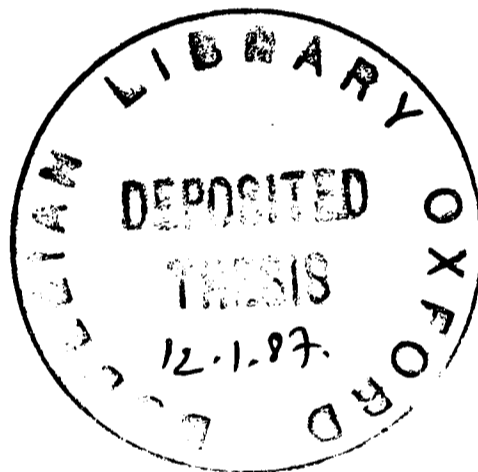


DECADENCE AND THE ENGLISH TRADITION

One might go on to a dozen names: Cleveland, Denham, Flatman, Campion, Lovelace, Carew, and all the inspired company. Are you so intent upon the latest eccentricity of Paris, that you have no ears for these singers? - Lionel Johnson



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ABSTRACT

"Decadence and the English Tradition: The Influence of some seventeenth-century writing on literature of the Eighteen Nineties."

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Oxford.

Thesis submitted in accordance
with the requirements of the
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The thesis sets out to do two things. It seeks first of all to describe the revival of interest in the Caroline era which defines the nature of an "English Tradition" in the Eighteen Nineties. Secondly, in doing so it seeks to reappraise three significant poets of that era, Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and Francis Thompson, in terms of their participation in this revival.

The first chapter, "Craving Viaticum", deals with the general background of the Eighteen Nineties period. It suggests that the Symbolist movement equates with the Decadent one in a more direct way than has often been allowed, and deals with the era's enthusiasm for nostalgia and past ages as part of its reaction against current society. It also explores the period's allegiance to hero-figures. The second chapter, "The French Connection: Pater's Part", deals with Walter Pater, and evaluates him in terms of his art and criticism, suggesting how these develop from a nostalgic desire to re-create past ages in the image of his present ideals. The more exaggerated claims made by critics of his work for the influence of French writers on him are questioned, and Pater's relation to the "English Tradition" is discussed. In the third chapter, "The French Connection: Other Approaches", the tendentiousness of those critics who attempt to define the entire Decadent era in Britain in terms of French influences is discussed and exposed.

The fourth chapter, "New Births of Decadence: The English Tradition and the Seventeenth Century", deals with the relation of the literature of the period to the Caroline era in detail, and the fifth chapter, "Of Academic Interest", is concerned with analysing this relationship through discussion of both contemporary and present-day critics, adducing statistical evidence to prove a resurgence of interest in the writers of the Caroline era in the period 1880-1910. The sixth chapter, "By the Statue of King Charles: The Jacobite Revival" deals with the political and religious aspects of the Caroline revival, and charts the growth of neo-Jacobitism in the Eighteen Nineties and its relation to literary history. The seventh chapter, "Against Nature: Defining Decadence", suggests that the root of Decadent thinking is myth, and that the counterpart of Symbolism in the world of decadent nostalgia was the iconic religious and political culture of the court of King Charles I, a convenient archetype for Decadent myths of ritual, aristocracy, and martyrdom. This discussion closes the first part of the thesis.

"Francis Thompson, Faithful Decadent: Catholics and Criticism" is Chapter Eight. It discusses Francis Thompson in relation to his critics, and the manner in which views of his work have been polarised between two main schools of criticism. Chapter Nine, "Faithful in my Fashion", suggests a resolution of this historically polarised critical discussion by assessing Thompson's poetry in close relationship with the work of the seventeenth-century sacred poets. The tenth chapter, "Waif of Romance: The Poetry of Ernest Christopher Dowson", assesses Dowson in relation to Herrick and the Cavalier lyrists, discussing also how he stands as a type in relation to his age. The eleventh chapter, "Lionel Johnson: One of Those Who Fall: His Life and Ideas", is concerned with the crisis

in Johnson's thought over the natures of guilt and beauty, and how this is illustrated in his poetry. The twelfth and final chapter, "The Life and Work of Lionel Johnson: A Long Blast Upon the Horn: His Work and Themes", assesses Johnson's nostalgia for the Stuart era in terms of a resolution of his present poetic crisis through past values. His intellectual and intertextual relationships with Ben Jonson and Marvell are also discussed. The thesis closes with an assessment of Johnson's achievement based on his allegiance to the Caroline revival with which the argument throughout has been concerned.

Murray Pittock

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DECADENCE AND THE ENGLISH TRADITION

Chapter 1 : CRAVING VIATICUM

i. "Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat..." Baudelaire¹

In the general literary imagination the end of the nineteenth century is an age neither Victorian nor modern, neither strait-laced and disciplined in the values of patience and purity, nor one of new forms and exciting changes. The language used to describe it betrays these assumptions. In an era when criticism has pinned text to context, has rifled the potentials of reader response and authorial intent, and drawn the boundaries of healthy art with ideology, the Eighteen Nineties and their problems are largely left alone among the images they have always possessed: those of "decadence", "naughtiness", yellow and mauve years of minor poets and above all of Wilde. They still are largely seen in colour instead of in detail, and criticism here still resembles impression rather than discussion. Linda C. Dowling writes:

The tendency of scholars to take the part for the whole - to find Arthur Symons, for instance, typical of the Rhymers' Club, which is then seen to be typical of fin-de-siècle literature in general - has been encouraged, too, by the very exclusiveness of the tragic generation.

Exclusive is the word: the poets of the period lie outside the general run of material used in the construction of literary history.

Ms. Dowling points out how little is known and is found out about the

1. Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, intr. Théophile Gautier, (Paris, Calmann-Lévy n.d.), p.81

period because the part is so often taken for the whole, and looks forward to "the recovery of the authentic literary context of the fin-de-siècle, a labor that promises to be engrossing, essential and long".²

This then is written in the hope of recovering part of that context, and in performing some elementary steps in the archaeology of the rest. Since Ms Dowling's bibliography was published in 1977, a few steps have been taken in that direction. Analysis of the 'Nineties continues to be largely reductive, because generalised from particulars. In a gifted recent attempt to come to grips with the problem, Dr R.K.R. Thornton has tried to track the term "decadence" to earth in his The Decadent Dilemma, published in 1983. After tracing it historically, he comes to see it in terms of a struggle of the real to live or write out the ideal, a dilemma between dream and actuality; the dilemma really of a Dr Faustus without the moral overtones. Given these premises he decides that "the consciousness of the impossibility", the "failure to bring together the real and ideal" was solved by Symbolism, because it "could demonstrate that real and ideal were not separate, but united in the symbol ". This meant that "Decadence was at an end".³

In this analysis Dr Thornton is following Arthur Symons, the chief contemporary critic of the movement of the last decade of the nineteenth century. Symons believed that decadence was only a passing phase en route to symbolism. Symons' chief work on the subject, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, was first published in 1899.

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2. Linda Dowling, Aestheticism and Decadence: A Selective Annotated Bibliography, (New York, Garland, 1977), xiii.
 3. R.K.R. Thornton, The Decadent Dilemma, (London, Edward Arnold, 1983), pp.3ff, 195, 200.

In it Symons speaks of "the pride of being, the pride of becoming: these are the two ultimate contradictions set before every idealist". This analysis seems remarkably close to Thornton's conflict between the real and the ideal; and Symons too sees Symbolism as providing a solution to these "ultimate contradictions". He writes of "that confidence in the eternal correspondences between the visible and the invisible universe", towards which "literature must now move, if it is in any sense to move forward". The means to achieve such confidence in correspondences shortly becomes clear:

What is Symbolism if not an establishing of the links which hold the world together, the affirmation of an eternal, minute, intricate, almost invisible life, which runs through the whole universe?

The problem is solved. Symbolism "seems to harmonise those instincts which make for religion, passion, and art, freeing us at once of a great bondage".⁴ Thus decadence, as Symons describes it, "that morbid subtlety of analysis, that morbid curiosity of form" is a route to self-discovery only.⁵ It is the extreme form of self-explanation that leads to the Verlaine who was "now furiously sensual, now feverishly devout".⁶ Such yielding to the absolute within ourselves is, for Symons, the way to allow our servants to do our living for us, to paraphrase Axel - "Symbolist, Decadent or Mystic" are parts "of an Idealism".⁷

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4. Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, ed. Richard Ellmann, (New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., 1958), pp.22, 75, 80, 95.
 5. Arthur Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature", Harper's Monthly Magazine Vol. 26 (1893), pp. 858-867 (p. 867).
 6. Ibid., p. 860.
 7. Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, pp 30, 72.

The chief difficulty about Symons's and Thornton's interpretation is that it defines the solution in terms of itself. Symbolism becomes in this analysis, a kind of swollen portmanteau of literary movements which is introduced for the purpose of getting rid of the term "decadence", which can then be incorporated into the term "Symbolism", instead of digging its heels in obstinately to resist our endeavours. The whole question of what we mean by "decadence" will be discussed at length later, but at the moment I think it would be instructive to note certain basic contradictions in the Symons argument. Symbolism as I have said, has to become an objective term for the purposes of this argument, and this is the main difficulty. For we do not think of symbolic approaches to the universe as objectively true; one might as well say that decadence is solved because metaphors are literal. Yet "Symbolism" must be objective, because it has to incorporate the sheer subjectivity of decadent self-exploration, to place and define it. And what is decadence to Symons?

To fix the last fine shade, the quintessence of things; to fix it fleetingly: to be a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul: that is the ideal of Decadence, and it is what Paul Verlaine has achieved.

The contradiction is here in all its glory. The aim of decadence is to "fix" and thus transmute itself into Symbolism, ("the ideal of Decadence"), which as Thornton writes is realised only in Symbolism. How does it do this? By grabbing hold of "fine shade", "quintessence"; by being "disembodied".⁸ These are not terms that we normally associate with objective certainty. Symons on de Nerval is no more convincing:

8. Arthur Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature", p. 862.

To have realised that central secret of the mystics...does it matter very much that [Nerval] arrived at it by way of the obscure and fatal initiation of madness? Truth, and especially that soul of truth which is poetry, may be reached by many roads; and a road is not necessarily misleading because it is dangerous or forbidden.

Well, madness is not normally an avenue to objective truth for most of us. In fact leading a lobster on a blue ribbon as de Nerval did because "it does not bark, and knows the secrets of the sea" may seem a little more than is necessary to, as Symons puts it, establish "the links which hold the world together"; "Establishing" and "affirmation" are the words Symons uses about Symbolism. Yet de Nerval's discovery of any "central secret" is not analysed; it is merely a compliment of Symons's in symbolist code-language. On de Nerval's death, Symons recalls, "a geometrical proof of the Immaculate Conception" was found in his pocket. Is this the blending of the being and becoming Symons expresses?⁹

It may be well objected that the truth of Symbolism is not one that is subject to rational proof, that it is a truth apprehended rather than understood. This is a fair enough point. But it hardly amounts to a solution to the problems of the insecurity and subjectivity of "decadence". It hardly, to quote Dr Thornton "demonstrates" anything, since it is a demonstration only accessible to the practitioner. In Symons' own terms it requires individual self-exploration, a more detailed attempt to live out Pater's "gem like flame" in every way possible.¹⁰ Scientific method is not part of

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9. Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, pp. 7, 80; Roger Lhombreaud Arthur Symons: A Critical Biography, (London, Unicorn Press, 1963), pp. 167, 238.
10. R.K.R. Thornton p. 200; Walter Pater, The Works 8 vols. (London, Macmillan, 1900), Vol. I; The Renaissance, p. 236.

creative truth; agreed. But then how can Symons write that decadence is "crystallised...under the forms of Symbolism"?¹¹ Dr Thornton likewise says that Yeats used "the dance, the mask, the symbol...to solve the Decadent dilemma".¹² In order for these statements to mean anything, the forms used must be themselves not reducible to the basic dilemma of real and ideal. In addition to this, one should believe that decadent form is uncrystallised in some way; that is that decadence is primarily a matter of content, or of uncertain and liquid form. This might apply in some cases, but in poets like Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, or Verlaine himself, form is of major importance. How without form indeed, can you have Romances sans Paroles ?¹³ How can you fix anything, even fleetingly, as Symons claims for decadence? And how can a chief work of the decadence like Huysmans' A rebours function, when it depends so heavily on forms of living, forms of expression, forms of art, twisted in the hands of Des Esseintes to an elegant, individual perversity; but nevertheless an overriding perversity of form, not of content?¹⁴ If, as Beerbohm wrote, "Artifice must queen it once more", how does the decadent belief in this differ from the Symbolist one? Wherein lies the crystallisation?¹⁵

Does it perhaps lie in the forms of Symbolism? The dance, the mask, or the "symbol"? This is surely verbal trickery along the lines

11. R.K.R. Thornton, p.200.

12. Ibid.

13. Arthur Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature", p. 861.

14. Cf. J.K. Huysmans, Against Nature, tr. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1959), pp 84-95.

15. Max Beerbohm, The Works, (London, John Lane, 1921), p.99.

of Yeats's "artifice of eternity". In "Sailing to Byzantium" these words are a formula of escape, but as the poet knows, not an escape itself. What is an artifice of eternity? Is it a golden bird, and if so, how does one become one of those? The objective agony of dying is not to be relieved by dreaming of fifth-century Byzantium, and the recollection of "The young / In one another's arms" is truly more wistful.

Where then do these elusive crystals of symbolist truth lie? In the mask? The mask itself is a fundamental image of ambivalence in the work of Yeats; it is a mode of disguise in his dancers. The dance is a symbol of great power, but Yeats is always uncertain of its objective value, its ability to answer questions:

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
O chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

It seems that in this famous stanza questions about the real and the ideal are being asked, not answered. The dilemma of symbol and matter continues. The dance is the dance of the living for "those moments' sake"; but how that becomes a "Ledaean body" or a permanent "image" is as beyond the Symbolist as the decadent. "Which of her forms has shown her substance right?" Yeats asks of Maud Gonne. Having united the real and the ideal in the symbol, Yeats still uncertainly asks the ideal whether it is in fact the real. Wiser perhaps than some Symbolists, Yeats in the end knows that these modes of apprehension are "self-born mockers of man's enterprise".¹⁶

16. W. B. Yeats, The Collected Poetry, 2nd ed, (London, Macmillan, 1950), pp 217, 218, 243-45, 382; Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 239.

I have gone on at length over this initial question, because I feel that in it lies part of the reductive approach towards the problems of the Eighteen-Nineties period. The overwhelmingly complex self-exploratory subjectivity of the writers called decadent was certainly formalized in Symbolism; but the question of the ideal and real were not answered, only confined within certain modes of discourse. Subjectivity is not absent from Symbolism. But if the decadence is seen as a transient and intrusive stage of literary history, an "age of transition" at best, to quote Linda Dowling, then critics will always be more interested in it as a premise rather than a conclusion. No-one should be blamed for that: "decadence" seems so inconclusive. And yet this does not mean that a headless literary phenomenon doesn't possess a surprisingly large body. And it is that body we mean to begin dissecting or to return to literary idiom to find its "authentic literary context". "The tendency of scholars to take the part for the whole" as Ms Dowling writes, is only another way of saying that critics demand that "decadence" should only be a transitional term, not a full-grown and complex literary organism.¹⁷

The reductive approach to the period has not helped its writers in the critical world either with the exception of Wilde, whose public relations were always outrageous enough to be outstanding. This thesis is intended to try and help set this to rights. Critics have another axe to grind against the writers of the period also; that is their insistence on the paramount nature of French influence. The English decadents are thus effectively minimized in their importance; and this approach again derives from the fault of taking

17. Linda Dowling, xiii, xviii.

"the part for the whole". French influence did play an undoubted part, but it was never more than that. Other contexts, particularly native and historical ones, played substantial rôles.¹⁸

This is why this thesis is called "Decadence and the English Tradition". It seeks to fix, and hopefully not too fleetingly, nor with a disembodied voice, the problems of "decadence" as a term in general, as applying to the Eighteen-Nineties in particular, and as a concept whose definition in its English context relied as much on the legacy of the traditional past as the Francophilia of the experimental present. I intend to begin with a survey of the main qualities of the era, to proceed to its special interests, and to conclude this thematic part of the thesis with a substantial study of "decadence" as a concept in theory and practice, and what kind of thinking if any, it customarily exhibits. Thereafter I will conduct studies of three of the period's most important and/or typical poets: Francis Thompson, Ernest Dowson and Lionel Johnson. Wilde and Pater will be extensively examined in the first part of this study; but they are not selected for individual study because it is felt that reevaluation of the worth of certain other writers' literary achievements is required for the reasons given above. Wilde and Pater are well enough studied.

18. Cf. Christophe Campos, The View of France from Arnold to Bloomsbury, (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 153ff.

ii All things are a flowing
Sage Heracleitus says... 19

The nineteenth century was an era of confidence in material progress. Artists like Baudelaire and Gautier lambasted the "bourgeois"; the growing middle-class, for this confidence. Baudelaire saw progress as a concept which could only betray a true understanding of the past.²⁰ The past itself became indeed of great interest to the literary world as the century progressed. Indeed in the realm of poetry, English poets in particular seemed to write only of the past. Generalisations are insecure things; but though that last statement may be as insecure as the rest of them, writers like Morris and Pater undoubtedly faced the diminution in religious faith caused by galloping scientific and materialistic progress with the defences of nostalgic Utopianism, ultimately political in the former case, always aesthetic in that of the latter. For a serious ideology, Pater leant on Plato and Hegel, both writers who interpreted history in a spiritually rather than materially developmental way, and might thus be seen to stand against the idea of progress, as understood by the "Philistines" of the period, to continue to use Matthew Arnold's gifted journalistic term.

Yet Pater offered no real solutions, for the heart of his philosophy was subjective, as subjective as the lowest reaches of the decadence that Symons would later discuss en route to establishing the truths of Symbolism. Pater thought that beauty was relative.²¹

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19. Ezra Pound, Collected Shorter Poems, 2nd ed. (London, Faber & Faber, 1968), p.206.
20. Charles Baudelaire, Selected Writings on Art and Artists, ed. P.E. Charret (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972), p. 121; George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, (New York, Capricorn Books, 1959), p.66.
21. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, pp. 130-33 Cf. n.101.

Nor would he have necessarily accepted that a central mystic truth such as Symons had held de Nerval to discover would be necessarily objectively relevant:²² "Experience," he wrote:

...is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us...

Pater thought that "each mind" was "keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world". For the world itself was always changing: "everything flows and nothing stays" as Heraclitus had said. In his The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry Pater began to do what was to become his hallmark, and indeed the hallmark of the entire era that was to become known as the English decadence: he began to write of the past in terms of the needs of the present. In The Renaissance he writes of Pico Della Mirandola, of Leonardo da Vinci, of Michelangelo; but his writing is not what we would understand by critical: it seeks to define no text or picture in consistent terms. Instead Pater writes out of his "own dream of a world" to create a context in which his own preoccupations can flourish. These preoccupations come out, not only in the famous passage on La Gioconda but also in Pater's description of Leonardo da Vinci's death:

...one who had been always so desirous of beauty, but desired it always in such definite and precise forms, as hands or flowers or hair, looked forward now into the vague land, and experienced the last curiosity.

The "last curiosity" is in the end Pater's subject. La Gioconda has "learned the secrets of the grave"; those secrets that Pater sees

22. Roger Lhombreaud, Arthur Symons: A Critical Biography, p. 238; Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, ed. J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 98ff.

as delightfully vague, and in turn also the beginning and the end of art, since art should always strive to the eternal in true Symbolist fashion. Pater is exhibiting the decadent dilemma, as Dr Thornton would have put it; the real and its struggle after the ideal, its "last curiosity". Pater writes:

Art, then, is...always striving...to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material...the 'imaginative reason', that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol.

"Mind then...is the true type or measure of perfected art" he subsequently comments. This is a version of the Symbolist doctrine, a striving to get rid of the material, and to incorporate it into the ideal. Leonardo's desire for beauty in "definite and precise forms" like Michelangelo's "deep delight in carnal form" are alike, while artistic, lacking in a grasp of Symbolism. For that we need the "vague land...the last curiosity".²³

Of course, one has to be alive to create art, and Pater realises this. His solution is one that would be Christian if it were not devoted entirely to an ideal of subjective self-realization. But we should not live for others, but for ourselves, to cram "as many pulsations as possible into the given time". It is "the love of art for art's sake" that brings "the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake". Pater writes that:

Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude to those about us, and in the brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their way, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening.

23. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, pp. 81, 125, 129, 138, 139, 233, 235.

Life is to be lived for the sake of personal passion, personal art, personal dreams. Yet this race to defeat death is a race towards death, because the Paterian life demands a continual recognition of the things beyond life, the abstract values. And because these abstract values are not Christian or philosophical, not concerned with the end of things nor with their ground, but are personal, wholly concerned with the passionate absorption of self into eternity, they are death-seeking. Pater, subsequent to The Renaissance, largely abandons the practice of writing of real artists in terms of these intense aesthetic values, and instead invents characters like Emerald Uthwart, Duke Carl of Rosenmold, Gaston de Latour and Marius the Epicurean. Without exception, these are young men drifting towards death through the medium of seeking the absolute in themselves. They are doomed to the "last curiosity", the finding of self which, as Yeats knew can only be accomplished after death.

Despite Pater's self-created Symbolism of the journey of the soul through the symbols of beautiful young men and intoxicating surroundings, which are perversely meant, not as temptations but as encouragements to the "vague land" beyond, his "fallen day" is a subjective one. Pater admits as much; it is our own "dream of a world" not anyone else's. Here no more than elsewhere does Symbolism solve the decadent dilemma; indeed one thing Pater's heroes actually never seem to do is really communicate with another human being. His search for "the chilling touch of the abstract and disembodied beauty" is not a conversational one, and if it cannot communicate its truth, how can we know if it is not falsehood?

Paterian ecstasy was regarded with some suspicion, and Pater withdrew his Conclusion which sums up his attitudes in the second

edition of The Renaissance although it later reappeared. Whether the "hard, gem-like flame" it enjoined was responsible for the burning-out of the "Tragic Generation" as Yeats called them, of the Eighteen-Nineties, is doubtful.²⁴ Pater himself had borrowed a great deal, not least aspects of his prose style, from Swinburne, and rather than giving a new siren voice to the end of an era, he rather seemed to articulate the intense subjectivity that was gaining ground in artistic theory and practice, a belief that sought to separate art from all external criteria, most particularly judgemental ones. Hence we get Art for its own sake; and since art has so little now to do with life, death becomes its ideal, and if not death, childhood, because childhood is seen as the dying within life, dying into guilt and maturity from innocence and immaturity. A poem by Dowson neatly encapsulates both subjects.

Lie still, and be
 For evermore a child!
 Not grudgingly,
 Whom life has not defiled,
 I render thee.

Slumber so deep,
 No man would rashly wake;
 I hardly weep,
 Fain only, for thy sake,
 To share thy sleep.²⁵

Yeats quoted Heraclitus on dying "each other's life", living "each other's death".²⁶ This is what poets like Dowson were intent on doing; stretching their hands out over a grave, and crying "Swop!"

24. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 236; W.B. Yeats, Autobiographies, (London, Macmillan, 1955), pp. 277-351.

25. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, ed. Desmond Flower, 3rd ed. (London, Cassell, 1967), p. 95.

26. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Plays, 2nd ed. (London, Macmillan, 1952), p. 594.

But those who could not always be dreaming of death, or forget the "last curiosity" in favour of more pressing artistic concerns, turned not to the dead past, but to the living past of poetry and other writing. Even writers absorbed in their own subjective self-exploration, maintaining the Paterian ecstasy, looked for some mode of objectivization in their own work. This they did not merely find through symbols. For, as we have noted above, symbols merely formalize and do not dispose of the question of the real's pursuit of the ideal. These writers looked instead to the past, particularly, as we will see later, the English past to provide a stable articulation for the attitudes they sought to strike. Whether they used in any objective sense the texts that were there, or merely created their own readings to articulate their own concerns, as Pater did in The Renaissance is another question and one that I hope can be looked at later. But certainly they believed that these influences formed a bulwark, and an English one at that, unlike Verlaine and Baudelaire, against their own uncertainty. As I have said, Pater's heroes are better at dreaming than speaking, and poetry is speech. And to speak of oneself it was better to speak not in the terms of Verlaine and Baudelaire, great French poets, but in those of a predecessor, a predecessor whose speech might form an identity struggling to express itself.

Great Heaven! When these with clamour shrill
 Drift out to Lethe's harbour bar
 A verse of Lovelace shall be still
 As vivid as a pulsing star...

Yeats quoted these lines of William Watson's in the introduction to The Oxford Book of Modern Verse.²⁷ It was the "pulsing star"

27. W.B. Yeats (ed.), The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1936), xii.

that the poets sought to articulate their Paterian "pulsations".²⁸

In their urge to purify poetry, to purify themselves to perfect speech, the poets of the time, as Yeats wrote,

...tried to write like the poets of the Greek Anthology, or like Catullus, or like the Jacobean lyrists...we looked back. We thought it was in the very nature of poetry to look back.²⁹

This thesis will aim to discuss the third of these categories, albeit in slightly different terms from those used by Yeats.

The age was obsessed by decadence. J.A. Symonds thought that "the inevitable progression from the embryo through the ascending stages, of growth and maturity by declining stages to decrepitude and dissolution has not been sufficiently insisted on". Interestingly enough, the period Symonds chose to use this theory on in an English context was the period of late Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline art, which was taken to go from "perfection in Shakespeare...to decadence in Davenant". Escape from decadence could be made through hybridization of art, as Symonds thought that Ben Jonson had escaped by crossing "romantic drama, and humanism". In this context he thought of Baudelaire that the "tendency toward a fusion of the arts is a symptom of his age, which seems to him decadent". Symonds thought "the 19th Century is the age of hybrids par excellence", and he elaborately compares the Victorians with the Elizabethans; the latter age is dominated by no particular type; rather we are in the world of hybrids. And the hybrid is an evasion of decadence in the "evolutionary scheme" which Symonds is attached to.³⁰ It was

28. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 236.

29. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions (London, Macmillan, 1969), p. 495

30. René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950 : The Later Nineteenth Century, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1966), pp. 402-403, 445.

this idea of recurrency shared by Symonds and writers like him to try and compare past periods with their own, to see if they too had evolved towards decadence, and whether lessons could be learnt from them for the future of literature. The Caroline poets were those who were strange and extravagant, and it was to them, as we shall see later, that the subjective artists of the late nineteenth century turned in order to objectivize their speech.³¹ Some sought refuge in the world of Ancient Greece. But the Hellenism which provided a setting for the figures of Tennyson or Alma-Tadema was weakened by the subjective self-creation put on it by the late Victorians: if the past was used to symbolise the present, then the present's role interfered with that of the genuine past. The past was being recreated by its forced incorporation into present contexts. When in the period of Pater it became merely a sign, not even of the glory of Greece as seen in modern Britain but rather merely of beautiful things by which those dreaming them become even more beautiful, its subjectivization was complete. Confidence in cultural archetypes broke down: in the Hellenism of the decadents, Richard Jenkyns remarks in The Victorians and Ancient Greece, "the air is heavy with metaphor".³² The metaphors which had long interfered with Victorian Hellenism now take over, and the decadent identity, or lack of it, is composed of re-interpretation of a Greek culture now subjectivized in the interest of self-exploration. Seeing in Greek decadent poetry, as in Roman, a model for their own "pulsations", the writers of the time used these ancient authors to recreate

31. Cf. J.M. Steadman, The Hill and the Labyrinth, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983), p. 36ff.

32. Cf. J.M. Buckley, The Triumph of Time, (Massachusetts, Belknap Press, 1967), p. 19ff; Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 297.

according to their own needs, as Pater had done in The Renaissance. Symonds wrote of the violation of "pastoral innocence" in the last of the Greek poets, victims of an "effete and decaying civilization", corrupted with the "hectic hues of consumption and even the strange livors of corruption", the "splendours" "of beauty in decay".³³

"Beauty and decay" were to be the traditional resorts of the "Tragic Generation",³⁴ whether or not they had actually been those of the Greeks, whom Symonds saw as "corrupted". Just as the Hellenism of Classical Greece had provided metaphors and symbols to sustain the high Victorians, so late Greek writers sustained the images of the decadence, except now the re-creation was more intense and less real. Scholarship could not provide the Paterian pulsation. Critical imagery, as here, grows lurid: "effete", "decaying", "consumption", "corruption", "beauty in decay". Atmosphere replaces writer. Impressionistic as late Victorian criticism often was, this "rose in the hair" style is the preserve of the decadents.³⁵ But decoratively evil as the poets of the late Hellenic and Latin periods were, they did not form a basis for a decadent poetry of the present. In The Century Guild Hobby Horse of January 1889, Herbert Horne wrote in the editorial that we must look back to a Caroline age of manners and beauty as opposed to the world of Zola.³⁶ Later on in my account of the themes of the period I intend to discuss at length just what this looking back involved, both in terms of the Symonds theory of

33. John Addington Symonds, Studies of the Greek Poets, 1st series, 2nd ed., (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1877), pp. 34, 37.

34. Vide Supra, n. 24.

35. Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece, p. 297.

36. Herbert Horne, editorial, The Century Guild Hobby Horse, vol.4 (1889), pp. 1-8 (1, 3).

recurrence and also in the terms in which the writers themselves understood it. Certainly the Platonism and mysticism of the Caroline period was an attraction to a time itself beset with religious uncertainty: Suckling's enthusiasm for Zoroaster, Plato and Plotinus, was echoed in the 'Nineties also.³⁷ In his preface to the 1895 edition of the Select Works of Plotinus, G.R.S. Mead wrote:

The public interest in the philosophy of mysticism and theosophical speculation has so largely developed during the last twenty years that a demand for books treating of Neoplatonism and kindred subjects is steadily increasing.

Mr Mead does not intend to ignore this opportunity to praise Plotinus as "a guide" to "lead us by a safe path to those supernal realms". He says that "the 'higher criticism'... has once for all struck the death-blow to mere bible fetishism" and that "there is a distinct tendency in the public thought of to-day towards a modified mysticism". Plotinus is not altogether only examined as a thinker; he is praised as a guide. This posing of him as an authority for troubled times is all part of the widespread attempt of the age to escape from subjective self-doubt and cosmic doubt; to find a guide, and one, who in order to be convincing, must be exotic. Criticism of Plotinus in the preface is minimal, and Mead alludes also the by no means uncommon thesis of recurrency:

...I hope to show that the temper of the public mind of today, with regard to the problems of religion and philosophy, is very similar to that of the times of Plotinus.

Here, Plotinus, the chief Neoplatonist and one well-known in the seventeenth century, is used as a traditional validator of the

37. Keith Feiling, A History of the Tory Party 1640-1714, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924) p. 47

way modern thought is tending; a guide through the realms of "a modified mysticism", the context of which resembles his own day.³⁸

The Plotinian question at the end of Yeats's Among Schoolchildren "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" is of course a Symbolist one of real and ideal.³⁹

This theme of recurrency was to be one that helped to stabilise the attitude of Eighteen-Nineties writers and critics to the rapid change of their own literature, and its widespread condemnation as "decadent". Whether this belief in recurrency was an analytic invention for the protection of their own literary activities and modes of utterance, or whether it was a model with some basis in fact, I intend to discuss later. For the present it should be sufficient to note that it was not only they who noticed the similarities. Desmond Flower, in the introduction to his 1934 edition of Dowson's Collected Poems remarks that "it is odd...they [the 'Nineties poets] have not been more frequently compared" with the writers of the Renaissance. He mentions Marlowe, Kyd and Nashe, and goes on to compare the hopelessness of Webster's dark tragedies with the Eighteen Nineties drift towards nihilism and despair.⁴⁰

Keith Feiling, in A History of the Tory Party 1640-1714 writes:

Carew himself did in fact die before the deluge - the Civil War - wasted by something very like the "hard, gem-like flame" of the Renaissance.

38. G.R.S. Mead (ed.), Select Works of Plotinus, tr. Thomas Taylor, (London, George Bell, 1895), vii, xii, xiii, xxxiv.

39. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, p. 245.

40. Ernest Dowson, The Collected Poems, ed. Desmond Flower (London, Cassell & Co. and John Lane, 1934), xii.

These "gem-like flame" followers, disciples of Pater, looked indeed for models on which to build, pasts in which to find a history.⁴¹

Arnold had been one of the chief writers earlier in the second half of the nineteenth century who had used Hellenism as a model of "aërial ease, clearness, and radiancy" in the face of a civilisation he believed had gone wrong in becoming "mechanical and external". As has been discussed earlier, such use of one's favourite nostalgia as the answer to current problems, was, even in the grip of so thorough a mind as Arnold's might be, doomed to increasing subjectivity. Cut off from its links with its own society and used only as a patent formula to cleanse our own, its "clearness, and radiancy" were signs of Arnold's own scale of interpretative values only: they shone with a light borrowed from morals, not earned from history. In this context Arnold's blaming of Puritanism for crossing the natural stream of Hellenism is difficult to understand as a historical fact, except insofar as the Hellenism was Arnold's own view of Greek values. However, the opposition to Puritanism, ancestor of modern Philistinism, is interesting; for it is part of the overall background that prepared the way for the Jacobite revival of the Eighteen Nineties. Moreover Arnold's view of the "governing idea of Hellenism" as "spontaneity of consciousness", is one which, while not necessarily answering to Greek thought, certainly corresponds with the Paterian ethic: it is a philosophy of pulsation. Arnold's nostalgia for the "radiancy" of Hellenism is in fact setting the scene for a future of anything but, which discovers only the self-absorbed tendencies of such spontaneity. Arnold's belief in the radiancy of the past led

41. Keith Feiling, A History of the Tory Party 1640-1714, p. 54.

to the self-identification of the decadence with the late world, the world which was set in opposition to Arnold's, though secretly sharing its premises of nostalgia, except that the nostalgia had become fully instead of implicitly, subjective.⁴² Arnold had written in "Obermann Once More":

But now the old is out of date,
The new is not yet born,
And who can be alone elate,
While the world lies forlorn? 43

The Eighteen Nineties answer was to be "alone elate" by bringing forward the birth of the new in the terms of the old and by ignoring the world, whether by taking refuge in the "wall of personality" or in the elegant Palace of Art, now a prison for those like Des Esseintes, who could not live in the outer world. To be sure, occasionally the "hard gem like flame" might be refined into a concept of order like Hopkins's "inscape" (Pater was Hopkins's tutor at Oxford), but more commonly it was a flame that wasted and destroyed.⁴⁴ Pater's living as if one were dying in the pursuit of beauty was not often subjected to a Christian interpretation.

We have already seen that the nineteenth century belief in progress, to which Arnold in the stanza above is still clinging, albeit that he thinks himself in a sad transitional time, was one that the thinkers and writers surrounding the decadence denied.

42. Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, pp. 132, 134.

43. Matthew Arnold, The Poems, ed. Miriam Allott, 2nd ed., Longmans Annotated English Poets, (London, Longman, 1979), p. 572.

44. Gerard Manley Hopkins, The Poems, eds. W.H. Gardner and N.H. Mackenzie, 4th ed. (London, Oxford University Press, 1967), xx.

Baudelaire has already been quoted on this subject; but the reactionary nature of this idea is better put in a passage from Schopenhauer on demagogues:

The colossal evil of the world...they attribute entirely to governments: if these would only do their duty there would be Heaven on earth, i.e. we could all, without work or effort, cram ourselves, swill, propagate and drop dead - for this is a paraphrase of their "end in itself" and the goal of the "unending progress of mankind" which in pompous phrase they are never weary of proclaiming.

Clearly the denial of materialistic progress implies a denial of progress in social conditions, because nothing can ever really progress in the sense of getting better; as the Victorians meant it. The only progress is change on the Heraclitan model, and it is interesting that even this is modified by the recurrency theory, which leads into Yeats's gyres and cyclical historical thought. Moreover demagogues are socially participative, unlike the true artist/philosopher, who withdraws himself. While Schopenhauer obviously predates Pater and is not in himself a consciously decadent philosopher, his pessimism was known in the Eighteen Nineties; he was Dowson's favourite philosopher at Oxford. Moreover, Schopenhauer's judgements on our life in the world are not vastly different from Baudelaire's:

We are overtaken by its [existence's] worthlessness and vanity and this is the sensation called boredom.

A lack of faith in progress or society without a corresponding religious faith leads to the belief only in the vanity of human wishes, and thus ennui overtakes the contemplative artist or philosopher. Nor is there a way out in the joys of the senses.

"Sensual pleasure itself," remarks Schopenhauer, "consists in a continual striving and ceases as soon as its goal is reached."⁴⁵

Thus Olive Schreiner was to write in The Story of an African Farm about life "A striving and a striving, and an ending in nothing".⁴⁶

Dowson was later to annotate this, according to Victor Plarr, as "The conclusion of the whole matter".⁴⁷ Such was the cast of mind that could be found in one of the period's best poets. Nor was he of course alone. Schopenhauer himself had felt that "Barbarism is returning, despite railways, electricity and flying balloons", and the period's writers as a whole felt that not only was this return despite material progress, it was because of it.⁴⁸ The reactionary overtones of such thought seem clear enough, and the Zeitgeist of the age turned its back on the striving forwards it believed to be irrelevant. Humanity must look only backwards to learn its lessons. And although occasionally that nostalgia for the ages before the present led, as in Morris, to radical reconstruction of the past, most often it lent itself to the past-as-isolation, history as a preventative measure against the present.⁴⁹

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45. Arthur Schopenhauer, Essays and Aphorisms, tr. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970), pp. 54, 154. Cf. Victor Plarr, Ernest Dowson (London, Elkin Matthews, 1914), p. 43ff.
46. Olive Schreiner, The Story of an African Farm, int. S.C. Gronwright Schreiner, (London, Ernest Benn, 1951), p. 94.
47. Victor Plarr, Ernest Dowson 1888-1897, p. 43.
48. Arthur Schopenhauer, Essays and Aphorisms, p. 228.
49. Cf. Paul Meier, William Morris: The Marxist Dreamer, ed. Robin Arnot, 2 vols. (Sussex, The Harvester Press, 1978), vol. I, p. 94ff.

It would be false to say that this was the only channel that the thought of the period fell into readily. J.A. Symonds himself used his theory of recurrence to remark on, not only decadences, but the possible arrival of "The Renaissance of Modern Europe", where he can hope to see "the nations...advancing towards prosperity as yet undreamed of", "and the world-spirit crying joy!"⁵⁰ Admittedly this dates from 1872, but such sentiments were by no means dead in the Nineties. However, even in areas of thought far from the traditional coterie of the decadent poets, Wilde, Dowson et al, recurrent themes of thought were gaining ground. W.E. Gladstone, in the Romanes lecture in the Sheldonian in 1892, the year of his death, refers to "the extinction of the Roman Empire in the West" and "its senility". He gives space also to Jacobite and Whig controversy of long ago. The present is referred to in terms of the past, and although some still believed in "the bracing daylight", "the haunted dusk" was a more attractive spot for many literary men.⁵¹ A recent book on Victorian poets puts it succinctly. After commenting on Swinburne's "hunger for the past" Robert Peters remarks:

Swinburne here joins the ranks, if he is not, indeed, the leader, of those writers (Arnold, Pater, John Addington Symonds, Oscar Wilde and Arthur Symonds among them) who contrasted their hunger for a romanticized past with a desperate Philistine present.⁵²

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50. John Addington Symonds, The Renaissance of Modern Europe, (London, Thomas Scott, 1872), p.32.
51. William Ewart Gladstone, The Romanes Lecture 1892, (London, Henry Froude, 1892), pp. 5, 36-38; Richard Le Gallienne, The Beautiful Lie of Rome, (London, Simkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1900), p. 55.
52. Robert Peters, "Swinburne: A Personal Essay and a Polemic", in Richard A. Levine (ed.), The Victorian Experience: the Poets, (Ohio University Press, 1982), pp. 138-157 (p. 156).

For Swinburne, his society was "the new Gaza where we live".⁵³ The new Gaza was reflected in novels like A Child of the Jago by Arthur Morrison, and the British Realist school, which discussed the real social problems of the time; but writers like Herbert Horne wanted nothing to do with naturalism and realism.⁵⁴ These had nothing to do with "the last fine shade, the quintessence of things",⁵⁵ the exploration of "the great passions" as "angels of God" as Yeats wrote in 1895.⁵⁶ To counteract the Philistines Symons hoped for a "strenuous virtue, and the joy of sin".⁵⁷ It was for those who appreciated such dilemmas that works like Villiers de l'Isle Adam's Axël were created, although that play's ostensibly moral tone shows the perversity of decadence as it tries to accommodate itself to "the eternal correspondences" and became Symbolism. However, as we have seen, by doing so it only formalises its quarrel about reality, and does not answer its own questions.⁵⁸

53. Ibid.

54. Cf. n.36; Arthur Morrison, A Child of the Jago, ed. P.J. Keating, (London, MacGibbon and Kees, 1969).

55. Arthur Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature", p. 862.

56. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions, p. 197

57. Arthur Symons, London Nights, (London, Leonard C. Smithers, 1895), p. 104.

58. Vide supra, n. 4.

iii Melancholy Germane to the Stars

In his preface to Finberg's translation of *Axël*, W.B. Yeats wrote of his youth in the Eighteen-Nineties that:

We were perpetually thinking and talking about the value of life, and sometimes one or other of us - Lionel Johnson perhaps - would say, like *Axël*, that it had no value.

This shows once again the shades of Schopenhauer and Schreiner. Yeats confessed that de L'Isle Adam had influenced him. De L'Isle Adam does not so much invent ideas as articulate a wide range of current ones well (this is a frequent phenomenon of the period). The play, about a young nobleman who totally withdraws himself from public life in order to (as it happens) realise the fullness of existence in committing suicide with his beloved as soon as he meets her, on the grounds that a real relationship would be too sordid, is full of the high terms of Eighteen-Nineties phrase:

Therefore, since we cannot be anything but our own thought, wedded to the occult flesh of our deeds, let us think and act in such a manner as to give birth in ourselves to godhead...

Contact with the absolute (godhead) is once again achieved by revelling in one's own subjective life, a life in which what we do itself is merely "occult flesh". The Commander, a failed worldling in pursuit of *Axël*'s buried treasure, tempts the young man in worldly terms: "My name is 'real life', do you understand?" he says. *Axël* to face the "martyrdom" which is his suicide, the ultimate death of self, but only for the sake of self. While alive, *Axël*'s attitude to altruism is as uncompromising in its way as the

Commander's. "The rights which a man takes and keeps are all that he will ever have" he says, which accords with the Commander's praise for the medieval nobility who "were obeyed" though "they were one against a thousand". Axël believes that "the world" is merely "the oldest of...all" illusions. Hence one can act as one likes in it. Sara, his beloved, is as little prone to modesty as he is: "All the favours of all other women are as nothing, set in the scale of my cruelties" she says, and remarks "I seem to remember that I have made angels fall". She is his sister, and thus even in love and death the development of character is as self-centred as possible. Axël only shares his martyrdom with his own flesh and blood, not with any woman of a different family.

Both characters possess dreams of infinity, though from their speeches one gathers that the infinity discussed is an infinity of self-realisation, and more specifically one of self-extension, that is of power. Cruelty, power and blasphemy (Axël drinks the poison that kills him from a "holy chalice") do not seem to be illusions, although the world is one: they are the true marks of self. Axël wants no children: they are "the weary round". Instead the "ideal moment" is all that matters; the ideal of self-realization for the brother-sister hermaphrodite that goes to its grave apparently triumphant. The Old Retainers sing:

Farewell for ever, black pride of the iron past!
 Our small light flickers as your elder glories
 fade
 And like a wintry sun, but feebler at last,
 Passes the world we made.

Axël belongs to the past at the end of the play. For he is supposed to have triumphed: and only the past triumphs. The "small light

flickers" on when the "elder glories fade". "The world we made" passes on as the past has done, but the past is still "black pride" and "iron", not the feeble world of the present with its dwindling towards "idle shades". Axël is too large for the action of the present in the play: he belongs with old grudges, old scores, old mysticism. He is a giant who dreams of infinite power, a mental Tamburlaine, who bows to no man, surrounded by old retainers who have been wounded in real wars, and carry real scars, like little men. The great men (of whom Axël is supposed to be one) die into their ideals, and leave them as a legacy of pride for the uncertain present.

This said, the actual as opposed to the putative process of the play is a diminutive one. Axël is in retreat from life; whereas his father was a public servant, Axel, admittedly subsequent to his father's tragic death, denies the right of the state, indeed of society. The Commander's claims about public duty are shown to be hypocritical, but they are nevertheless valid in themselves. Axël's Castle is the world within Pater's "thick wall of personality"; it is the world of internalization. By the end of the play we see that Axel has internalised his exploration of life to the extent that time itself no longer matters to him: what matters is the "ideal moment" with Sara. All time and time's gifts contract to that point just as all life contracts to the castle, and all knowledge contracts to Axël himself and his beloved Sara. And since she is his sister, the "ideal moment" of their relationship is in itself a reductive one: Axël goes to meet his past in the womb not his future in love; just as he sits in his father's castle, on his father's gold, and does nothing except look back and look inwards.

He proposes no dutiful restitution of the gold to the State, nor even to use it for power. All he does is sit on it and resentfully mourns what is past: the only duty is to the dead. As for living, our servants will do that for us.

But one has to look on from outside the play to see the falsehood of its premise and its structures. The refinement of all life to the Paterian pulsation is not criticised, but praised by de L'Isle Adam. Alternatives to Axél's point of view such as the nunnery which Sara flees from and the ethic of the Commander, are ridiculed, and those who trust in such values are made to seem prudes and hypocrites. The answer to everything lies in the refinement of self and the retreat into the "last fine shade, the quintessence of things" which turns "the great passions" into "angels of God". Axél was the allegory of the decadent life insofar as it was a pursuit of self for its own sake, with its ending in the satisfaction of Pater's "last curiosity". Almost all that is missing from it is the contempt for moral values not merely theorised about, but realised: the strenuous sin.⁵⁹

Just as Axél was the kind of character who realised this ideal in fiction, so living people were also hailed as exemplifying the life of Symbolism, correspondence between the subjectivity of self with the objectivity of the absolute, between the visible and invisible universe. We have already seen G.R.S. Mead hailing Plotinus as a sage for the age, one who lived in what he saw and what he saw was truth. But there are more contemporary examples.

59. Villiers de L'Isle Adam, Axél, tr. H.P.R. Finberg with a preface by W.B. Yeats, (London, Jarrold, 1925), pp. 7, 65, 144, 149ff, 202, 215, 235, 260, 262, 280, 285, 286, 291.

One of the more prominent is found in Arthur Symons' characterization of a famous actress of the period, Eleonora Duse. He commences his study of her by telling us that "she is the artist of her own soul" and quotes her as saying

The one happiness is to shut one's door upon a little room, with a table before one, and to create; to create life in that isolation from life.

She is to Symons "A great impersonal force". Her life is seen as a journey of solitary self-creation⁶⁰, just as Janus tells Axël to "Fulfil yourself in astral light".⁶¹ This fulfilment of the Symbolist life Symons seems to see in Duse, who to him creates herself within herself in isolation in self. She is seen in the same grandiose symbolic terms as Axël sees himself: "with desperate ambition...desperate integrity". Duse herself said:

To save the theatre the theatre must be destroyed, the actors and actresses must all die of the plague: they poison the air, they make art impossible.⁶²

Such a statement is at least evidence of a whimsical remorselessness. To Symons, and apparently in such statements as these to Duse herself, the realisation of "truth" in art (i.e. the symbol) was more important than anything else. And the adherent of such truth once again in Symons's interpretation, must disagree with the world of the present. Symons looks back to the past for the art of the soul

60. Arthur Symons, Studies in Seven Arts (London, Archibald Constable & Co., 1906), pp. 331, 337.

61. Villiers de L'Isle Adam, Axël, p. 216.

62. John Stokes, "The Legend of Duse", in Ian Fletcher (ed.), Decadence and the 1890s, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 17, (London, Edward Arnold, 1979), pp. 151-73 (p. 154).

now lost except in the case of isolated geniuses like Duse, with her passions, among which were found those of Clytemnestra. Other Symbolists aligned her suffering with that of the Madonna. Clearly, although Symbolism might unite real and ideal and thus solve the decadent dilemma, precisely which part of the ideal was Clytemnestra and which the Blessed Virgin was a small point still open to accusations of indecision.⁶³

Besides these refinements of the inner self towards the ideal of the symbol, more noticeable outward manifestations were also associated with the quest for perfection, in particular the cult of the dandy, which having passed from England to France in the time of George IV, taking the person of Beau Brummell with it, now returned to England in the persons of writers like Wilde, John Gray and Max Beerbohm.⁶⁴ To d'Aurevilly, Dandyism was a kind of sartorial natural selection:

Dandyism may be taken as the art of selection,
practised by a lover of the visible world...

When Brummell, d'Aurevilly remarks, "rose to the rank of an idea he was Dandyism itself". Brummell thus represents the apogee of this colourful Darwinism, and at the same time he is described in the same kind of terms we have seen applied to Axëi and to Duse, as personifying the art itself, a living symbol of Dandyism. D'Aurevilly traces back Dandyism beyond its English flourish during the Regency, and places its origins in the court of Charles II

63. Ibid, p. 161ff.

64. Ellen Moers, The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm, (London, Secker & Warburg, 1960), pp. 108-112, 124ff, 195-215.

where "Elegance returned to England...leaning on the arm of Corruption". Under the influence of France of course. This tracing-back of Dandyism to the seventeenth-century may prove an interesting one when we attempt to specify one of the main nostalgias of the Eighteen-Nineties later on in this thesis. At any rate d'Aurevilly is seeing Dandyism in the same terms as Pater's ideal figures. They are the enemies of Puritanism (though they can never get rid of their own original Puritanism), and they are "the product of a bored society", the present with its ennui. They "represent Caprice" in a classified and symmetrical society, hence they pay no attention to social rules but go their individual way. They "are the hermaphrodites of History", and thus they show their complete self-sufficiency and withdrawal into the self, like Axël. Like him also is their attitude to others: "kindliness is a sentiment unknown to Dandies", d'Aurevilly remarks. For "to be bored does not conduce to being kind".⁶⁵

Dandyism, then, is another phenomenon of the Eighteen-Nineties which corresponds with Symbolism insofar as it seeks to realise the absolute in oneself, except that its spiritual pride is of a more visible kind than that of an Axël. Yet its end is the same: self-exploration, living for those moments' sake, except the moments are those of cravat and collar, not of crime and incest; although it is the dandy's place to be a little on the side of the hermaphrodite, especially since otherwise they might be dressing up for the sake of women. That would never do: to follow the ideal, and get entrapped with the particular.

65. J.A. Barbey d'Aurevilly, Of Dandyism and of George Brummell, tr. Douglas Ainslie, (London, J.M. Dent & Co., 1897), pp. xxiii, 15, 37, 78, 80, 92, 141.

It is hard to think of any society reacting with complete seriousness to the pretensions of those who sought to embody ideals in art or in life in this manner, and indeed the Eighteen-Nineties were a period of quite exceptionally widespread literary parody. Some quite serious writers of the period took up arms against the atmosphere created by their literary contemporaries. John Davidson, one of the more prominent poets of the period, mocked at the general affectation of despair for the future that characterized so many of his contemporaries, in his A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender:

Though our thoughts turn ever Doomwards,
Though our sun is well-nigh set,
Though our Century totters tombwards,
We may laugh a little yet.

The laughter in Davidson's novel, though often laboured, is directed at the practitioners of the Symbolist mode of life. The hero, who chooses the title Earl de Lavender (with its distinct overtones of dandyism, not to say effeminacy), remarks of the name that "the more I consider it the more symbolic it appears".

Davidson is a shrewd commentator when he does not talk about himself and he sees that the pretensions of Symbolism to establish a correspondence between real and ideal are only fantastical. It is in the consideration of Earl Lavender himself that his name appears symbolic; there is no outer objective sign of its value as a binder together of the visible and invisible worlds. Indeed, Lavender's companion is not persuaded of the symbolic ideal the name represents. He has different ideas: "I should like to be called Plantagenet", he says. We note once again that the ideal pseudonym represents

not the inevitable verities only, but also, indeed instead of these, shows us the idealized past.⁶⁶

Earl Lavender, while it makes some shrewd hits, suffers from Davidson's faults of prolixity and laboriousness, faults which make his "Fleet Street Eclogues" unread and do nothing to give him a dynamic literary reputation today.⁶⁷ However, G.S. Street's The Autobiography of a Boy, while not a profound, is an attractively racy indictment of the fin-de-siècle milieu. The book is a mock-autobiography of a nameless decadent, who, Street remarks, while at Oxford was "In his first year...a severe ritualist, in his second an anarchist and an atheist, in his third wearily indifferent to all things..." When the "autobiography" gets into full swing, we hear the young decadent remark:

From a purely aesthetic point of view, there is much that is acceptable in the Church's ritual and surroundings. Why trouble about the import of her teachings? I never listen to them, or merely smile when some fragment of quaint dogmatism breaks in on my repose. But I love to sit in some old cathedral and fancy myself a knight of the middle ages, ready to die - dear foolish fellow! - for his simple faith.

This is a very shrewd hit at the decadent position: its nostalgia for the Church of past ritual, meaningless in religious terms to the writer concerned, but full of delightful pulsations. The caprice of the decadents and their false grandiosity is also sharply shown up by Street when he has his hero remark:

I hate philanthropists. Chiefly, of course, as a question of principle.

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66. John Davidson, A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender, (London, 1895), pp. iv, 18.
67. Vide John Davidson, The Poems, ed. Andrew Turnbull, 2 vols, (Edinburgh & London, Scottish Academic Press, 1973), I, p.194ff.

Once again the objectivity, the alignment with the absolute that these Paterians claimed is exposed as fatuous. The young man's principles are simple caprice.⁶⁸

Although Street does not appear to have any specific target in mind when attacking this young decadent of his own invention, he may well be concerned to satirize George Moore, whose Confessions of a Young Man appeared in 1888, some years before Street's book. In it Moore describes his exotic youth in France, "the only school of Art" as it is to him at the beginning of the book. In Paris he lived exotically in mind, and apparently outwardly also:

I bought a Persian cat, and a python that made
a monthly meal off guinea pigs...

He tells us that "Gautier...taught me that our boasted progress is but a pitfall" and that Baudelaire, "beautiful in sublime decay" set the seal upon a new conscience in Moore, that "of the pagan world... lust, cruelty, slavery". "I would have held down my thumbs in the Colosseum" Moore remarks, "that a hundred gladiators might die and wash me free of my Christian soul with their blood". "Depravities" in the legitimate sense are merely "a revolt against the commonplace". Naturally in the city of concierges and cafes there is not much room for this sort of thing without involving the gendarmerie, and so Moore does what we have so often seen being done, and places his fantasies in the past. "England was great and glorious" he says, "because England was unjust, and England's greatest son was the personification of injustice - Cromwell." We note again the tendency

68. G.S. Street, The Autobiography of a Boy, (London, John Lane, 1897), pp. x, 53, 77.

to see certain people as personifying a particular absolute, whether positive or negative. It is interesting that Moore looks to Cromwell rather than the more common idolization of Charles I in the period, a phenomenon to be discussed at length later. Perhaps it is because he is so staunchly "Protestant" rather than "Catholic" (inverted commas are used because Moore does not appear to have really believed) in his connections, unlike many Nineties poets. "When England ceases to be Protestant" he wrote:

...she will decline into the equivalent of
the poor Celt who worships his priest and
shoots his landlord.

Moore does not have much time for shooting landlords: he tends towards the reactionary side of symbolist absolutism proclaiming that "Art is the direct antithesis to democracy" and citing Athens. Limited franchise is apparently thus acceptable.

In this period of decadence, Moore writes "only a snobbery is left to save us". "Oh, vile, filthy, and hypocritical century, I at least scorn you" he tells us and inveighs against "Respectability". To him "the rescue and the individualisation of the ego is the first step", as with all Paterians; the concentration upon self. This is difficult in the present century:

But the past is a haven of rest -
The things of the past are best.

In the past nothing dies, nothing changes.
In the past all is lovely and still;
No grief nor fate that estranges
Nor hope that no life can fulfil,
But ethereal shelter from ill.

...We cry there and rest, there is rest
In the past, its joys are the best.

For all to be "lovely and still" is the longing for the absolute, rest in beauty, rest in perfection. It is the way of Axel, the "last curiosity" of Pater, and here Moore espouses it. But what kind of past is best? That question will be answered in full later, but Moore sees fit to give us some hints in his account of the movement that would later take place in the Nineties. Although he praises Gautier, Baudelaire and Huysmans, Moore admits that via Pater and De Quincey he "passed to the study of the Elizabethan dramatists, the real literature of my race, and washed myself clean of France". The pull of the past in English literature was strong: Moore admits to writing his comedy Worldliness "after a month's study of Congreve, Wycherley, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar". He shared that preceding period's own nostalgia; just as Lovelace wrote "Love in the First Age" in memory of vanished innocence, so Moore penned "Nostalgia" where "with weary hearts we long / For the dear old days of Arcady". Moore also used the theory of recurrence, with regard to the great age of England's drama. He writes:

...the miracle play rose through Peele and Nash to Marlowe, hence to the wondrous summer of Shakespeare, to die later on in the mist and yellow and brown of the autumn of Crowes and Davenants.

Moore believed that his too was a period of decadence, in step with the Caroline age that saw the decadence overcome by more than a "snobbery": by the 'personification of injustice' himself. That was what made England "great and glorious". Similarly today, only the exceptional man freed "of my Christian soul", endowed with "snobbery", can counteract the decadence. Superman is perhaps a candidate. Indeed Moore remarks that "Pity" is "that most vile of all vile

virtues". He describes Jesus as "the pale socialist of Galilee". This Nietzscheanism is Moore's answer to the decadence, in this instance apparently one of Respectability. But there were other decadences abroad. It is interesting that Moore sees the solution as similar to Cromwell's in the age he looked back on and admired. This minor novelist truly tried to be a modern pagan, a great Caesar giving the death sentence to gladiators. Such were the extravagances of the period's analyses and its solutions.⁶⁹

Even the progressive thought of the time was used by these writers to confirm their own opinions. Wilde himself, in his famous article "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", wrote that "Socialism would relieve us of that sordid necessity of living for others", a remark hardly in keeping with the Labour Party's Clause Four, although Wilde does have an ideological statement in hand to excuse himself from his attack on charity:

It is immoral to use private property in order to alleviate the horrible evils that result from the institution of private property.

Wilde, like the other writers of the time, saw individual self-realization as the great goal, hence "living for others" could only be a "sordid necessity".⁷⁰ "The new Individualism is the new Hellenism" after all;⁷¹ and in his preface to Dorian Gray, Wilde proclaims that "The highest, as the lowest form of criticism is a

69. George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, pp. 7, 40, 58, 66, 117, 118, 122, 141, 142, 146, 159, 160, 177, 188, 202, 211, 214, 217, 239.

70. Oscar Wilde, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", The Fortnightly Review, Vol. 55 (1891), pp. 292-319 (pp.292-93).

71. Ibid., p. 319.

mode of autobiography". In other words, standards of critical judgement are only self-referential, only part of the continuing process of self-realisation through self-exploration. Wilde is as much concerned as Pater to show that "the thick wall of personality" confines the relevance of artistic creation and judgement to the self, and hence since Art cannot be exported to the world,

All art is quite useless.

Useless, that is, on a utilitarian basis. Far from providing the greatest happiness for the greatest number Wilde sees art as providing happiness for one and one alone, the self. No wonder he detests charity; for his concept of art is the aesthetic equivalent of avarice.⁷²

This greed of the soul was of course not without its consequences in the lives of certain of the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties. Arguably it affected Wilde, for its manifestation in his sexual recklessness led to his undoing. Certainly it made its mark on Arthur Symons who suffered a nervous collapse in 1908 from which he never completely recovered. Far from Symbolism binding together the visible and invisible worlds in a stable correspondence, Symons's attitudes and beliefs during the period of his breakdown demonstrate the feverish height of subjectivity present in a completely self-referential account of events:

I may have said to myself, then, for all I know, with Gerard de Nerval: 'I attribute to myself an influence over the course of the moon, and I believe that this star had been struck by a thunderbolt of the Most High, which had traced on its face the imprint of the mask which I had observed.'

72. Oscar Wilde, The Complete Works, ed. Vyvyan Holland, New ed. (London and Glasgow, Collins, 1966), p. 17.

Even the stars wear masks in the strange visions of Symons in his breakdown. At first the doctors thought that he was suffering from general paralysis and consequently gave him little time to live. But he recovered, albeit slowly. In his Confessions he tells the story, which shows his hatred for the captivity of hospital, of which he seems to have been almost paranoically conscious. He describes it, as befits a writer of the period, in a metaphor of the past:

What do these huge prison walls symbolise?
 Captivity. Richard Lovelace - how beautiful
 a name for so wanton a lover! - was the
 Adonis of his generation; after wasting his
 substance in the recklessness of despair he
 died in extreme want, and in a cell.

Once more the figure looked back to is the personification of an absolute, this time Adonis. But there was no romantic end to Symons's captivity. He was released from hospital and lived till 1945, revising his critical opinions and bringing out mediocre books of poetry in the main. He felt that during his illness he had "drunk of the cup of dreams...the cup of eternal memory" as he believed that Gerard de Nerval had done, another past writer with whom Symons identified. But an illness such as Symons's was no very pleasant avenue by which to reach Symbolic truth. The "obscure and fatal initiation of madness" which he seemed to believe he shared with de Nerval weakened his communication with the outside world, not strengthened it. Yet if all art was quite useless, perhaps that was a sign of Symons's true initiation into the personal uncommunicative world of Symbolism.⁷³

73. Arthur Symons, Confessions: A Study in Pathology, (New York, The Fountain Press, 1930), pp. 17, 45, 88; Roger Lhombreaud, Arthur Symons: A Critical Biography, pp. 238, 244.

What happened to all these writers? The myth of the "Tragic Generation", those who died young in the search for the invisible Absolute beyond self in self, was fostered by W.B. Yeats. It is partly true, but not all these writers had died by the time the twentieth century was well under way. The famous dandy John Gray, who had signed his letters 'Dorian' in the early Eighteen-Nineties, and was pretty enough for the part, took one way out and became a Catholic priest.⁷⁴ As has been suggested above, religion is very closely aligned to the decadent life, being separated from it only by the invisible wall of commitment to God. To live every moment as if one is going to die is a Christian activity; but only if that life is dedicated not to self but to God. The ritual of Catholicism was the passageway many of the writers frequented between these two states: its ritual and hierarchy gave the sense of antiquity and beauty sought after. If they were concentrated on too heavily of course, one could forget about God, and some of the writers did just that; Pater used to attend Anglican services for their aesthetic value.⁷⁵ On the other hand the Catholic priesthood with its celibacy, gave an outlet for homosexuals to suppress their sexuality "in a good cause" so to speak. Brocard Sewell, Gray's most recent and distinguished biographer, suggests that this was partly the case with Gray.⁷⁶

74. Brocard Sewell, In the Dorian Mode: A Life of John Gray, (Padstow, Tabb House, 1983), p.15.

75. Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater, 2 vols (London, Everett & Co., 1907), Vol. I, pp. 206-208.

76. Brocard Sewell, In the Dorian Mode, p. 230.

In any event, he served in Orders for over thirty years and converted his dandyism in part to a sense of ritual; "a procession of one" as he was called at his Church in Edinburgh. He could still be Paterian enough to fantasise "about the minutiae of his own funeral", but the "Truth" he had found "hidden in the mirk / Of Symbol" was one outside himself that called on his service. His attitude to Society at large was very different from that of the typical Nineties poet:

Society...is something which God has built into human nature. It is the medium by which men are educated, kept alive, and sanctified - the medium in which Christianity circulates.⁷⁷

There is no retreat into the self here. Gray grew to glory in the natural over the artificial in art. Even in his days as a Nineties poet his range of sympathy with nature is always threatening to overpower his strict, aloof, and carefully-formed verse:

Amaranth fadeless, tells me of thy flesh.
Briar-rose knows thy cheek, the Pink thy pout.
Bunched kisses dangle from the Woodbine mesh.

I love to loll, when Daisy stars peep out,
And hear the music of my garden dell,
Hollyhock's laughter and the Sunflower's shout.⁷⁸

The symbols of nature are caught up and overcome by the delight in nature. Gray's delicate art and his gentle life are the type of the repentant Nineties poet. Perhaps he did not have the strength to be bad. He died in 1934.⁷⁹

77. Ibid., pp. 66, 93, 131, 133.

78. John Gray, Silverpoints (London, Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1893), vi.

79. Brocard Sewell, p. 188ff.

Richard Le Gallienne, who died in 1947 after an uncomfortable war in France refusing to give broadcasts on behalf of the Nazis,⁸⁰ was another typical figure of the Nineties, famous for his indulgent notices.⁸¹ However, although some of his prose-work carries the trappings of the contemporary style he was always opposed to the excesses of the decadent period. His nostalgia for the past, while present, was self-conscious enough not to ignore the demands of the present, even in his light verse:

Ah, Herrick, what a sight for thee!
Gone the tempestuous petticoat -
Tempestuous breeches now she wears,
And yes, thy Julia has a vote.⁸²

Le Gallienne was not an anomalous survival because he possessed the detachment to adapt to a changing society. Perhaps the most anomalous survival of all was W.B. Yeats, who was also the greatest. This thesis can have as little to do with Yeats as possible, or he would swallow the minnows swimming in its waters, but it is interesting that although he transformed his verse and its purposes after 1900, he retained certain elements of Eighteen-Nineties thought: literary and political nostalgia, magico-mysticism, belief in the "unknown instructors".⁸³ His ethical attitude towards the value of place and a landed aristocracy is strongly reminiscent of Ben Jonson, the "sterner conscience and a friendlier home" of Lady Gregory being Yeats's Penshurst. Jonson's relationship with Sir Philip Sidney's

80. Richard Whittington-Egan and Geoffrey Smerdon, The Quest of the Golden Boy, (London, The Unicorn Press, 1960), xv.

81. Cf. Desmond Flower and Henry Maas (eds.), The Letters of Ernest Dowson, (Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1967), p. 359.

82. Richard Whittington-Egan and Geoffrey Smerdon, The Quest of the Golden Boy, p. 32.

83. Cf. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p. 287.

family is paralleled in Yeats's "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" where the dead officer is "Our Sidney and our perfect man". Yeats's "household spies" who might surprise lovers in "A Woman Young and Old" is a phrase lifted from Volpone's song to Celia. There are more evidences of influence. Suffice it to say that Yeats also found many of his poetic values in the past, and also held a theory of recurrency in history, in a much more intellectualised form than that held by Symons. To Yeats also a poet writes "of his personal life", but Yeats's introspection was severely limited by his love for his friends, his country and history. When he stopped writing of what was within himself he started to write the poetry for which he is respected. The ladders to life outside led out of "the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart".⁸⁴

84. Ben Jonson, Works, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1947), vol. VIII, The Poems The Prose Works, pp. 73, 93, 102, 120.

W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, pp. 143, 148, 150, 308, 311, 392.

iv Opinion Is Not Worth a Rush

As we saw at the beginning of this discussion, much of the critical opinion directed at the period is beginning to be thought to be too prone to generalisation and too reductive of the problems of the Eighteen-Nineties. I have attempted to demonstrate that the "decadence" and its approaches to reality are not to be easily dismissed as a mere transitional phase en route to Symbolism. Indeed, Symbolism is merely a form of the decadence itself in my reading. The period's intellectual life is one of complexity, much of which remains to be discussed; but I have tried to provide wide-ranging and central examples of its main obsessions: the cult of the self and its neo-Epicureanism characteristic of Pater; the distaste for contemporary society; the flight to the past; the idealization of the ego; and the idealization of past figures who represent the ego at its most fulfilling (cf. Moore's comments on Cromwell). The alienation of the artists of the period from art as a means of social communication led to the intense glorying in it for its own sake; and "Art for its own sake" is more than a grandiose comment of aesthetic egotism - it is a statement of reactionary politics. As Moore said "Art is the direct antithesis to democracy".⁸⁵ The process of reaction in a temporal political scale is one of turning the clock back; hence the literary and political nostalgia of the writers of the period. The job of this thesis is to talk about that nostalgia in hitherto neglected terms: these are the terms of the English tradition.

85. George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, p. 122.

The previous criticism which has proved most fruitful in the area we are now attending to has been that based on theme criticism, although much of the best of this work has been done outside Britain - Mario Praz's classic The Romantic Agony was the first major work done in this field. The themes Praz chooses, the fatal woman, Satanism, Sadism, Byzantium and algolagnia are fine as far as they go, which is very far indeed. But then they are seeking to draw the confines within which the development of European Romanticism as a whole found its modes of expression. They are too large for the depiction of the purely English tradition in the Eighteen-Nineties. Moreover Praz does not explicitly articulate what I believe to be the crucial and over-riding theme of political and literary nostalgia.⁸⁶

"Cerebral lechery" is how A.J.L. Busst describes the androgyny common in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and this is a very acceptable way of describing the tendency of isolation of self towards an onanistic sexuality.⁸⁷ "Axel is of course, complete with the incest motif, a related example. I don't propose to discuss this theme at length because it plays a relatively smaller part in the literature of the Eighteen-Nineties in England than on the Continent. But certain themes are present throughout the period in all countries. A good example of recent criticism in one area is Tom Gibbons' 1973 book, Rooms in the Darwin Hotel, which analyses the period from the perspective of Darwinian thought:

86. Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony, ed. Frank Kermode, 2nd ed., (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970).

87. A.J.L. Busst, "The Image of the Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century", in Ian Fletcher (ed.), Romantic Mythologies, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 1-95 (p.39).

...the evolutionism of George Bernard Shaw's Man and Superman (1903), the pervasive imagery of cancerous social 'disorder' in H.G. Wells's Tono-Bungay (1909), the ironic use of Lombroso's notions of individual degeneracy in Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent (1907)...⁸⁸

are all examples that he gives. Degeneracy was the negative counterpart of evolution seized on quickly by scientists and pseudo-scientists, some of whom were quite respectable in their day; although Lombroso's and Nordau's conclusions on genius now seem perverse.⁸⁹ It was a convenient stick with which to beat the new generation of writers, and indeed anybody that the scientific commentator concerned did not like. But Gibbons is slightly unusual in following through the evolutionist strand in the period's literary thought:

Hyndman's Democratic Federation, Edmund Gurney's Society for Psychical Research, Mme Blavatsky's Theosophical Society...and many other associations of the same kind marked the coming of a great reaction from the smug commercialism and materialism of the mid-Victorian epoch, and a preparation for the new universe of the twentieth century.

Gibbons believes that the "obsession with 'decadence'...cannot be fully understood without reference to the framework of evolutionary thought..." Some of the above-listed organisations might be taken as evolutionary. Hyndman's Federation certainly, and possibly Gurney's Society. It is doubtful whether Theosophy was "a preparation for the new universe of the twentieth century". However, the seeming contradiction which may seem to be emerging between Gibbons's picture of these groups preparing for the future and our picture of a

88. Tom Gibbons, Rooms in the Darwin Hotel, (Nedlands, University of Western Australia Press, 1973), viii.

89. Cf. Max Nordau, Degeneration (London, William Heinemann, 1898), viiff; Cesare Lambroso, The Man of Genius (London, Walter Scott, 1891), v-vi.

backward-looking era may be solved when we consider the slightly odd way in which some writers of the early part of this century thought of evolution.⁹⁰ Gibbons quotes Orage as saying that "evolution" is in fact proceeding backwards, Orage is then quoted from The New Age:

Evolution...connotes in this age [1915], not the multiplication and outspread of human faculties, but their reduction by assimilation and intensification.

Formerly, he goes on to say

...the race sought properly the mouths of the streams of life. Since the Christian era, at any rate, the word of progress is to seek their sources...Our route homeward is therefore via the eighteenth century back to the seventeenth, and thence, if we are fortunate, to the still earlier centuries of our golden race.⁹¹

Here is backward-looking "evolution" indeed! Gibbons sees the late-nineteenth-century concept of evolution as a "purposive... Force". He associates it with the preserves of Symbolism, and its practioners who were involved in "turning their backs on the physical world". Evolution as a "purposive...Force", Gibbons sees as having tendencies to mysticism and occultism, which were ways of exploring in search of it. He links it with the immanent doctrines of God and with Neo-Platonism, which "now received the apparent support of the most up-to-date scientific thought". Apparently, just as Wilde used socialism as part of his élitist perspective so the writers of the time were using evolution against

90. Tom Gibbons, Rooms in the Darwin Hotel, pp. 1, 3.

91. Harold Orage, The New Age, XVII, 6 (10 June 1915), pp. 133-34.

science. The statements of Mead concerning Plotinus come to mind; that the age was in search of a "moderate mysticism" - scientific credibility might make it so. Gibbons supports Mead's statements as to the growth of interest in mysticism and the occult, and states that the "belief that the universe is essentially spiritual" is a doctrine held in common by many occultists:

Two of the most recurrent notions of the many 'occult philosophers' are essentially Neo-Platonic: they are (a) that the life or energy of God permeates all created things, visible and invisible, and (b) that earthly phenomena "correspond" to, i.e. are symbols or counterparts of spiritual realities.

Gibbons quotes the ubiquitous Gerard de Nerval in support. Evolution as a "force" then, becomes integrated with Neo-Platonic doctrines of God's energy, and Symbolist ones of "correspondence". The search for these "spiritual realities" though, remained as subjective as ever. But Gibbons does not think that these were anything but widely sought after:

...the élitism and occultism of W.B. Yeats were the reverse of unusual during the period under discussion.

The occult secret is one that the many cannot find; and so we are back in the preserves of reactionary politics.⁹²

Gibbons tries to analyse decadence through this mode of thought, and writes:

As far as I have been able to discover, it was the French poet, novelist and critic Paul Bourget (1852-1935) who first equated decadence in literature with decadence in the social structure.

92. Tom Gibbons, pp. viii, 2, 5, 10, 11.

His formula, Gibbons tells us, was "Excessive individualism".

Gibbons does not have much time for this, which he calls "Bourget's ludicrous equation of literary decadence with political individualism".

Nietzsche however, apparently agreed that "individual freedom" - widened to a political theory of equality - was the culprit.

Gibbons, I feel is being too dismissive. We have seen "excessive individualism" as precisely the malady from which the writers of the period liked to suffer. And yet there is a paradox in this analysis; that it was precisely the "Freedom of the individual" that the Axels of the world sought to annihilate. Axel does not care how many people his gold might feed. Decadence in this sense is not the "Freedom of the individual" in terms of "political rights", but precisely the opposite, "Freedom" in terms of total inequality. Some are free in castles, or castles of the mind at least, to pursue Symbolist truth. Others are but their servants who will perform their living for them or indulge them in their perversities.

Gibbons goes on to explore the near-sacramental claim for Symbolism made by Symons, and discusses the movement of the period's thought in terms of an evolutionary ideal which could simultaneously allow the intense looking back to the past of the period, and also the optimism of such statements as this one, taken from The New Age of 1909:⁹³

We are now standing.....at the cradle of a
second English Renaissance in Art, Literature,
and the Drama.⁹⁴

93. Tom Gibbons, pp. 30-31, 88ff.

94. Harold Orage, The New Age, IV, 19 (4 March 1909), p. 379.

Although his analysis is a good one, Gibbons really misses the sheer tension of the period. While catching hold of some of its more important thought-processes, he does not see the dilemma that existed between the need to hope for a new society and the having to hope for it in terms of the past when the present was becoming ever-more materialistically aggressive, in its full force. Gibbons does not see the period in terms of the "Tragic Generation", rather the reverse; it is only a time of changing artistic ideologies. In his conclusion he suggests that the "symbolist movement" might be "a new and severer kind of bondage" in some ways, but this is as far as it goes. Gibbons sees the paradoxes in his thorough theme-criticism, but the force of the "Romantic Agony" is missing. All in all, also I think, the evolutionary side-show of degeneracy was more directly important to the period than Darwinism itself. The Lombroso prison-hospital was more in evidence than the Darwin Hotel.⁹⁵

In my discussion of the period so far, I have attempted to outline the critical images of the nineties area, to look at what I see as their inadequacies and the real problems of the subject-matter, and to begin to explore the areas into which the pre-occupations of the time lead us. As the thesis progresses, I shall be enquiring into the area which seems to me to be one of the most important neglected ones: that of looking back to the past. Dealt with occasionally in terms of Victorian nostalgia for Greece and the medieval period, its implications are, I believe, far more wide ranging. I intend to concentrate on one area which proved

95. Tom Gibbons, p. 144.

especially fruitful in formulating the literary consciousness of the period: the Caroline age.

To conclude, much of the old style criticism is reductive, and much of the new, deflating as it is to the myth of the "Tragic Generation" fuelled by Yeats to glorify his contemporaries, over-reacts on the side of sanity. The period was not altogether sane and it looked forward to death as much as to a new world. Edith Sitwell said of the drowning of Sir Dennis Anson, one of the second generation of "The Souls" in 1912:

His death was a symbol of his generation, kind and coterie as similarly on a grand scale, the sinking of the Titanic had been a symbol of the approaching fate of Western Civilisation.

Thinking in symbols was evidently common. Just what kind of thought this is will be examined in detail when we come to look at decadence. It was certainly a way of thinking which as well as encouraging the egotism we have studied encouraged fatalism. Everything could be seen to be part of a pattern to be viewed in the reflected light of history. On being told of her son's death Julian Grenfell's mother said

Well they could do not more than die for their country - since the days of Athens.

The Hellenic images of the nineteenth century, images of an idealized past, carried on over to the First World War. The epitaph on a trench seen by John Buchan proclaimed: "The Devonshires held this trench. The Devonshires hold it still", a declaration based on Simonides' epitaph on the fallen Spartans at Thermopylae.⁹⁶

96. Angela Lambert, Unquiet Souls, (London, Macmillan, 1984), p.160; Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece, pp. 335, 337.

Of course the Hellenic ideal had its other side, as we see in Jenkyns's remark on J.A. Symonds:

Symonds turns all Greece into a fantasy of compliant innocent youth, submitting itself passively to the writer's salacious gaze.

Homosexuality found its contemporary symbols in androgyny, but its nostalgic symbols could be, and were, based in the Hellenistic age.⁹⁷

Together with the preoccupation with the past, the "distant world of...elegance and order" went the dislike of the present, turning often to alienation and ennui.⁹⁸ Carlyle called on history as a necessary aid to understanding; and John Stuart Mill noted a rise in nostalgia.

This was only the beginning, however. Historicism was the discipline, but nostalgia was the mood it created as it undermined faith by showing its development. The Higher Criticism was a form of this; developmental analyses undermined confidence in the unchangeability of seemingly authoritative modes of living and writing. Thus was "undermined":

...the ancient assumption that poetry is a variety of truth or knowledge, closer to philosophy than to history. In this its tendency was ever to compel critical attention back upon more specifically aesthetic criteria for the discussion of art and to liberate art from subservience to criteria more suitably applied elsewhere.

So art moved closer to Art for its own sake through the analytical abolition of its objective functions, truth or knowledge. It took refuge as we have seen, in mysticism and in the extreme artistic

97. Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece, pp. 225-26.

98. Ibid., p. 316.

egoism which walked hand in hand with the growing individualism of the later nineteenth century, save that this was a reactionary, not a radical individualism. History as Truth led back to history as poetry, for art deprived of its function as truth or knowledge fled to mysticism.⁹⁹ Recurrency was the kind of historical theory that forced art into the past to find traditions and kindred spirits, just as degeneracy was a theory that encouraged an idealized past. Material and analytic science was the present and hence the enemy. Rossetti "could not care whether the sun went round the earth or not, and turned away from all social and political questions to explore the byways of his own sensibility."¹⁰⁰ Pater said that "Hard and abstract moralities are yielding to a more exact estimate of the subtlety and complexity of our life" confirming the undermining processes of historicism and beginning to look for the solution in "our life", our selves.¹⁰¹ The rise of Ego anarchism which proclaimed that a single deed was worth more than a thousand pamphlets,¹⁰² was the political movement that corresponded to the beliefs of Axel, that "the rights which a man takes and keeps are all that he will ever have".¹⁰³ Moore's idealization of Cromwell and injustice, his hatred of respectability, are the counterparts

99. Peter Allan Dale, The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History: Carlyle, Arnold, Pater, (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 3, 255.

100. Graham Hough, The Last Romantics (London, Methuen, 1947), p.206.

101. Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, (London, Macmillan & Co., 1901), Works, Vol.V, p.67.

102. Barbara Tuchmann, The Proud Tower, (London, Macmillan, 1980), p.72

103. Villiers de L'Isle Adam, Axel, p.202.

to the cry "Il n'y a pas des innocents!"¹⁰⁴ But while the anarchists killed seven heads of state between 1890 and 1901, the writers dreamed reactionary dreams, and wrote in the "thousand pamphlets", or rather periodicals. Yet even anarchists were prey to the mysticism of the age.¹⁰⁵ Speaking of the decline of anarchism in Britain in the late 1890s, John Quail writes:

...the group fell a prey to mysticism and spiritualism and the comrades lost all their old time spirit and activity.

Ennui could even defeat revolutionaries.¹⁰⁶

In the next chapter, I want to discuss the main critical challenge to my identification of an English Tradition, one which will be defined as the thesis progresses. The widespread critical belief that the English Eighteen-Nineties was only "ennui", an echo of the Continent, particularly France, and not a movement significantly independent, deserves close attention. I shall be discussing the French claims in general, and with special reference to Walter Pater, who forms a key link between the standard interpretation of the period and the alterations I seek to make in it. To end this chapter comes a quotation from 1914 from Rupert Brooke to John Drinkwater, showing that the "last curiosity" of Pater was still prevalent among those who were really to be "The Tragic Generation":

Come and die. It'll be great fun.¹⁰⁷

104. Barbara Tuchmann, The Proud Tower, p. 93.

105. Ibid., p.72ff.

106. John Quail, The Slow Burning Fuse, (London, Granada Publishing, 1978), p. 221.

107. Angela Lambert, Unquiet Souls, p. 71.

Chapter II : THE FRENCH CONNECTION : Pater's Part

The man of England and the works of France

When his [Pater's] eyes fell on Magdalen tower he seemed to see Charles the First standing on the top watching the troops of Essex as they streamed from Abingdon over Sandford Ferry on that May morning of 1644.

Wright's Life of Pater.¹

To most persons of mind sensitive as his, his chosen studies would have seemed full of melancholy, turning always, as they did, upon death and decay.

Pater on Sir Thomas Browne²

"She is older than rocks among which she sits; / Like the Vampire/
She has been dead many times, / And learned the secrets of the
grave..." it is with these words that the poetry of The Oxford Book
of Modern Verse begins.³ Words which were not poetry as Pater
wrote them, but became so under the editorship of Yeats. Yeats took
them from their status as prose to demonstrate their seminal influence
on the poetry that followed in his book, full of his friends, and
"tavern comrades" of the Eighteen-Nineties.⁴ They came from Pater's

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1. Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater, 2 vols. (London, Everett & Co., 1907), vol.II, p.138. I am aware of this biography's unreliability as regards much of Pater's life, but will be using it on a limited basis since it is a contemporary source.
 2. Walter Pater, The Works in 8 vols, Appreciations with an Essay on Style, (London, Macmillan, 1901), Vol.V, p. 134.
 3. W.B. Yeats (ed.), The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1936), p.1.
 4. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, 2nd ed. (London, Macmillan, 1950), p. 116.

description of Leonardo da Vinci's La Gioconda, and are perhaps the most famous words he wrote, but in common with much of his writing say far more about his own interests than da Vinci's. We have already seen Pater's intense subjectivity at work, the conversion of the past to a backdrop for ennui-laden aesthetics; here we see his main interests together, age, death, "the secrets of the grave" and vampirism that goes with them. Most of Pater's heroes act as if they had had a dose of vampiric attention, with their anaemic drifting and early deaths. Any careful reading of Pater will show us why; they are drained of character to intensify an apprehension of their surroundings, of the aesthetic content of this particular "imaginary portrait".⁵ Lionel Johnson thought of Pater that

...he is a literary vampire, sucking the life
and poetry out of the heart of every man he meets.⁶

The "life and poetry" that was in the heart of a real Winckelman or da Vinci is replaced by Pater's image of the man and his work. The past, the "secrets of the grave", are drained and replaced by a picture, a sensation, an impression. Pater writes in his essay on Giorgione of the "'imaginative reason', that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol".⁷ Pater's own "imaginative reason" encounters the art of Giorgione or Michelangelo; what he leaves us is its symbol, its subjective rendering in his own terms, drained of the

5. Walter Pater, Imaginary Portraits and Gaston de Latour, Works, Vol. IV.

6. Cf. Thomas Wright, The Life of Water Pater, Vol. II, p. 156.

7. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, Works Vol. I, p. 138.

life of its artist and period, and filled instead with Pater's own. The past becomes the present dressing as the past. Here is Pater writing of Michelangelo:

Michelangelo is so ignorant of the spiritual world.....of all that range of sentiment, he is the poet, a poet still alive, and in possession of our inmost thoughts - dumb inquiry over the relapse after death into the formlessness which preceded life, the change, the revolt from that change, then the correcting, hallowing, consoling rush of pity; at last, far off, thin and vague, yet not more vague than the most definite thoughts men have had through three centuries on a matter that has been so near their hearts, the new body - a passing light, a mere intangible external effect, over those too rigid, or too formless faces; a dream that lingers a moment, retreating in the dawn, incomplete, aimless, helpless; a thing with faint hearing, faint memory, faint power of touch; a breath, a flame in the doorway, a feather in the wind.⁸

Now what are we to make of this "mere intangible"? Michelangelo is "in possession of our inmost thoughts", and what thoughts are these? We are told in a passage that bears some resemblance to a stream-of-consciousness page in a novel; "intangibility", "vagueness", "passing light", "incomplete", "faint", "feather in the wind". And what does all this vagueness concern? "The most definite thoughts men have had through three centuries on...the new body." Michelangelo is credited with belief in immortality only through "the consciousness of ignorance". Yet he also deals "cautiously and dispassionately" with these "serious things", concern with which he apprehends through "wistful speculation". Now apart from all the questions these beg concerning Michelangelo's thought processes, it would seem perhaps hard to be conscious of ignorance concerning immortality and at the

8. Ibid., p. 96.

same time to examine the subject "cautiously and dispassionately" while indulging in "vague speculation". Michelangelo, Pater remarks is "the disciple not so much of Dante as of the Platonists".⁹ But Platonism has little to do with conscious ignorance or vague speculation (in the eyes of its adherents at least). Pater makes Michelangelo intellectually incoherent. The descriptions of his thoughts are disconnected and highly impressionistic, and the details of "the new body" are unashamedly Pater's own. There are far more of them than there is of Michelangelo in this passage. The "dream that lingers a moment" is what is important to Pater here, "for those moments' sake".¹⁰

Michelangelo, like La Gioconda, is an image of Pater's concerns, and a canvas for his dreams. It may be said that many other critics of the period were highly impressionistic; but what Pater has is an insistency of tone, an imposing mind, and a rendering of a message. His "Conclusion" powerfully states nothing about the literature and painting under discussion, and everything about the way he views it, and in viewing it, claims to view life and death.¹¹

After The Renaissance, as we saw in the last chapter, Pater begins to invent the messenger as well as the message, and uses figures like Marius and Gaston rather than real artists. The religious home of Marius is death, as it is for Emerald Uthwart. Yeats put Pater's famous passage into verse, because of his "revolutionary importance" for his generation. For Pater, the

9. Ibid., p. 95

10. Ibid., pp. 95, 96, 239.

11. Ibid., p. 233ff.

journey to death was the chief legacy he had left behind him.¹² In Pater's world of "somewhat mortified" "beauty", he loosed the past from the constraints of a moral influence accorded it by Arnold,¹³ and changed it to an atmosphere wherein moved his restless images of men in search of death or dreaming of a stagnant beauty. This was his contribution to the English tradition at this point; he contributed to the use of the past as an agent for the concerns of the present, the "definite thoughts...through three centuries" he speaks of in his essay on Michelangelo. In statements like these, he claims that Michelangelo shares the thoughts that are his own. For Pater, the past is not idealized to liberate the present, as with Arnold and Morris and, to some extent, Tennyson; it is moulded into the form of a larger prison wherein sits the La Gioconda of the imagination, renewing herself by emptying the past of content and resupplying it with the concerns of "her fallen day", the *décadence*.

This is how I interpret Pater's role in the events of the period which are under discussion. He is not a major part of the interest in the Caroline period which will be looked at shortly, but he is important insofar as he is symptomatic of the age as it has been already discussed. He also is more than symptomatic in that he is one of the chief exemplars of the literary nostalgia gaining ground at the time. It is because of his overall status in relation to the period that I wish to use him to open the ensuing discussion of the influence of French literature on the period as a whole. I am doing

12. W.B. Yeats (ed.), The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, viii.

13. Walter Pater, Appreciations with an Essay on Style, Vol. V, p. 134; Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, ed. J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 129ff.

this because the Eighteen-Nineties has suffered from generalisation, not only concerning the interests and attitudes of its writers, as Linda Dowling points out, but also by its over-relation to the literature of France.¹⁴ George Moore had written that "France is the only school of Art",¹⁵ and despite his reservations on French literature already discussed, this view of the period has persisted to the present day. A recent critic writes of Lionel Johnson as an "ardent.....disciple of Huysmans" (admittedly Belgian!).¹⁶ Le Gallienne is reported by Christophe Campos to have half-hoped "that England would be conquered by France one day".¹⁷ Enid Starkie writes that

...during the first half of the nineteenth century, the most vital currents in French literature came from Britain; but, during the second half, the stream flowed the other way, and French culture impregnated English literature - this influence continued, uninterrupted, until the advent of the Second World War.¹⁸

Now, I have no wish to deny all this. The influence of France and French literature, of realism and naturalism and symbolism as

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14. Linda Dowling, Aestheticism and Decadence: A Selective Annotated Bibliography, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities Vol.82, (New York, Garland, 1977), xiii.
 15. George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, (New York, Capricorn Books, 1959), p.7.
 16. E. Davis, Yeats's Early Contacts with French Poetry, Communications of the University of South Africa, (Pretoria, 1961; the Folcroft Press, 1970), p.46.
 17. Christophe Campos, The View of France from Arnold to Bloomsbury (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 163.
 18. Enid Starkie, From Gautier to Eliot (London, Hutchinson, 1960), p. 122.

artistic doctrines, was great, and is well-documented. All that this thesis seeks to do is to change the proportions of the analysis, which have suffered overly from generalisation. Few of the ideas of the period, yes, even literary nostalgia and the idea of recurrence, were English, or English alone; but they helped to unearth a rich vein of the past which was most influential on the period. This is the vein we are mining for; the English tradition and its balance of influence with the French invasion, some of whose legacy we shall also examine and find to be not quite so French after all. But Pater will be discussed first, not because of his place in the scheme of the thesis so much as because of his importance in the period.

J.J. Conlon writes of Pater in his Walter Pater and the French Tradition, that he had "a lifelong concern for French culture", and says that

Beginning with... 'Diaphaneite'... Pater inaugurated a systematic application of the ideas and theories he had gathered from predominantly German and French sources.¹⁹

What were these ideas? We have already seen that on the Germanic side it was Hegel whom Pater took as a model for his view of the developmental nature of history (although developmental only in a spiritual sense). As for the French sources, Conlon sees Gautier and Baudelaire as having similar critical postures to Pater, and sees Michelet and Sainte Beuve as "French writers" who "played a large part in molding Pater's perspectives on literature, art, and culture...". Pater in this interpretation is "serving as interlocutor

19. J.J. Conlon, Walter Pater and the French Tradition, (Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 1982), p.17.

between nineteenth-century French Romanticism and Victorian England". Conlon believes that Pater sought in France and French literature parallels for his own time, and that French literature was thus, by implication, an important part of his reconstruction of the past. According to Conlon, Pater sees the Renaissance and twelfth-century France as times in "close rapport with his own". He adopts certain of the aesthetic habits postulated about these periods to make the similarity closer.²⁰ Conlon writes of Michelet on Abelard as "L'inspiration ecclésiastique, ayant produit son symbole, son rituel et sa légende",²¹ and ecclesiastical symbolism was very important to Pater, who begins the passage quoted above on Michelangelo with a scene set in "the sacristy of San Lorenzo".²² It is the aesthetic in Christianity which attracts Marius, as it attracted the Brasenose tutor who wished to be ordained while being almost an unbeliever.²³

Conlon sees Pater as borrowing the concept of decadence in relation to the Pléiade from Saint Beuve, saying that he "differs from Sainte Beuve in that he viewed the *décadence* positively and the French critic was offended by it". It is true that the writing about "decadence" at this time largely came from France, but Conlon's evidence for associating Pater with Sainte Beuve is not conclusive; indeed he says that the influence was most likely only, which becomes

20. Ibid., pp. 11, 37, 48-52, 62, 85, 90.

21. Ibid., p.58

22. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 95.

23. Walter Pater, The Works, Vol. III, Marius the Epicurean Vol.II, p. 110ff; Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater, Vol.I, p.201.

further attenuated when he comes to discuss "Baudelaire's shadowy influence upon Pater". Alluding to Baudelaire's and Pater's criticism he writes that "Pater was in Baudelaire's debt for a great deal more than has been previously imagined".²⁴ It would not be easy to deny the influence of Baudelaire on Pater, or indeed on much writing of the latter part of the nineteenth century. But there are two main questions to be asked. Firstly, how far would such an influence be due to Baudelaire's stature irrespective of nationality, to leave aside specifically French claims. Secondly, how far does Pater actually accept Baudelaire's critical precepts? Selfishness, sacrilegious pleasure and the pursuit of lust are not a great part of Pater's critical ethic, and explicitly no part at all;²⁵ yet G. Turquet-Milnes in the definitive The Influence of Baudelaire in France and England names the latter two as "elements which constitute the Baudelairian spirit", as also he names the "faculty of self-analysis and torment in love" and "moral anarchy, overwhelming pessimism and terrible solitude of the soul". Well, there is little love in Pater, or moral anarchy (at least explicitly). Pessimism is again not "overwhelming". And since Turquet-Milnes characterizes Baudelairian "sacrilegious pleasure" from Saint Beuve's Volupté, it appears that Pater is doubly non-indebted on this point. The "pursuit of sensation" belongs to Pater, but it also belongs to more poets than Baudelaire.²⁶

24. J.J. Conlon, pp.47, 55, 69, 85, 90.

25. Cf. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, pp. 30ff; p.233ff.

26. G. Turquet-Milnes, The Influence of Baudelaire in France and England, (London, Constable & Co., 1913), pp.14, 17.

There is some doubt then. But A.G. Lehmann in The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895 serves only to compound this doubt. He speaks of Baudelaire's "mystical foundation" for symbolism,²⁷ a little unlike Pater's "imaginative reason",²⁸ although possibly both have in common more elements than mere vocabulary might illustrate, but more tellingly he says that:

Baudelaire's aesthetic stands fairly and squarely against the pre-eminence of music. And in this respect it is a useful support for what was eventually to be the symbolists' replacement of music as supreme art by poetry.²⁹

Now this is surely most unlike Pater, who quite clearly tells us that "Music.....is the true type or measure of perfected art".³⁰ This is surely a most un-Symbolist thing to say, and a major difference from a stand which is "fairly and squarely" in the opposite direction. I am not trying to prove that Pater never read Baudelaire, far less that he was not influenced by him. But what I am trying to show here is that this influence cuts in and out at a sub-ideological stage; that Baudelaire did not dominate the formulation of Pater's ideas. And this is surely quite important, since J.J. Conlon says that Pater was serving as "interlocutor". With regard to Baudelaire at least, he was his own man.

27. A.G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1968), p. 53.

28. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 138.

29. A.G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895, p. 220

30. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 139.

Conlon sees Pater's uses of historical parallels very clearly, however. Throughout "Pater draws correspondences" "Antoninus is likened to Montaigne" and "Apuleius is likened to Théophile Gautier and others"; to name two examples. But he lets us know that the parallels used were not always, or even in a majority of cases, French ones:

Pater assumed the pose of a classicist relating one era to another, tracing similarities, for example, in the work of Plato, Michelangelo, and Hugo, and in the Greek, Renaissance, and Romantic tempers.³¹

This re-creation of history in terms of parallels is not a specifically French one or even largely based on French influence. When writing on style, Pater did think of "writing English...the way 'the French write' ", but he also thought of English style in "the way the Romans wrote Latin", and he pleaded "for a Victorian style as typical of his age as the 'impossible Queen Anne' and 'incondite, exuberant Elizabethan' were to their ages". Again on style, Pater writes of prose as

...a coloured thing with Bacon, picturesque with Livy or Carlyle, musical and intimate with Plato and Michelet and Sir Thomas Browne, exalted or florid, it may be, with Milton and Taylor.³²

These are by no means all French examples. And although Pater called Flaubert "the martyr of a literary style" as Conlon notes,³³ is it therefore legitimate to claim with Conlon that

31. J.J. Conlon, pp. 48, 49, 98.

32. Ibid., p. 88; Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, p. 6.

33. J.J. Conlon, p. 120; Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, p. 27.

Flaubert's work provides a valuable clue to the source of Pater's "formula" for his Portraits: each is based upon the contemporary unveiling of some ancient mystery through the discovery of artistic or skeletal remains.³⁴

Possibly, inferentially possibly. But whereas with Baudelaire it was the content of the criticism that was seen to be influential, with Flaubert, it is style. This is also tricky ground; just how far is the "formula" of the Portraits traceable to Flaubert? And if they are, is it not in the last resort a minor point? For it is the substance of Pater's recreative nostalgia that is at issue here. Flaubert also was a great writer. Yet neither with Flaubert or Baudelaire can Conlon show Pater acting as a mere "interlocutor". Pater's ideas and theories are not merely applied to Baudelaire as we have seen; and Conlon does not suggest that it is Flaubert's ideas, or even a consistent theory, that Pater is borrowing. The "netteté remarquable d'exécution" Pater found in all the French arts may give him his "ideals of clarity and mysticism",³⁵ but it does not give him all of them, nor even their substance. And in his tracing of parallels and influences he does not depend on French writers, although he uses them. Conlon quotes D'Hengest on Pater's followers of the Eighteen-Nineties, Wilde, Sharp, Johnson, Dowson et al. that:

Tous sont largement ouverts aux influences contemporaines françaises, aux messages qui leur parviennent de Baudelaire, et, plus récemment, de Verlaine, de Huysmans, ou de Mallarmé.³⁶

34, J.J. Conlon, p. 109.

35. Ibid., pp. 34, 63.

36. Ibid., p. 106.

That "largement" is, I believe, a mixture of possible chauvinism and certain generalisation. In the case of Pater also, whatever he wrote of Ronsard and Watteau, whether he borrowed the idea of the decadence from Sainte-Beuve or not, it seems to me that Mr. Conlon can only in the end claim so much; and that so much does not amount to Pater standing on a French tradition. His was more than the "task of explaining French prose and criticism". Mallarmé said of Pater: "J'y sais le prosateur ouvrage par excellence de ce temps".³⁷

For example, in "Emerald Uthwart", the hero himself is connected to specifically English experiences; his "intellectual awakening" sprouts at Oxford into a love for the city and the University's connection with the Civil War. His love of the "half-romantic places" latches on to the disorder in ceremony and worship which accompanied that war; he is disturbed by its events and its remains. The style may be Merimée's, as Conlon points out,³⁸ but the substance is Pater's own and will be of further interest in the context of this thesis.³⁹

Conlon introduces Pascal towards the end of his discussion as the "standard against which Pater measured the ideals of Amiel and of Thomas Browne". Fair enough; but surely the "soul's invisible province" which Pascal was interested in is what attracts Pater; surely the substance of Pascal's interests are of rather more importance than the fact that the man himself was French.⁴⁰

37. J.J. Conlon, p. 139.

38. Ibid., p. 144.

39. Walter Pater, Miscellaneous Studies, Works, Vol. VIII, pp.219, 228.

40. J.J. Conlon, pp. 155, 156.

Conlon chooses to say that:

Another obvious implication of his study of Pascal is Pater's ultimate orientation towards France. Pater's thought, his critical and stylistic theories, and a major portion of his knowledge could only be characterized as 'French'.⁴¹

Pater himself had agreed with Moore's characterization of Paris as the New Athens by calling "the French...the Greeks of our contemporary world".⁴² That there was an admiration of them and influence by them on the part of both writers among others it would be wrong to deny. But the way Conlon argues is by the generalizing route too often travelled when discussing the period. Pater's admiration of Pascal is characterized as "ultimate orientation". The influence of Baudelaire is seen as "shadowy", but nevertheless it can be confidently stated that Pater is in Baudelaire's debt "for a great deal". Flaubert's style is seen as influencing Imaginary Portraits and Conlon also says that "Emerald Uthwart" can be compared with Madame Bovary in its "scientific and medical realism".⁴³ Yet can we say that these influences, if influences they are, render Pater an "interlocutor", an interpreter of France for the England of his time? Surely not, for as we have seen in the case of Baudelaire, what influences there were appear to operate below the level of artistic argument. What Pater is actually saying is often removed from Baudelaire, sometimes standing in direct contradiction to him. Likewise the influence of Flaubert is seen as stylistic only. Ideas like "decadence" regarding the Pléiade

41. J.J. Conlon, p. 162.

42. Ibid., p. 147

43. Ibid., pp. 85, 90, 109, 144, 162.

may or may not have been culled from Sainte Beuve, but once again "decadence" is too widespread a concept in the late nineteenth century to allow Pater to be a mere amanuensis of French interpretation. By the quotations he himself makes from Pater, Conlon shows his subject's interest in styles which are Roman and English as well as French, and parallelism which is not entirely given over to rendering the spirit of the age in France. Rather they are used by Pater to show something about his own age; his customary use of other cultures. To sum up, while no one can disagree with Pater's high level of contact with, and interest in, arts across the Channel, the process of critical attention which leads from discussion to inferential proof to the categorical claims of "ultimate orientation", and "could only be characterized as French" is to be deplored. It is impressionistic in its categories, and gives us a sketch for a one-dimensional vision only. The present discussion is not intended to give that vision whole; but only to demonstrate that there are other dimensions, while never doubting the full-frontal attraction of French influence which has cast the rest in shadow for so long. The "refined and comely decadence" that with the poetry of du Bellay Pater believed that the Renaissance was "putting forth in France", is only one aspect of the totality of parallelism and literary nostalgia. Pater used as a backdrop for the exploration of his own soul, the souls of his heroes and the soul of his age.⁴⁴

Another aspect, for example, occurs in Pater's discussion of Sir Thomas Browne. Speaking of him, Pater says:

44. J.J. Conlon, pp. 55, 88, 162; Walter Pater, The Renaissance, xii.

To most persons of mind sensitive as his, his chosen studies would have seemed full of melancholy, turning always, as they did, upon death and decay. It is well, perhaps, that life should be something of a 'meditation upon death': but to many, certainly, Browne's would have seemed too like a lifelong following of one's own funeral.⁴⁵

"A lifelong following of one's own funeral". How like the dedication of Pater's own heroes this is. The strands of thought that Pater identifies in Browne are those that Pater seems to share; and for once, the subject may not be completely distorted by the Paterian analysis. For Browne's thoughts do turn on death, and the "last curiosity" is very much a part of the mental processes of Religio Medici, and even more so of Hydriotaphia and works like Brampton Urns.⁴⁶ Pater, a little more subjectively perhaps, writes of Browne as possessing "some inward Platonic reality" of the institutions which suffered in the Civil War period. Here his apprehension is likened to Michelangelo's, except there is less of the "wistful speculation" and more of the "reality" in the way Pater sees Browne's Platonism.⁴⁷ Yet Browne to Pater is obeying the Paterian rule, in keeping "solitary prisoner" his "dream of a world",⁴⁸ and it is little surprise when we meet another passage that identifies the two writers in their interests:

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45. Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, p. 134.
46. Sir Thomas Browne, The Works, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, new ed., 4 vols, (London, Faber and Faber, 1964), pp. 11ff, 129ff, 233ff; Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 129.
47. Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, p. 132; The Renaissance, p. 95.
48. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 235.

...to Browne the whole world is a museum; all the grace and beauty it has being of a somewhat mortified kind. Only, for him...over all...there was the perpetual flicker of a surviving spiritual ardency, one day to re-assert itself - stronger far than any fancied odylic gravelights.⁴⁹

The two passages above are probably the closest that Pater came to self-characterization in one of his critical subjects. Pater's studies are "full of melancholy", turning upon "death and decay". His heroes follow their own funerals. To Pater, "the whole world is a museum"; a statement which accurately characterizes his use of the past as an extended backdrop to the concerns of the present, drained with its own life and filled with his, lifeless apart from him. These museum exhibits are of mortified beauty.⁵⁰ As Conlon puts it:

Pater's desire of physical beauty mingled itself [with] the fear of death - the fear of death intensified by the desire of beauty.⁵¹

Would not this lead us to enjoy beauty more keenly? Not Pater, whose ideals of beauty are frequently static, mortified yet living, combining death and life, like La Gioconda. And yet, for heroes like Marius, there is "the perpetual flicker of a surviving spiritual ardency" that motivates them enough to look for death that in Pater's terms is the last resting-place of the beautiful.⁵²

Pater saw in Browne, who lived "in an age stirred by great causes, like the age...of Montaigne" the closest mirror to his own

49. Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, p. 134.

50. Ibid.

51. J.J. Conlon, p. 96.

52. Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style; Works, Vol. V, p. 134.

interests, and indeed his style is not without its debts to Browne's mordant ardency. He quotes Browne saying that "all existence...had been but food for contemplation", and of his reactions to Anglicanism, Pater says "How English, in truth, all this really is".⁵³ Browne is an English aspect to Pater's comparisons and identity, and perhaps because there was in Browne a little bit of the real "last curiosity", Pater found it easier to convert him into a subject for sympathetic appraisal. For Flaubert "the form was the work itself",⁵⁴ but despite a statement of such comprehensiveness, it was the substance of attitude that Pater sought, and Browne was one place where we can see in Pater's words his own reflection.

Pater's early, if inaccurate, biographer, Thomas Wright, tells us more about Pater's sympathies. When he was young, Pater's "great idol" was "Richard Hooker". While acknowledging debts to Gautier in theory ("to seek out beauty for itself with a complete impartiality") and Flaubert as a "Literary model", Wright acknowledges Pater's reading of and love for Plato and Plotinus, and more tellingly Jeremy Taylor, Vaughan, and Sir Thomas Browne.⁵⁵ Pater makes his own admiration of the seventeenth-century stylists clear when he writes of Evelyn "and the like - which bring the influence and charm of a visible countenance to the dry tenour of ordinary history".⁵⁶ Pater himself tried to do no less, and his dual fascination with the past and the journey of the soul to death found its home in Vaughan

53. Ibid., pp. 128, 129, 131.

54. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 129; Appreciations With an Essay on Style, p. 37.

55. Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater, Vol. I, pp. 107, 230; Vol. II, pp. 61, 62, 116.

56. Walter Pater, Essays from the Guardian (London, Macmillan, 1901) p. 74.

and Browne, both of whom, thought Pater, "trace the soul backwards and forwards", as he himself was trying to do, by transferring the concerns of the present to second-century Rome; by transferring images across the ages, and drawing parallels.⁵⁷ Browne also, writing of the Roman urns, transfers images of the soul and death to a contemporary setting, and muses on these objects of the past as Pater muses upon its artists and societies.⁵⁸

It was natural that such a conscious prose stylist as Pater should have turned to the great stylists of English as well as to France for his style; writers like Browne and Evelyn. But also these writers of an era of turmoil, of "great causes", seem to reflect to Pater much of his own interest in the vista of the past and the journey of the soul.⁵⁹ Pater's fiction, criticism and ethic relate to his perceptions about Browne, for example, directly; Pater finds himself in Browne. He took a keen interest in the historical associations of the places round him, and in Oxford he had an especial interest in the time of "great causes", the Civil War. So French (vide supra) a story as "Emerald Uthwart" finds its processes of self-discovery in that period:

Uthwart about his seventeenth year...felt it [intellectual awakening]...like the pressure outward of wings within him - ἡ πτεροῦ συνάμιξις, says Plato, in the Phaedrus.

The "power of the wing" is a phenomenon in Pater's analysis of young men and their intellectual growth: it is a description

57. Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater, Vol. II, p. 150.

58. Sir Thomas Browne, The Works, Vol. I, p. 155ff.

59. Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, p. 128.

symptomatic of the heroes of the period's fictions and realities, who believed that power resided in self, and it became a metaphor, interestingly enough, for the achievements of the poets of the Cavalier period in the Eighteen-Nineties, especially in the hands of Alice Meynell. The metaphor of "wings" extends right from Pater to Yeats in its suggestion of spiritual or intellectual power without limits.⁶⁰ But what does Uthwart awake to? His awakening in the end is to the military life which he fails in, since he is as ill-fitted for it as most Paterian heroes. But since he is an intellectual, awakening to the power of the wing, he seeks the military in an academic context, Oxford. What Uthwart

...reads most readily is of the military life that intruded itself so oddly, during the Civil War, into these half-monastic places, till the timid old academic world scarcely knew itself.⁶¹

Like the academic world, Uthwart does not know himself, since he ventures into the army with more adventure than discipline. While still at Oxford, he, like Pater who saw "Charles the First" "on Magdalen tower",⁶² sees history in all the monuments around him.

He [Uthwart] treasures then every incident which connects a soldier's coat with any still recognisable object, wall, or tree, or garden walk; that walk, for instance, under Merton Garden where young Colonel Windebank was shot for a traitor. His body lies in Saint Mary Magdalen's churchyard.

60. Walter Pater, Miscellaneous Studies, p. 219; P.M. Fraser (ed.), The Wares of Antolycus: Selected Literary Essays of Alice Meynell, (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 22.

W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, pp. 147, 235, 274, 275.

61. Walter Pater, Miscellaneous Studies, p. 228.

62. Cf. note 1.

Uthwart dreams of "the days when the Puritans destroyed the Dean's 'Great Hall' ", but it is not the path of destruction he follows.⁶³ Like Sir Thomas Browne, who thought "Cromwell... a usurper, the death of Charles an abominable murder",⁶⁴ he is destined to be on the loyal side, although he dies for it. Colonel Windebank is his archetype: the young soldier who dies at the hands of his own side for a marginal betrayal of orders. Windebank and Uthwart are parallel: although Uthwart is not executed, but reprieved, he turns to lassitude and death.⁶⁵ Here we see Pater tying together past and present. The Civil War was the time when the military life came into the civil, as the name given to the war itself would suggest. It provides the parallel of a soldier dying in an atmosphere that enthralls Uthwart and prefigures his own death. His addiction, like Pater, to past events, is specified:

...the mere beauty of the place counted at the moment far less than in retrospect. It was about retrospect even now, with an anticipation of regret...

Retrospect is all. The "anticipation of regret" is the sense of loss Uthwart will feel when he is called away from the recall of past history to the modern duties of the army, for failing in which he is to lose his purpose for living.⁶⁶

Uthwart is another cipher for Pater, "who took interest... particularly in those [historical associations] of a soldiering art",

63. Walter Pater, Miscellaneous Studies, p. 228.

64. Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, p. 130.

65. Walter Pater, Miscellaneous Studies, p. 240ff.

66. Ibid., p. 228.

and had an intense interest in Milton and his haunts which could centre in the Civil War period. Pater went over No.19 York Street, Petty France, where Milton had resided in 1651 as a result of this "intense interest".⁶⁷ For Pater, who loved Burton and Montaigne, Taylor and Browne, the age of "great causes" that the Civil War represented, the era when Oxford was intruded upon by military causes, this age was one of the parallels he drew with the troubled present. Uthwart is to die as Windebank once died, for disobeying orders. His mind and his militarism are to him fused in Oxford at the time of the Civil War, where he looks back to great military events, as Pater was to do also. Besides, France, the Caroline period, and especially the period of the Civil War, is one invaluable to Pater for constructing parallels and analysing themes. Indeed he himself died shortly after refusing to write an introduction to Antony a Wood's Life of Lovelace, for which he did not have time.⁶⁸ The "last curiosity" of Uthwart and Pater alike was based on beauty and that beauty they found in this age of "great causes" in action and morbid beauty in art, in the War of Charles and Cromwell and in the strange prose of Sir Thomas Browne, "full of melancholy".⁶⁹

In his studies of Plato also, Pater sees the "immutable" theories of the Greek philosopher as having parallels in the seventeenth century. In Plato and Platonism, he seeks to "blend...Pythagorean

67. Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater, Vol.II, p.138.

68. Lawrence Evans (ed.), Letters of Walter Pater (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970), p.150.

69. Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, pp.128, 134.

doctrines with the Christian belief" and quotes Vaughan's "The Retreat" in support of this blending. Elsewhere he writes:

Summing up these three philosophies antecedent to Plato, we might say, that if Heraclitus taught the doctrine of progress, and the Eleatics that of rest, so, in such quaint phrase as Vaughan's, Pythagoreanism is the philosophy of re-action.

Vaughan is blended in with Pater's analysis of Greek philosophy as Browne is with the way Pater regards melancholy, and as the Civil War is with the mental growth of Emerald Uthwart. These writers and their period are seen as interpretative intermediaries in the total scheme of Pater's self-analysis, and his analysis of art.⁷⁰

Another example occurs in Pater's discussion of Heraclitus:

Heraclitus had preferred the "dry soul", or the "dry light" in it, as Bacon after him the siccum lumen [in love]. And the dry beauty, - let Plato teach us, to love that also, duly.⁷¹

Bacon is, like Heraclitus, one who crystallizes the possibilities for the interpretation of beauty, the interpretation that Pater is most of all striving for. They are there to "teach us", as is Plato, the values of the past that need to be reflected in the present. After all, the "very conscience of art" is "its saving salt, even in ages of decadence". It was Plato who said that "education should be in music", Pater's own belief, and one as we have seen in direct contradiction to that of Baudelaire. The two "characteristic virtues" of the "pagan world", were, according to Pater "Bravery - ... and temperance".⁷² Although temperance was never very high on Pater's

70. Walter Pater, Plato and Platonism, Works, Vol. VI, p. 65.

71. Walter Pater, Plato and Platonism, p. 259.

72. Ibid., pp. 254, 256, 258.

list, at least in a comprehensive sense, bravery was a value that influenced him: it is being over-brave that ends the career and ultimately the life of Emerald Uthwart.

Pater had written that "the essence of all artistic beauty is expression".⁷³ If he was influenced by French theory and style, he used the English writers above-discussed as a means of expression. The prose of Sir Thomas Browne, the history of the Civil War; both are alike means to express intellectual growth or mortified beauty. The way in which Pater sees Browne is the way in which he sees himself and his own characters; preoccupied with death and melancholy modes of thought and feeling. The means of that melancholy may be for Browne meditation on mortality in time of strife; for Uthwart, meditations upon the military and the intellectual intermingled. The England of the seventeenth century is one of the points of reference and of parallel that Pater seeks in his historical reconstructions, his dams for the Heraclitan Stream. "The stars of the French Pléiade" burnt with a "hard, gem like flame",⁷⁴ but so did writers like Thomas Carew.⁷⁵ Pater's "sympathetic feeling for the beauty of autumn and decay" was like that of Théophile Gautier, but also like that of Sir Thomas Browne.⁷⁶

"Beerbohm complained that Pater wrote English as though it were "a dead language", and this love of ritualism in prose, this reference to classicism was akin in English to the prose stylists of the earlier

73. Walter Pater, Plato and Platonism, p. 107.

74. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 236; Gerald Monsman, "Pater and His Younger Contemporaries", Victorian Newsletter No.48, (Autumn 1975), pp. 1-9 (p.1).

75. Keith Feiling, A History of the Tory Party 1640-1714, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 54.

76. John Addington Symonds, review of The Renaissance; The Academy Vol. IV No.68 (15th March 1873), pp.103-105(p.104).

seventeenth century.⁷⁷ The "legend of a 'golden age' " was one that Pater discussed; his Greek studies show more of Dionysus the Devourer than Arnold would ever let into print.⁷⁸ But Pater's literary nostalgia depended on something else: the recreation of himself and his age:

Surely, past ages, could one get at the historic soul of them, were not dead but living, rich in company, for the entertainment, the expansion, of the present: and Duke Carl was still without suspicion of the cynic afterthought that such historic soul was but an arbitrary substitution, a generous loan of one's self.⁷⁹

Pater's way of looking at the past was a loan of himself, admittedly conducted without cynicism. But there was more to creating the "Apolline aura" than the "contemporary French ideal", which after all was not a part of Pater's beloved past.⁸⁰ G. Monsman observes:

Describing the criticism of Charles Lamb, his closest predecessor in the English tradition, Pater observes: 'To feel strongly the charm of an old poet or moralist, the literary charm of Burton, for instance, or Quarles, or the Duchess of Newcastle; and then to interpret that charm, to convey it to others - he seeming to himself but to hand on to others, in more humble ministrations, that of which for them he is really the creator - this is the way of his criticism'.⁸¹

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77. Anthony Ward, Walter Pater: The Idea in Nature (Worcester and London, MacGibbon and Vee, 1966), p. 22.
78. Walter Pater, Greek Studies, Works Vol. VII, p. 48; Cf. Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, p. 129ff.
79. Walter Pater, Imaginary Portraits and Gaston de Latour, Works Vol. IV, p. 145.
80. Ibid., p. 124.
81. Gerald Monsman, Walter Pater's Art of Autobiography, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1980), p. 13; Walter Pater, Appreciations With an Essay on Style, p. 112.

A close predecessor indeed. Pater, like Lamb, handed on in criticism "that of which...he is really the creator", and what he handed on in his parallels and means of expression was a close sensation built out of himself and a picture of a past implicitly parallel with or influential on his own. He saw his pasts as Marius saw rosary beads, as the tokens of repetition and nostalgia, easing death's progress; aesthetic delights like Christianity.⁸² While it is true that he was widely acquainted with French literature past and present, its theories were what he mainly subscribed to (and not even these necessarily, as we have seen in the case of Baudelaire). The substance of his literary drive, its subject-matter, was that which this thesis constitutes the elements of the English tradition, the elements of a literary nostalgia. Not Flaubert or Baudelaire or Mallarmé practised this to the extent that it became a dimension of the late nineteenth century in England. And Pater, although not its architect, was at least its most capable draughtsman.

The Caroline period is only one of Pater's means of expression. With him it was not overwhelmingly important, though it was later to become so. Marius and Gaston de Latour were to be the two first parts of a trilogy, the third of which was to be set in the England of the eighteenth century, not the seventeenth.⁸³ It was only a part of Pater's overall perspective. The Jacobite revival of the Eighteen-Nineties as well as the numerous other lost causes that crowded the period for publicity had not yet taken full effect at

82. Walter Pater, Marius The Epicurean, Vol. II, p. 223.

83. Lawrence F. Schuetz, "Pater's Marius: The Temple of God and the Palace of Art", ELT Vol. 15 (1972), pp. 1-19 (p.17).

the time of most of his writings.⁸⁴ But the kind of effect that it was to have, and the connexion this "forlorn hope" might make with France, while in itself remaining British, can be seen in this passage from "Joachim du Bellay":

Ronsard's poems are a kind of epitome of his age. Of one side of that age, it is true, of the strenuous, the progressive, the serious movement, which was then going on, there is little; but of the Catholic side, the losing side, the forlorn hope, hardly a figure is absent. The Queen of Scots, at whose desire Ronsard published his odes, reading him in her northern prison, felt that he was bringing back to her the true flavour of her early days in the Court of Catherine at the Louvre, with its exotic Italian gaieties. Those who disliked that poetry, disliked it because they found the age itself distasteful.⁸⁵

"Hardly a figure is absent" in the poetry that was to succeed Pater; for the decadence chose the losing side, the forlorn hope, as surely as Pater wrote that Ronsard did. The "fantastic, faded rococo" of the Pléiade was merged in the fantastic faded poetry of the Eighteen-Nineties.⁸⁶ Pater was the "epitome of his age"; "the strenuous, the progressive" was absent in him; but his range of reference is too wide to pin him down to the Cavalier and Caroline in the English tradition. Yet he nevertheless writes by the principles of literary nostalgia, without being absorbed by these particulars.

84. Cf. The Royalist, Vol. I, 1890; The Legitimist Ensign, Vol. I, 1901; Catalogue of the Exhibition of the Royal House of Stuart (London, [1888]).

85. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 166.

86. Ibid., p. 167.

Chapter III : THE FRENCH CONNECTION : Other Approaches

...during the first half of the nineteenth century, the most vital currents in French literature came from Britain; but, during the second half, the stream flowed the other way, and French culture impregnated English literature - this influence continued, uninterrupted, until the advent of the Second World War.

Enid Starkie From Gautier to Eliot¹

George Moore's Confessions, his long hair, his python, and his Baudelairean cat set the fashion for the nineties.

- Christophe Campos
The View of France from Arnold
to Bloomsbury²

When we come to examine the place of France and French literature in the lives and styles and content of poets and writers of the Eighteen Nineties period, we are struck at once by the question of influence, and how it is often answered before it is asked. Linda Dowling points out the dangers of generalization about the literature of the period; and it is indeed the question of literary influence, especially from France, which is answered in a general way, compromising the period's complexity in much the same way as generalizations about Symbolism's role as a solution to decadence reduce

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1. Enid Starkie, From Gautier to Eliot, (London, Hutchinson, 1960), p. 122.
 2. Christophe Campos, The View of France from Arnold to Bloomsbury, (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 153.

the meaning of the term from a state to a process³, a reduction at odds with the painstaking way in which the question of definition has attended upon the term for the last hundred and fifty years.⁴ But to define is to analyse, and to analyse is to question; and in a sad way not enough questions about the Eighteen Nineties have found their way onto critical agendas.

The problem to some extent has lain in the way certain figures of the period eulogized France; Richard Le Gallienne for example, half-hoping that England would be conquered by France one day said that "we might hope for cafes in Regent St. and an emancipated literature."⁵

This brand of what Campos called 'gallomania' and which was undoubtedly widespread in the Nineties (he chooses Moore as the prime example) was one of the period's enthusiasms. Some fell in with it more than others.⁶ But as we have discussed above in "Craving Viaticum" and the following sections, such acceptance of enthusiasm as analysis means that questions, especially ones concerned with the period's obsessions with historical and literary-political nostalgia, remain unasked. Instead we get answers based

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3. R.K.R. Thornton, The Decadent Dilemma, (London, Edward Arnold, 1983), p. 200.
 4. Cf. M.D. Nisard, Etudes de Moeurs et de Critique sur Les Poètes Latins de la Décadence, 3 vols, (Brussels, Louis Hauman et Compee 1834).
 5. Christophe Campos, The View of France from Arnold to Bloomsbury, p. 163.
 6. Ibid., p. 162.

on the generalization we see in the quotations which head this chapter. Enid Starkie gives us a picture of France's impregnation of English literature right "until the advent of the Second World War". True enough, in some ways: we think of Eliot's and Pound's Francophilia. Yet even these were of different and limited kinds; and what of Lawrence and Hardy? That Lawrence learnt techniques from French novelists seems fair enough but Hardy himself, Forster and Meredith seem less immediately involved in the question. In any case, the kind of generalization that brings French influence up to the threshold of 1940 as an impregnating force, doesn't explain why the 'Nineties era is viewed as a special case, a generalization beyond generalization; a period when France not only "impregnated", but dominated English literature. In fact, Ms. Starkie's aptitude for generalization is such that it leads her into factual error: of the Rhymers' Club she writes:

Pater was their master and idol - Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson and Symons had known him as undergraduates at Oxford.⁷

These writers certainly admired Pater, though "master" and "idol" might seem a bit strong, and Lionel Johnson did call him a "literary vampire".⁸ But more than these objections is the simple fact that Symons was never at Oxford at all; Ms. Starkie's desire to keep the group together leads her to invent for them identical careers.⁹ One

7. Enid Starkie, From Gautier to Eliot, p. 108.

8. Cf. Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater, 2 vols. (London, Everett & Co., 1907), Vol.I, p.156.

9. Roger Lombreaud, Arthur Symons: A Critical Biography, (London, The Unicorn Press, 1963), pp.23, 25 ff.

might also object a little to the fact that whereas Johnson knew Pater well and had a full undergraduate career in Oxford¹⁰, Dowson was hardly there at all, and withdrew himself from the University during Mods.¹¹ "Finest artist now with us" as Pater may have been to him¹², Pater and his Oxford set are a somewhat illusory creation, at least in these named instances.

Campos's picture of George Moore, while accurately taken from Confessions, neglects Moore's preoccupation with the English past evinced there, and suggests that in some way Moore was a model for the 'Nineties, which can be no more than half-true.¹³ Wilde and Yeats had long hair, but Dowson and Thompson did not, for example;¹⁴ and cats, pythons and strange pets were not generally repeated on the British side of the Channel, despite the habits of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.¹⁵

It is not intended solely to carp at details in these statements. But attitudes which betray the unquestioning acceptance of certain home-truths about the period even if they are only half-true, add up to a counter-argument if they are displayed enough, which they are.

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10. Lionel Johnson, The Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher, Garland English Texts No.3, (New York, Garland, 1982), xxxix.
 11. Desmond Flower and Henry Maas (eds.), The Letters of Ernest Dowson (Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson, University Press, 1967), p.12.
 12. Ibid., p. 257.
 13. Christophe Campos, The View of France from Arnold to Bloomsbury, pp.139-153; George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, (New York, Capricorn Books, 1959), pp. 58, 66, 146, 160, 214.
 14. Cf. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, Facing, p. 105; Viola Meynell, Francis Thompson and Wilfrid Meynell (London, Hollis and Carter, 1952), facing iii.
 15. Brian and Judy Dobbs, Dante Gabriel Rossetti: An Alien Victorian, (London, MacDonald and Jane's, 1977), p. 150.

In Yeats's Early Contacts with French Poetry, E. Davis sees the hauteur of Baudelaire and Mallarmé as influential on Yeats's display of the same attitudes. But although Mallarmé is influential on certain poems (e.g. "A Coat"),¹⁶ Yeats's hauteur is far more easily traced from Ben Jonson, especially in his attitude to the landed aristocracy and the theatre.¹⁷ In fact, Yeats's belief in the sanctity of great houses is directly descended from the "high housewifery" of "Penshurst" and he glorifies Coole Park in Jonson's own words:

But inwardly, surmise companions
Beyond the fling of the dull ass's hoof
 - Ben Jonson's phrase - and find when June is come
At Kyle-na-no under that ancient roof
A sterner conscience and a friendlier home...¹⁸

Similarly Yeats's memory of Major Robert Gregory as "our Sidney and our perfect man" is an echo of Jonson's

Nothing perfect done,
 But as a CARY, or a MORISON.¹⁹

Yeats's ideal of aristocracy is quite unlike the French hauteur.²⁰ Davis follows up generalizations like this with statements concerning the "all-but Parisienne Maud Gonne", and remarks such as "Pater too

16. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1950), p. 142; Cf. Mallarmé, "La Marchande D'Habits", Poems, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1965), p. 79.

17. Cf. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, pp. 106, 225, 263, 273, 275.

18. Ibid., p. 143.

19. Ben Jonson, Works, ed. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson 11 vols. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1947), Vol. VIII, The Poems, The Prose Works, p. 247.

20. Cf. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Plays, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1952), p. 679 ff.

was a thorough-going Francophile", and that "all, even Francis Thompson, were to some extent devotees of the contemporary French writers."²¹

William Watson is the only poet Davis exempts from this statement.²² By use of statements like the above, he builds up a picture of a French-dominated culture. Unfortunately when it comes to textual evidence his proofs trail the grandiosity of his conclusion a little. He compares Lionel Johnson's "To Morfydd", "The Church of a Dream", "Mystic and Cavalier" and "Dark Angel" to Baudelaire's:

Le cavalier promène un sabre qui flamboie
Sur les feules sans nous que sa monture broie...

and Verlaine's "Bon chevalier masqué". Evidently the presence of Cavalier imagery in the English poet must be under French influence. He then goes on to quote some more Baudelaire:

Il n'est pas une fibre a tout mon corps tremblant
Qui ne crie: O mon cher Bélzebuth, je t'adore?

and then remarks

Such mists and such mysticism are the marks of "neo-Celtic" verse, representative of which is Yeats's "The Valley of the Black Pig" - in which the final image of "the flaming door" is a deliberately ambiguous one.

He refers to "satanic poems in 'Les Fleurs du Mal' and...Verlaine's 'Liturgies Intimes' " in support. But Yeats's poem is about an Irish legend; and though his magico-mysticism may be drawn from the same pool as Baudelaire's attitudes and beliefs, there is no real suggestion of a current. Davis's citing of parallel passages only goes to show

21. E. Davis, Yeats's Early Contacts with French Poetry, Communications of the University of South Africa, (Pretoria, 1961; The Folcroft Press, 1970), pp. 27, 29, 36.

22. Ibid., p. 36.

that parallel lives never meet, without more suggestion of an intimate relation, at least.²³

Davis goes on to compare Lionel Johnson's elegant ritualistic room with that of Des Esseintes. Yes, Johnson did believe that "life is ritual"; but as we will see in the chapter concerning him, he shared none of Des Esseintes's passion for artificiality; indeed he loved nature and history, almost with a passion. His ritualism was more like that of Laud than that of Huysmans, and shared nothing deliberately satanic or perverse with Là bas or A rebours. Not that there may not have been some influence; but the evidence adduced by Davis is tenuous. Firstly he compares "Johnson's monastic prose" with Huysmans; this is very well, but is only argumentum ad hominem as far as the author of A rebours is concerned. Des Esseintes after all was not monastic for Christian purposes as Johnson intended to be. Then Davis comments on Yeats's statement that Johnson in his room thought of "some bookish desert, the Thebaid, or the lands about the Mareotic sea". Des Esseintes in A rebours

"revant à une thébaïde raffinée..."

It is a verbal parallel, but one with Yeats and not with Johnson. Johnson never mentions in his writing these exotic places.²⁴ But they are part of Yeats's symbolic impedimenta:

23. E. Davis, Yeats's Early Contacts with French Poetry, pp. 40-41.

24. Ibid., p. 43; Lionel Johnson, The Collected Poems, liv.

O what a sweetness strayed
 Through barren Thebaid,
 Or by the Mareotic Sea
 When that exultant Anthony
 And twice a thousand more
 Starved upon the shore
 And withered to a bag of bones!
 What had the Caesars but their thrones?

The "Mareotic Lake" even makes an appearance in "Under Ben Bulben". Given Yeats's notorious lack of accuracy in detailing, or rather retailing the lives of his friends, we cannot be sure of any influence here on Johnson, although there is obviously a case for one on Yeats.²⁵

The last pieces of evidence adduced are somewhat limited. Davis remarks on the "neatness and severity" of Johnson's room which he compares with that of Des Esseintes and its candles, and he notes that Lionel Johnson had "works upon theology in Greek and Latin". Huysmans gives Des Esseintes a lot of theology in his library.²⁶

Well, the fact that Johnson was tidy and had, since he was interested in the subject, theology books, is not quite enough to tip him towards conscious modelling on a character whom he seldom if ever mentions. But the evidence adduced in this case is quite good compared to some other examples of France's dominance. Davis states boldly of Yeats's most famous early poem:

So far as 'Innisfree' is concerned, several likely sources in Tennyson (particularly "The Lotos Eaters") suggest themselves; but nothing quite so close as those in Baudelaire.

25. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, pp. 210, 397.

26. E. Davis, Yeats's Early Contacts with French Poetry, p. 43; J.K. Huysmans, Against Nature, tr. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1959), pp. 50-51.

Really? Davis goes on to surmise that Yeats was unwilling to admit influence because of the necessity of maintaining Irish identity. Well! Perhaps Mr. Davis is unwilling to acknowledge Irish identity because of the necessity of proving French influence; there is no textual evidence for "Innisfree".²⁷

There are some close comparisons; Davis compares Verlaine's

Chère, pour peu que te bouges,
Renaissent tous mes désespoirs...

with Dowson's

Dear, so thou only move thine head
Shall all mine old despairs awake...

and Yeats's

O heart! O heart! if she'd but turn her head,
You'd know the folly of being comforted...²⁸

There are debts from Dowson and Yeats owing to Verlaine, particularly from Dowson, who used many of Verlaine's poems for his own oeuvre.²⁹ Yet Davis, while writing of the debts, is always demanding a critical "mine own with interest"; a demonstration of poetic indebtedness inclined to bankrupt its borrowers.³⁰ Yes, Davis draws successful verbal parallels. But then he goes on to parallel ideals, then attitudes, and finally parallels parallels, looking for example at Johnson through the glass of Yeats, darkly reflecting Huysmans. Baudelaire's "mannered idealisation of the Aristocrat,

27. E. Davis, Yeats's Early Contacts with French Poetry, p. 46.

28. Ibid., p. 48.

29. Ernest Dowson, The Collected Poems, ed., Desmond Flower, (London, Cassell, 1967), pp. 59, 89, 103-106.

30. Cf. E. Davis, Yeats's Early Contacts with French Poetry, pp. 43-63.

the Soldier, and the Poet", may very well have something to do with Johnson's ideals of poets and cavaliers;³¹ but, as we have discussed above with reference to Pater, whereas the English writer (or Irish-English, if we pander to Johnson's image of himself) may borrow the French style or idea, he seeks out his own content or method of implementation.³² "Emerald Uthwart" has a strong English centre; and Johnson's heroes and scholars are Caroline and catholic, whether Anglo or Roman. Davis himself says in his "Conclusion", after comparing Yeats's tower and symbols to their continental forebears, of the writing of the period that

What is negative and sardonic in this pattern of revulsions, disillusionments, and refashioned ideals may be found in the poetry of the Jacobean, particularly in that of Webster, Ford, and Tourneur.

Well, here is an English tradition; but the positives must all be left to France, so that the traditional picture of the period is vindicated. Not, though, that Mr. Davis does so; as elsewhere, he generalises on superficial resemblances to make them substantive. The isolated comparisons are bound together by assertion and generalization to the point of critical impressionism. But the vague vision is not one to which we should trust our sight.³³

Yet we still must look further before we are content. Writers more contemporary with the period shared many of the interpretations we seek to qualify, and if needs must, undermine. The fault of much later writing on the period is that it generalizes

31. Cf. E. Davis, p.62.

32. Cf. "Pater's Part".

33. E. Davis, Yeats's Early Contacts with French Poetry, p. 62.

not only from enthusiastic statements like that of Le Gallienne quoted above, but from contemporary critical interpretation itself.

In 1913, G. Turquet-Milnes published The Influence of Baudelaire in France and England, which we have referred to above, while discussing Pater. Turquet-Milnes, after detailing the kind of beliefs and writing current among Baudelaire and his contemporaries in France for the first two hundred pages, turns to "The Baudelairian spirit in England", where, he says of Swinburne

...the art-for-art theory, the preoccupation of pure sensuous beauty...can, I think, only be accounted for by the fact that Swinburne was greatly influenced by the French poets.

This he sets in opposition to England's long-lived "heresy of the didactic", and goes on to discuss the "spirit" as influential on the work of Swinburne, Arthur O'Shaughnessy, Wilde, and Beardsley. Of Wilde's Dorian Gray he says:

We are minded at every turn of des Esseintes...
Though the starting-point be from Baudelaire.
there is also very much Huysmans.

Under his section of "Contemporary Writers" Turquet-Milnes remarks that "Mr. Arthur Symons is a Baudelairian as critic rather than as poet". Aubrey Beardsley is to him "the Baudelaire of the pencil - a Baudelaire in miniature, unhealthy, feminine, and in nowise classic".³⁴

Turquet-Milnes's analysis is fine as far as it goes (leaving aside the "unhealthy, feminine" for a moment). But what is he saying? Firstly, he links Baudelaire's influence with a "spirit"

34. G. Turquet-Milnes, The Influence of Baudelaire in France and England, pp. 219, 221, 222, 246, 249, 277.

in English literature, and sees Swinburne as an articulator of this. The "spirit" he defines (we have already touched on this in our discussion of Pater) as

- 1) The faculty of self-analysis and torment in love.
 - 2) The pursuit of lust or sacrilegious pleasure.
- and 3) Moral anarchy, pessimism and solitude of the soul.³⁵

This as we have seen does not apply very well to Pater. But it clearly does apply to at least some of the art of Wilde or Beardsley, for example Dorian Gray with its self-analysis and solitude, or Beardsley's illustrations to Lysistrata.³⁶ What is important however, is that Turquet-Milnes sees this "spirit" as being influential on the approach of the writers mentioned ("Symons is a Baudelairian as critic" for example) rather than their subject matter. This brings us back to the "Emerald Uthwart" question. For example, Dorian Gray could have been written about a perverse Cavalier in the reign of King Charles II while adhering to Baudelairian spirit; it wasn't, as we know.³⁷ This thesis is not intended to deal in fantasy, nor to suggest that the English tradition was a matter of subject-matter only, and not of approach and belief. But it is interesting that Turquet-Milnes's claims are more concerned with stylistic influence ("the Baudelaire of the pencil") and says so; he does not seek to dominate the period with the influence he is discussing. Indeed, he names selected writers only, and a major theory, that of art for arts' sake. He is more careful, first to say what he means by the

35. Ibid., p.17ff.

36. Cf. Oscar Wilde, Complete Works, ed. Vyvyan Holland, New ed., (London, Collins, 1966), p.17 ff; Henry Maas, J.L. Duncan and W.G. Good (eds.), The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley, (London, Cassell, 1970), p. 439.

37. Oscar Wilde, Complete Works, ibid.

"Baudelairian spirit", and then to hunt down more precise examples of it. Nor are his claims set too high; he writes that

The fact that Lord Alfred Douglas was received into the Catholic Church in May 1911 far from astonishing confirms us in the opinion that he is a true symbolist.³⁸

Well and good. Turquet-Milnes informs us that aesthetic delight in ritual seeks out a common home. But no more than that: none of the explicit modelling on say, Huysmans, which Lionel Johnson is credited with by Davis.

Turquet-Milnes goes on to discuss "The Baudelairian Spirit in Painting" and in Music, although he relates much of his discussion under these heads to Continental sources, excepting Beardsley under the former. Summing-up the period at the beginning of his book, he declares of the writers of the time:

This search for sensation necessarily led - in the realm of language - to the most remarkable revolution in style ever seen since the seventeenth century, and in the realm of ideas, to mysticism and occultism on the one hand, and to perversion on the other.

Well Turquet-Milnes comes closer to the point of our argument here, in mentioning the seventeenth century, and its revolution in style. It was to some parts of that revolution, as well as to the "Baudelairian Spirit", that the writers and the period in England which we have under scrutiny, turned back to look on. Apparently unknown to himself, Turquet-Milnes draws even closer to the mark in a passage which he uses in support of his argument concerning Swinburne's openness to French influence, from a letter the poet

38. G. Turquet-Milnes, The Influence of Baudelaire in France and England, p. 259.

himself wrote in 1875:

My father, Admiral Swinburne, is the second son of Sir John Swinburne, a person whose life would be better worth writing than mine. Born and brought up in France, his father (I believe) a naturalised Frenchman (we were all Catholic and Jacobite rebels and exiles), and his mother a lady of the house of Polignac (a quaint political relationship for me as you will admit), my grandfather never left France till called away at 25.....

This passage may outline an openness to France.³⁹ But it also reveals another avenue to influence, an Anglo-Scottish one, that of the Jacobite. This was an avenue of literary nostalgia that Swinburne himself did not neglect, and that was to be of use to poets after him, as we shall see. The influences of France did not always tend to France even when they were present: they might point back to British concerns. The cult of the dandy was originally an English one; and nothing could be more home-grown for pathos than the cause of the Stuarts, which conveniently itself led back to the stylistic revolution of the seventeenth century, for example in the controversy over literary and pietistic styles that raged between Cavalier and Puritan.⁴⁰ Nor was Swinburne simply romanticizing on this occasion; his ancestors did indeed include Jacobites.⁴¹

Turquet-Milnes is quite balanced in his critique as I have suggested. It was, as mentioned earlier, some of the 'Nineties writers themselves who misled critics of the period with their fulsome praises. George Moore said of France that it "possessed me

39. G. Turquet-Milnes, The Influence of Baudelaire in France and England, pp. 11, 219, 222, 265, 283; Cecil Y. Lang (ed.), The Swinburne Letters, 6 vols., (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1960), vol. 3, p. 10.

40. J.M. Steadman, The Hill and the Labyrinth (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984), pp. 36, 37, 50, 51.

41. Philip Henderson, Swinburne: The Portrait of a Poet, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 5-6.

as if with the sweet and magnetic influence of home."⁴² But it was always a part, and never the whole. Pound's statement that

For the best part of a thousand years English poets have gone to school to the French, or one might well say that there never were any English poets until they began to study the French...⁴³

is an enthusiasm of this kind. But as we would regard a statement of this kind as only partially true, if striking, so we should regard the way in which the Nineties are written about in the same light. It seems strange that, given that most of us do not take French literature's influence on English as dominant to the extent of Pound's comment (which is itself in contradiction to Enid Starkie's statement about the first half of the nineteenth century quoted above), why should we select a period of no more than a quarter of a century as an exception to this? The story of 'Nineties criticism is too pat to be perfect. T.S. Eliot's statement that "The predominance of Paris was incontestable" though the "first decade and more of this century" is quoted in support of The Road from Paris by Cyrena Pondrom;⁴⁴ but against that we may balance his interest in the seventeenth century, particularly the metaphysicals.⁴⁵ Just as the evidence of interest is there in the twentieth century, so it is growing in the nineteenth before our period begins among dandies and Jacobites alike, who are branches of the same oak. Brummell was a Legitimist,⁴⁶ and:

42. George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, p. 41.

43. Cyrena N. Pondrom, The Road from Paris: French Influence on English Poetry 1900-1920, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 174.

44. Ibid., p. 1.

45. T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays 1917-1932, (London, Faber and Faber, 1932), pp. 267ff.

46. Ellen Moers, The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm (London, Secker and Warburg, 1960), p. 124.

On the title page of Pelham; or, the Adventures of a Gentleman is an epigraph from Etherege, which defines in the language of Restoration comedy the Regency sense of the term gentleman:

'A complete gentleman, who according to Sir Fopling, ought to dress well, dance well, fence well, have a genius for love letters and an agreeable voice for a chamber.'

Bulwer was not the only writer of the period to turn to the Restoration for a literary tradition. Benjamin Disraeli (whose father had written affectionately of the Stuarts) compared the dandies to 'the fine gentlemen of our old brilliant comedy - the Dominants, the Bellairs, and the Mirabels', and Mrs. Gore believed that the fashionable novel at which she excelled rose 'from the ashes of our long-extinguished high-life comedy'. Pelham particularly was a return, after a hundred years, to the principle of Restoration comedy: a satirical approach to the ways of the great world, sharpened by intimate acquaintance with it and softened by appreciation of its curious values.⁴⁷

In the Eighteen-Nineties the gentlemen were exhibiting very many "curious values"; but those of the revived Regency dandy were those of the revived Caroline gentleman.

Translations of the French outnumbered those of any other languages into English by 'eight to one' at the time of our period and slightly later (the proportion must be still quite high now),⁴⁸ but the English uses to which foreign works might be put is best encapsulated in a comment John Todhunter made on Watteau's Les Champs Elysées; the man with his back turned is

...probably quoting Herrick to himself:
Gather ye roses while ye may
Old Time is still a-flying [sic]⁴⁹

47. Ellen Moers, The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm (London, Secker and Warburg, 1960), p.74

48. Christophe Campos, The View of France from Arnold to Bloomsbury, p.243.

49. Ibid., p. 104.

So it was with dandyism and to some extent with Jacobitism, as we shall see later; Brittanica capta ferum victorem cepit and France's use of the cult of dandyism was a conquest by the English idea and Brummell its executor: "The first French dandy called his valet by an English name". When it returned, it was as much French influence on England as a Roman statue of Zeus was Greek. And as we see in Todhunter, the English might even in French fields find English signs; and now we are to go looking for English signs elsewhere, and hope to begin discovering at last the nature of the English tradition which helped to give the period a perspective beyond Francophilia. The dandy's achievement is simply to be himself. Let us see what the period's was, and in the process, wash ourselves "clean of France", to quote George Moore.⁵¹

50. Ellen Moers, The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm, p. 115.

51. George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, p. 214.

Chapter IV : NEW BIRTHS OF DECADENCE

i The English Tradition and the Seventeenth Century

"In 1881...he first read the Jacobean dramatists and the metaphysical poets...The influence of the violence of Webster's theatre, the language and concern for death of Donne and Crashaw never left him".

- Angus Wilson
The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling.¹

[Webster and Herrick]..."two of my favourite authors: Herrick above all".

- R.L. Stevenson to Edmund Gosse²

"...it seems important...to sketch very briefly the reason, why it ever became possible to think of Laforgue and Donne, Webster and Villiers de L'Isle Adam, as poets of the same sort".

- Frank Kermode: Romantic Image³

[In Rochester]..."the painful and the spectacular unite, as in those blood-stained sunsets and sunrises of Baudelaire, Laforgue or Apollinaire".

- Claude Rawson: TLS March 29 1985⁴

Flaubert and Baudelaire and Gautier, Hennequin and M. Zola and M. Mallarmé, with all their colleagues or exponents, may sometimes be set aside, and suffer us to hear Quintilian or Ben Jonson, Cicero or Dryden.

- Lionel Johnson.⁵

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1. Angus Wilson, The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling, (London, Secker and Warburg, 1977), p. 47.
 2. Sidney Colvin (ed.), Robert Louis Stevenson: Letters, 2 vols. (London, Methuen, 1899), Vol. I, p. 278.
 3. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 114.
 4. Claude Rawson, "Systems of Excess", TLS, (29 March 1985), pp.335-36 (p. 335).
 5. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy, (London, Elkin Matthew, 1894), p. 79.

On 10 June 1895 Swinburne wrote to William Rossetti a letter of sympathy on the death of his sister. In it he compares her to Herbert and Vaughan, the latter being "essentially more akin to her...than anyone else".⁶ The comparison was intended to be complimentary, and so it was. But more than that, it was an example of the kinship the poets and writers of the time were feeling on their own behalf and on the behalf of others with the writers of the Caroline period and the later Jacobean.

I have already discussed in this thesis the chief distinguishing marks of the period as a whole: its egoistic longing for freedom from restraint, its nostalgia, its idealization of certain figures, its mysticism. I have seen how the past was the place where its writers frequently searched for validating beliefs and points of comparison. And I looked also at the claim of France to a place as the dominant influence on the period, and have hopefully shown it to be a claim frequently generalized upon.

I have no wish to generalize. The argument of the ensuing three chapters will be directed at localizing what I believe to be one of the most important elements in the period, totally neglected as a measure of its critical interest: that of the English tradition, as it is found in the period 1620-1670; a period of turmoil and strife, of political uncertainty and millenarianism. The fin-de-siècle was a period of uncertainty also; the period of the rise of anarchism, the beginnings of real working-class power after the extension of the franchise in Britain and Ireland; and abroad, the growth in socialist

6. Cecil Y. Lang (ed.), The Swinburne Letters, in 6 vols, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1959), Vol. 6, p. 80.

parties and anarchist outrage. We touched on these points briefly at the end of "Opinion is not worth a Rush", and since this is not a political discussion, I do not want to dwell on them too much. But there is a feeling of things coming to an end among the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties. The world was "autumnal...and pale" to Lionel Johnson;⁷ and after the fact Sitwell could interpret the loss of the Titanic as a symbol of the end of "Western Civilization".⁸ Thinking in symbols is what links the two eras, rather than any superficial political instability. The king among the stars, the Platonic Cult of Charles, has its reflections in the mysticism of the Eighteen-Nineties which I have compared with that of the 1640s and 1650s in my discussion of G.R.S. Mead above.⁹ Evolutionary theories of decadence were applied to the decay of seventeenth-century literature, particularly the drama, as well as to the current age.¹⁰

The parallels of course, do not join. I do not attempt to provide some grand Zeitgeist to bind the two eras so different in many of their concerns. But the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties were attracted to this past period: the pathos of the king, the overdecorative beauty of the poetry, the triumph of a puritanism Matthew Arnold had recently identified as the continuing enemy¹¹; a nostalgic utopianism, and the images of dandies and cavaliers, heroically casting their lives away for the "great cause"¹²

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7. Lionel Johnson, The Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher, [Garland English texts no.3] (New York, Garland, 1982), p. 65.
 8. Angela Lambert, Unquiet Souls, (London, Macmillan, 1984), p.160.
 9. Cf. "Craving Viaticum", Chapter I.
 10. Martin Butler, Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 7.
 11. Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, ed. J. Dover Wilson, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 142ff.
 12. Walter Pater, Works, 8 vols, (London, Macmillan, 1901), Vol.V, Appreciations with an Essay on Style, p.128.

It is my job to localize the details which this short summary cannot contain. The comparisons persist however, and in the preface on decadence, I have examined the nature of the symbolic thought that writers can see in common in the two periods. Frank Kermode explores Arthur Symons's allegiance to both camps, French and English, and suggests the similarity between the two.¹³ Claude Rawson compares Rochester with Baudelaire, and writes of "the insolvent garreteers of the 1670s and the 1890s alike"; the 1670s are not quite the period this thesis has in mind, but the insistency of this kind of comparison is one that remains both unexplored and interesting.¹⁴ The association of writers of different periods with similar crises in political confidence has also been recently made in a different context by Michael Long's Marvell, Nabokov which sees the Russian Revolution and the Civil War as leading to similar outlooks in both writers of a "sense of violation and loss", a retreat from Arcadia.¹⁵

The writers of the Eighteen-Nineties were concerned with this withdrawal from Arcadia. Yeats's warning modernist note, that "The woods of Arcady are dead" was nevertheless a regretful one.¹⁶ As befitted such regret, the writers of the period are frequently Arcadian in their politics. Swinburne, with his real-life Jacobite ancestry,¹⁷ set something of a tone in this direction:

13. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, p. 114.

14. Claude Rawson, "Systems of Excess", TLS, p. 335

15. Nicholas Shrimpton, Review of Michael Long; Marvell, Nabokov: Children and Arcadia, TLS, (5th April 1985), p. 378.

16. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1950), p. 7.

17. Philip Henderson, Swinburne: The Portrait of a Poet, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p.6.

There's nae mair lands to tyne, my dear,
 And nae mair lives to gie:
 Though a man think sair to live nae mair,
 There's but one day to die.

For a' things come and a' days gane,
 What needs ye rend your hair?
 But kiss me till the morn's morrow,
 Then I'll kiss ye nae mair.¹⁸

Here the impending doom and the feeling of an end are those of "A Jacobite's Farewell". A considerable amount of Swinburne's poetry is made up of goodbyes, from "The Triumph of Time" to "A Leave-Taking" by way of "The Forsaken Garden" and "The Garden of Proserpine".¹⁹ The valedictory mood is ideally captured in the pathos of the departing Jacobite with his Pater-like epicureanism redolent of love "till the morn's morrow" in the face of what appears to be nearer death than departure in the imagery of the poem: "There's but one day to die", "live nae mair...kiss ye nae mair". The Jacobite here, as King Charles was to be in Lionel Johnson's "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross", is a symbol of beautiful values and their departure from the world, inevitably:

There's nae mair lands to tyne, my dear,
 And nae mair lives to gie...

In Swinburne's case, there is little obvious direct influence of the style of the Caroline period on his own, but he does admit to being influenced by Crashaw, and was an admirer of Donne, Campion and Suckling, as well as being an early champion of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists.²⁰

18. Algenon Swinburne, The Complete Works, 20 vols. ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise, Bonchurch ed., (London, William Heineman, 1925), vol. III, p.279.

19. Algenon Swinburne, The Complete Works, Vol. 5, pp.169, 185, 200; vol. III, p.18.

20. Clyde K. Hyde (ed.), Swinburne as Critic, Routledge Critics Series, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp.274-311; The Swinburne Letters, V, 11, 134-35, 257.

Swinburne ceased to be an effective force in literature (as distinct from criticism) just at the beginning of the period with which we are now concerned, but the writers who succeeded him were to weave far closer links with the seventeenth century. Some of the most unexpected writers appear to come into this category. Ford Madox Ford writes of Joseph Conrad that Conrad was "an Elizabethan", justifying this:

...on the basis of Conrad's relationship to a Poland that was romantic, heroic, aristocratic; that is, an atmosphere comparable to England's in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He goes on to cite Webster, Marlowe, Massinger, Kyd, and Heywood as writing material that could fit easily into Conrad's imagination.²¹

Again this is not a precise parallel, but it is a good example of the kind of interpretation of these writers of the time that seems repeatedly to surface. Conrad himself was closer to those writers customarily termed decadent than one might imagine: Jessie Conrad said that Arthur Symonds was "the only poet Conrad read with pleasure".²² And we shall be examining the part the "romantic, heroic, aristocratic" play in the creation of an appropriate nostalgia.

The influence of the Jacobean dramatists and the metaphysical poets on Kipling has been cited at the beginning of this chapter: Robert Louis Stevenson also was influenced to a considerable degree.

21. Cited in Frederick R. Karl, Joseph Conrad the Three Lives, (London, Faber & Faber, 1979), p. 707.

22. Ibid., p. 349.

Not only did he name a volume of his poetry Underwoods (published in 1887) after Ben Jonson's The Underwood, but was also an enthusiast for Herrick. On 9 March 1884 in a letter to Sidney Colvin he writes:

Ye have been fresh and fair, Ye have been filled
with flowers - I fear I misquote. Why do people
babble? Surely Herrick, in his true vein, is
superior to Martial himself, though Martial is a
very pretty poet .

Herrick was "above all" his favourite author, along with Webster. Although apart from Underwoods mentioned above, it is hard to find explicit reference to the early and mid-seventeenth century poets writers in his work, Stevenson is concerned with the light and dark sides of the Cavalier ethos, as he is concerned with the light and dark sides of the human personality itself. Whereas (although I do not think so) it might appear far-fetched to see in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde the unstable mixture of hero and anti-hero found in Webster's educated malcontents Flamineo and Bosola, there is no doubting the affinity with Herrick. The Jacobite revival of the 1880s and 1890s led in England to a resurgence of the cult of Charles the Martyr; in Scotland, besides this, there is the revival of interest in Bonnie Prince Charlie. Kidnapped and Catriona deal with that era, and the carefree Cavalier ethos that could "I! and a world of Pikes passe through" to quote Herrick.²⁴

On the contrary The Master of Ballantrae deals with the dark side of the Cavalier ethos, its buckish pride and imperiousness, although Stevenson cannot quite bear to debunk Jacobitism completely,

23. Cf. R.L. Stevenson, Underwoods, 5th ed., (London, Chatto and Windus, 1890), iv; Sidney Colvin (ed.), Robert Louis Stevenson: Letters, Vol. I, pp. 278, 307.

24. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 31.

and so makes James Durie a double agent.²⁵ But there is no mistaking the identity the hero has with the Cavaliers who preceded him as he goes off to join the Prince quoting Lovelace to his "beloved" Alison Graeme:

'I could not love you, dear, so well,
loved I not honour more' , sang the Master.²⁶

But the house is divided: the laird only wants to send one of his sons to the Prince, for a new ethos is creeping up on Scotland, represented by Henry and the dry steward Mackellar, always involved in the business of the estate. To James, the money only exists to serve his wants, not as profit: but this Cavalier largesse and the pride that goes with it destroys in the end both brothers.²⁷ The Master of Ballantrae is a study of the dark side of the Cavalier ethos, and its incompatibility with an eighteenth-century Scotland trying to modernize and construct a consistent legal system and a stable society. This theme Stevenson obliquely returns to in Weir of Hermiston, where the dark side of the successor-state in relation to that of clan and Cavalier is anatomized. The tales Kirstie tells of her outlaw family past are now only romances, not fact.²⁸

Stevenson of course is involved in many other areas of literary exploration, that of the doppelganger being one of the most prominent. In any case, he is not normally one of the artists whom we associate with the 1890s as a period. Yet even he shares the beginnings of

25. R.L. Stevenson, The Master of Ballantrae, (London, Cassell and Company, 1901), pp.123-125.

26. Ibid., p.7.

27. Ibid., p.332.

28. R.L. Stevenson, Weir of Hermiston, (London, Chatto and Windus, 1896), p.113ff.

some of their vital concerns, in particular the literary nostalgia we discussed earlier. These are not "historical novels" in any detailed sense; but rather the outlines of an exploration of the past in terms of present concerns, as Pater had made.²⁹ The blending of doppelganger and Cavalier themes link past and present in their concerns with the light and dark sides of mankind. Henry and James Durie, Scotland future and Scotland past, are united in death. So it was that the decadents, of the time when "pale roses expire" chose to look back to the death of that symbolic rose of the past³⁰, which Eliot, the Eighteen-Nineties inheritor, chose still to mourn in Little Gidding.³¹

To Andrew Lang, who wrote a book on the Young Pretender,³² this nostalgia for the Jacobite was also important, but the scale of its influence in the 1890s is shown by the fact that it is one of the decadent characteristics anatomized in G.S. Street's satire, The Autobiography of a Boy, where the hero on losing a friend, feels:

...as some Charles the First towards his executioner,
and could find it in my heart to praise while I
pitied him.³³

According to Richard Jenkyns in The Victorians and Ancient Greece,

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29. Cf. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, Marius the Epicurean, Imaginary Portraits, Greek Studies, Works, Vols. I-IV, VII
30. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, p. 117.
31. Lucy McDiarmid, Saving Civilization, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.59.
32. Andrew Lang, Prince Charles Edward Stuart: The Young Chevalier, (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1903), pp.1, 3.
33. G.S. Street, The Autobiography of a Boy, (London, John Lane, 1897), p.12.

Mackenzie catches the atmosphere of upper-class English boyhood at the end of the century: 'Michael was for the Trojans against the Greeks...the Lancastrians against the Yorkists, and...for the Jacobites against the Hanoverians'.³⁴

Jacobitism, as I hope to show, was rife in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It was one of the chief obsessions of the age. But before going on to discuss it, I would like to take a more general look at the period's attempts to find for itself an English tradition, and to find much of it broadly in the period 1620-1670, and its consequent recurrences, such as the 'Forty-Five.

So far we have dealt with the forerunners of the Eighteen-Nineties in the main, and explored their relationship with the claims made on them by French influence, and with the elements of nostalgic recreation that were to become so important in the ensuing age, the Eighteen-Nineties, which I would like to take as the period 1880-1914, with its peak occurring at 1885-1905. In this period England and Ireland, and to a small extent Scotland, became part of a European movement of insecurity and fin-de-siècle morbidity; and yet remained distinctive by choosing their own forms of expression. In Ireland these were to take the form of the Celtic Twilight: the English Tradition is the concern of this thesis.

John Rothenstein wrote in his The Life and Death of Conder about the Edwardian "beau monde...about which there was...the touch of dignity and pathos that seems to belong to an order that is about to die". Conder's art found its fulfilment in "A Page from Herrick... the romantic land to which he [Conder] was beginning to find his way".³⁵

34. Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.194; Compton Mackenzie, Sinister Street (1913), Bk.1, Ch.8.

35. John Rothenstein, The Life and Death of Conder, (London, Dent, 1938), pp.36, 108.

Davidson's heroine Mary Montgomery in "A Romantic Farce" may be compared with the Mary Montgomery of a Royalist family just before the beginning of the Civil War in 1641, suggests Alexander Currie in a 1953 thesis.³⁶ The mentions are almost endless, as are the comparisons. But we must tackle them in an ordered manner, as many have failed to do. As early as Gosse, critics themselves made these comparisons, but never in an ordered fashion. Gosse writes of Rochester in Leaves and Fruit as "all the time... 'bonae sub regno Cynarae' " to his wife, picking an echo from Dowson.³⁷ A contemporary of the 'Nineties writers and a correspondent with Crackanthorpe, Davidson, Johnson, Le Gallienne, Pater, Symons and Yeats among others, Gosse occasionally, as above, gives hints of a comparison of the 'Nineties with the Cavaliers (albeit a late one in the above case). Intriguingly also, in Some Diversions of a Man of Letters, he parallels the decade of 1850-1859 with that of 1590-1600, which would parallel the 1890s, by implication, with the 1630s, highpoint of the Cavalier age. But these parallels are taken no further.³⁸

"Imagination", as Alice Meynell wrote, "surely, is not at its greatest until it passes beyond imagery, whither truth is simple and poetry bare, and Vaughan had glimpses of that vital country".³⁹ That vital country is the one we now explore, and although often confined by its imagery and the complexity of its truth in the critic's eyes, we hope to pass beyond it, and see the bare truth of exploration and relationship with the seventeenth-century past that is the justification for the task of this thesis.

36. Alexander Currie, "A Biographical and Critical Study of John Davidson", (unpublished B.Litt. thesis, Oxford, 1953), p.55.

37. Edmund Gosse, Leaves and Fruit, (London, William Heinemann, 1927), Cf. also p.84.

38. Edmund Gosse, Some Diversions of a Man of Letters (London, William Heinemann, 1919), p.333.

39. P.M. Fraser (ed.), The Wares of Autolykus: Selected Literary Essays of Alice Meynell, (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), p.66.

ii Speak, that I may see thee

"Light went out of English poetry as though a shutter had been closed to the west, before nightfall, when the noble seventeenth century came to an end with Crashaw, Vaughan and Lovelace; but a shutter to the east was opened after a hundred years by Coleridge and Blake and neither light nor stars, nor natural light have been barred since then".

Alice Meynell⁴⁰

"...a union of wit and religious emotion as rare now as it was characteristic of the seventeenth century in England".

Sir Henry Newbolt on the poetry
of Alice Meynell.⁴¹

The Eighteen-Nineties is often seen as a perverse tail-end of Romanticism. "The last romantics were the first moderns" writes Ruth Z. Temple in a 1974 article in English Literature in Transition.⁴² How does this square with the revival of the earlier tradition of which we are writing? For this simple reason: that in part at least, the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties era reconstructed Romanticism as part of the same pattern to which they wished to adhere. The idea of "Light" (i.e. lyricism) in English poetry of which Alice Meynell is writing above is one she sees as being shared by Blake and Crashaw, Coleridge and Vaughan, although the actual similarities between these groups of poets (pace Wordsworth and Vaughan) are harder to place.

40. Quoted in June Badeni, The Slender Tree, (Padstow, Tabb House, 1981), p.138.

41. Ibid., p.227.

42. Ruth Z. Temple, "Truth in Labelling: Pre Raphaelitism, Aestheticism, Decadence, Fin-de-siècle", ELT, Vol.17, no.4 (1979), pp.201-222 (220).

Mrs. Meynell also sees the "seventeenth century" as it applies to her poetic ideals, as ending, not in 1700, but rather in 1655 or so. It "came to an end" with "Crashaw, Vaughan and Lovelace", not with Congreve. This identification of the "seventeenth century" is based on the highest achievements of the Caroline period, and we can see that Sir Henry Newbolt is accepting it implicitly in his praise of Mrs. Meynell quoted above. The "union of wit and religious emotion" is far more applicable to the period 1620-1655 than it might be to the 1670s, 1680s and 1690s. We are with the Cavaliers and Laud, not Locke and the Battle of the Boyne. This is what "the seventeenth century" customarily means as an ideal and as a model in the minds and pens of the writers of the period with whom we are concerned. Lyric identity was more important than chronological exactitude.

In the Century Guild Hobby Horse in 1889 Herbert Horne wrote asking for a return to a Carolean age of manners and beauty rather than the realism of Zola.⁴³ Two years later in an article on "The Letters and Papers of Adam Legendre" the writer spoke of the period 1630-1650 as one where there "was the effort to realize...delicacy of manners", "this golden age of English Art". In a later article, on "Some Considerations of the Nature of Fine Art", Herbert Horne goes on to say of Art:

And thus it is, that the bane of Science is the soul of Art; 'the desires of the mind', as Francis Bacon expresses it...⁴⁴

43. Herbert Horne, Editorial, Century Guild Hobby Horse, Vol.IV (1889), pp.1-3 (1, 3).

44. Lyall Aubryson, "The Letters and Papers of Adam Legendre, Century Guild Hobby Horse, Vol. VI (1891), pp.45-59 (p.45); Herbert Hume, "Some Considerations of the Nature of Fine Art", Ibid., pp.45, 83-92 (p.87).

Science, the exaltation of method, is of course at odds with beauty and propriety: the methodical world of Mackellar has no place for the recklessness of James Durie, as it was to seem in 1895 that puritan England was still alive and well, and could not tolerate Oscar Wilde. Since Matthew Arnold it had been likely that the literary nostalgia in an era coming to fruition in symbolism, mysticism and reckless allegiance to art and artifice, artificial paradises, would turn back to the seventeenth century to find a parallel and an influence. For there was the conflict of Puritan and Cavalier, there was an era of the artificial in the masque and the Baroque, an era of Neoplatonism and Anglo-Catholicism (as we can see in Carlyle's attitude to the period and its legacies)⁴⁵, an era in which many believed the world would end, as Francis Thompson wrote of the nineteenth century:

This is she
 That rose 'midst dust of a down-tumbled world,
 And dies with rumour on the air,
 Of preparation
 For a more ample devastation,
 And death of ancient fairness no more fair.⁴⁶

Such was the milieu of an age that sought out a tradition in terms of its own interests and fears.

Alice Meynell was not a decadent writer in any moral sense. Her personal life appears to have been irreproachable. Yet she loved the seventeenth century, partly for religious reasons (she was an ardent Roman Catholic), partly because it expressed lyricism at a high, pure level. And she was a lyricist, a singer, though her songs are

45. Cf. Thomas Carlyle, Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, V vols., (London, Chapman and Hall, 1888), Vol. I, p.1ff.

46. Francis Thompson, The Collected Poetry, (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), p.367.

forgotten. In the age she loved she found that gift at its highest level of expression, and when she found it there, she was loyal to it throughout life. She reminded her son "not to...forget my Cowley"; and in a series of articles written in the Pall Mall Gazette in the Eighteen-Nineties, she set about praising the lesser writers of the Caroline age whom she felt expressed the lyric spirit as it ought to be realized.⁴⁷ Since the Pall Mall Gazette was a daily evening paper, it shows how a wide readership, and not just a few professional writers might have been interested in these relatively obscure seventeenth-century poets. In her essay "My Lovelace", published on 31st March 1897, she writes that

"Lovelace was a dancer of genius; nay, he danced to rest his wings, for he was winged, cap and heel".

In "To Althea", she asks whether they are "birds" or "gods" that wanton in the air, and remarks that "the seventeenth century was in love with that old fancy".

Not only the seventeenth century either. For her remarks in "Lovelace" seem to align themselves with Pater's interest in ἡ κτεροῦ ἐνυκπιῆς, "the power of the wing", the growth to which a young man reaches and exults in (cf. Pater's Study of "Emerald Uthwart"; itself closely associated with the Civil War). This sense of exaltation and expansion Mrs. Meynell sums up later in her essay, when she says:

To shake out the light and spirit of its leaves
[Lovelace's] is to give a glimpse of liberty
not to him, but to the world...⁴⁸

47. P.M. Fraser (ed.), The Wares of Autolykus, pp.20-47; June Badeni, The Slender Tree, p.188.

48. P.M. Fraser, viii, pp.22,24; Walter Pater, The Works, Miscellaneous Studies, Vol. VIII, p.219.

This is one of the "Fair and Flagrant Things" (a phrase from Crashaw) as another essay of 14th April 1897, in which she attacks the eighteenth century, is titled.⁴⁹ This is the recklessness and brightness of the Cavalier spirit which is "winged" in its own exultation, which was to prove so attractive to the Eighteen-Nineties, and was to leave its legacy behind in the legend of the "Tragic Generation", of the young men who perished, their talents suddenly dimmed. To Yeats they had won the right "To troop with those the world's forgot./And copy their proud steady gaze". The "proud steady gaze" they chose to copy was that of the Cavaliers in whom Alice Meynell found that power, and none more so than "proud" Lovelace.⁵⁰

She writes also in these essays of Cowley, Drummond, Campion, Marvell, Jonson, Waller and Vaughan, scouting the range of Caroline and late Jacobean lyricists, after returning to attacks on the eighteenth century, and how it lost the "elation and gaiety" of Cowley's Alexandrine for example. She admires also the age's lyric apprehension of women. In an essay "The Hand", published on 12th May 1897, she praises Carew and Campion at the expense of "Stella's hand", another eighteenth century example. "English women", she says, "with their blond hands are admired deliriously for this one beauty by the darker races".⁵¹ Ernest Dowson took up this aspect of seventeenth century lyrical intimacy in his poem "Ad Manus Puellae".⁵² In her assessment of the lyrical writers of the seventeenth century whom she

49. Ibid.

50. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1950), p.117.

51. P.M. Fraser (ed.), The Wares of Autolycus, pp.32-50(33), 55-66.

52. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, p.50.

loves, Mrs. Meynell often criticizes them in terms of interest to the current age, for example those of Pater or Dowson mentioned above, and also she relates them to her own Catholicism. Mrs. Meynell quotes from Drummond, and criticizes Newman in comparison with him:

Me here she first perceived, and here a morn
Of bright carnations overspread her face.

Out of these essays she makes a mirror for her own concerns, valuing lyricism above all. For example, with regard to Ben Jonson, she largely agrees with Swinburne's judgement of Jonson as "a poet who was not poetical". Unjust judgement though this may be, it reflects the demands of the Eighteen-Nineties for the exquisite, intimate and reckless at all costs in the poetry they sought to admire.⁵³

"The hand that loves to scatter; the life like a gambler's throw" as Yeats wrote in The Green Helmet.⁵⁴

The toast at the Rhymer's Club, written by Ernest Rhys follows the rhythm of Lovelace's "A Loose Saraband":

...we drink defiance
Tonight to all but Rhyme
And most of all to Science
And all such skins of lions
That hide the ass of time.⁵⁵

Lovelace's poem runs:

Off with that crowned Venice,
'Till all the House doth flame;
Wee'l quench it straight in Rhenish
Or what we must not name:⁵⁶

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53. P.M. Fraser (ed.), The Wares of Autolycus, pp.32, 40, 43, 58-59.
54. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Plays, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1952), p.243.
55. The Book of the Rhymers' Club, (London, Elkin Matthews, 1892), p.1.
56. Richard Lovelace, The Poems, ed. C.H. Wilkinson (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1953, 1930), p.140.

From it also Dowson took his lines "For I had pondered on a rune of roses/ Which to her votaries the moon discloses".⁵⁷ Lovelace had written of "our glass of Roses/ Which nought but sweets discloses",⁵⁸ but Dowson's apprehension of what roses might signify was more ostensibly profound.

The "defiance" of the Rhymers' Club was that of young men displaying "the power of the wing". Lovelace himself wrote of "The Falcon", "Princesse of the spacious Air", and said that the "quill from thine own Wing/ I pluck, thy lofty fate to sing". It was this side of the poet and the age that Peter and Mrs. Meynell drew on to sustain their visions of flight and soaring power in their literary nostalgia for the golden age of the seventeenth century, before the light went out. Yet Lovelace himself was also nostalgic, as we see in his "Love Made in the First Age" when "Lads, indifferently did crop/ A Flower and a maidenhead" and "Each touch was naturally chast,/ And their mere Sense a Miracle". His nostalgia is for an era even more Cavalier than his present one, where reckless love knows no obstacles.⁵⁹

Vernon Lee's ghost story, "Oke of Okehurst" is an attempt to show the kinship between the Caroline period and the Eighteen-Nineties present. It is set in a Jacobean manor-house in Kent. Mrs. Oke, who lives there, identifies herself with a seventeenth-century Alice Oke, her own and her husband's ancestress. This lady "had been a party to

57. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, p. 83

58. Richard Lovelace, The Poems, p. 140.

59. Ibid., pp. 143, 146, 147.

her husband's murder of her lover, a poet in the style of Herrick and Waller, named Christopher Lovelock" (modelled on Lovelace, obviously). "Any reference to this ancestral tragedy has the effect of violently agitating...Mr. Oke," which pleases his wife. "Mrs. Oke's love for a new Christopher Lovelock, and her openly flaunting her love before her jealous husband, provokes the final tragedy."⁶⁰

Now, one would not wish to postulate too deep a meaning for this story, but clearly it shows the tendency to draw parallels between the periods in question in a particularly morbid light. The conflicts of history are seen as returning to plague their inheritors. "The rose of love's delight/ Only lasts a day or night..." Symons wrote,⁶¹ but apparently those days and nights could recur, and bring back with them the conflicts and tragedies of ages past, as well as their lyric successes. On Dowson's death, Wilde wrote that he reminded "us of how thrushes sang in Shakespeare's day. If he is not yet laid to rest or unrest, do put some flowers for me on his grave". Most often death and lyricism are mingled.⁶²

Meanwhile, as some writers of the age were concentrating on Cavalier extravagance, so others were writing in the terms of the mystic poets of the seventeenth century. John Gray, for example:

...the poems that make up the second Calendar are more reminiscent of certain seventeenth-century religious works. Just as such metaphysical poets as George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, and Thomas Traherne, for example, had juxtaposed pagan and Christian allusions in their devotional works, so did Gray.⁶³

60. Peter Gunn, Vernon Lee (Violet Paget) 1856-1935, (London, Oxford University Press, 1964), p.130.

61. Arthur Symons A Book of Twenty Songs (London, J.M. Dent and Co., 1905), p.20.

62. Rupert Hart-Davis (ed.), The Letters of Oscar Wilde, (London, 1962), p.816.

63. G.A. Cevasco, John Gray, (Boston, Twayne, 1982), p.79.

But Gray, who glorified "the natural over the artificial" more than was good for a decadent, soon turned from this imitative re-modelling to his own curious limpid inwrought style, and the Catholic priesthood.⁶⁴ Others did not take the revival of the Caroline ethos particularly seriously to start with:

Ah Herrick, what a sight for thee!
Gone the tempestuous petticoat -
Tempestuous breeches now she wears,
And yes, thy Julia has a vote.⁶⁵

This is Richard Le Gallienne, recreating the past in terms of the present with an unashamed bathos. Yet despite his ability for irony which led him to stand outside the main body of Eighteen-Nineties writers, he too had his genuine leanings towards the Caroline era. His "Love's Exchange", which appeared in the Second Book of the Rhymers' Club has been called "a not unpleasing trifle in Herrickian vein".⁶⁶ Le Gallienne also wrote a poem "Hesperides": the title of Herrick's 1648 volume, and "An Epithalamion on the Marriage of William Faversham & Julie Opp", published in 1902, is also possibly based on Herrick.⁶⁷ He certainly saw the Rhymers' Club as bringing together a group "after the manner of such old miscellanies as England's Helicon or Davidson's Poetical Rhapsody:" not quite the period we are bound to discuss, but it shows how the poetical clubs of the present were modelled on those of the past.⁶⁸ Le Gallienne's poetry in his letters is described by his biographers as "the poetry of Traherne who saw God in a field of wheat, of Herbert who glimpsed

64. Ibid., p.118.

65. Quoted in Richard Whittington-Egan and Geoffrey Smerdon, The Quest of the Golden Boy, (London, Unicorn Press, 1960), p.32.

66. Ibid., p.175.

67. Ibid., pp.175, 401.

68. Ibid., p.174.

all heaven in a servant sweeping a room:"⁶⁹ If anything, it was the quieter side of the Caroline era which appealed to Le Gallienne, "a fervent Waltonian" who went in 1885 to the home of the Offleys, one of whom had been a great friend of Izaak Walton. In 1897 he published a facsimile reprint of the first edition of the Compleat Angler.⁷⁰

Meanwhile other writers chose different shades of the Caroline age to study and explore. W.E. Henley, arch-imperialist and anti-decadent, saw Herrick as a writer of pastoral beauty, intimacy and fertility. He compared him with Spanish poets: Valdivielso, Ocaña, Lope de Ubeda.⁷¹ In his Lyra Heroica Henley selects among others Shirley, Montrose, Lovelace, and Marvell to be the standardbearers of the Civil War Period in his book of verse for boys.⁷²

Other writers, principally those whom Henley would dislike, edged towards explicit Jacobitism in sympathy and interest. Periodicals, The Puritan, The Royal Magazine, and The King's Own sprang up, besides those officially dedicated to reviving the Jacobite cause, which I hope to deal with later.⁷³

The aim in this section of the thesis is not concerned with the details of how far the sympathies of Eighteen-Nineties writers with the Caroline period were purely imitative, and how far they sought real models for expanding their poetic vocabulary and direction:

69. Ibid., pp.474.

70. Ibid., pp.49, 59-60, 314.

71. W.E. Henley, Views and Reviews: Essays in Appreciation, (London, Macmillan, 1921), pp.101-103.

72. W.E. Henley, Lyra Heroica, (London, Macmillan, 1921), pp.22,34-42.

73. J.R. Tye, Periodicals of the Nineties, Oxford Bibliographical Society, (Oxford, 1974), pp.8, 13, 14.

I hope to explore these points later in the study of three of the period's most prominent poets; Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and Francis Thompson and their relationship, sympathetic and textual, with writers of the Caroline period. Later on also, I wish to explore one of the chief themes of the Eighteen-Nineties, and its importance to its writers: that of Jacobitism.

This section has been intended to give a flavour to the positive steps towards definition which I now seek to undertake in connection with establishing the English Tradition. The first of these will be as obvious, and yet nonetheless a necessary one: to explore the prevalence of interest in the Caroline period by measuring it in terms of editions published and new ground traversed during the period. The second will be to measure the interests of the Eighteen-Nineties in this tradition by the standards of criticism since that time, and to show that many isolated perceptions about the English Tradition of the "decadence" provide amply unworked soil for the argument of this thesis. The third step of definition will be to try to isolate what was most valuable in the seventeenth-century soil re-cultivated by the period, and to look closely at the definable effect it had on the period's practice and attitudes. These are the three stages of argument which follow; the most absolutely quantifiable being the initial one, and the one to which we now turn.

Chapter V : THE ENGLISH TRADITION

i. Of Academic Interest

Both Ernest Rhys in 1887 and Edward Everett Hale (in 1892) observed in Herrick's later verse a "note of profound apprehension of the dangers in which the country was being involved" after 1640...

E.H. Hagman Robert Herrick, a reference guide¹

Frederic Ives Carpenter saw Herrick and his fellow Cavaliers writing verses tinged by "the quiddities of the metaphysics [sic], the self-reproaches of the mystics and the devotees, and the darkness of Puritanism..."

Ibid.²

The tendency to read history as if it might reflect on the present was not confined to inventive critics such as Walter Pater, it was also true of more sober minds. Ms. Hagman tells us that Saintsbury's attitude in A History of Elizabethan Literature is that:

...the Caroline writers are 'sons of Donne', [he] defends them against labels like 'decadent', and asserts that never since that period have we seen 'such blending of classical frankness', of medieval simplicity and chivalry, of modern reflection and thought.³

Here we see the virtues of the Carolines as fulfilling all the expectations of the modern literary age. They have the "classical

1. Elizabeth H. Hagman, Robert Herrick: a reference guide, (Boston, G.K. Hall and Co., 1983), xvii.
2. Ibid.; Frederic Ives Carpenter (ed.), English Lyric Poetry 1500-1700, (London, Blackie and Son, 1897), liv.
3. Elizabeth H. Hagman, Robert Herrick: a reference guide, p.34.

frankness" admired by Johnson; the "medieval simplicity", imitated by Rossetti and Morris; and "modern reflection and thought", the preserve of the proprietors of the Darwin Hotel and perhaps Saintsbury himself.⁴ Indeed they have all these blended, and so exceed the talents of the period succeeding them, but are nevertheless an ideal to be repeated, a unique achievement. Saintsbury denies that they are "decadent", but it is interesting that such a label should already have been applied to them. Indeed, in the work of Symonds, whom we touched on earlier, the Caroline period is one of the periods of decline that follow the exaltation of success, the exercise, perhaps of *ἡ κρείσσεις* as a literary geist.⁵ Saintsbury denies its identification with such a concept, but looks at the other side of the coin, and cites its unique achievement in terms with which his own age could identify.

Herrick was the standard-bearer of the Caroline poets. He is, in the words of Swinburne in the 1891 preface to Pollard's edition, "and will probably always be the first in rank and station of English song-writers", and Herrick it was who was among the most closely studied during the period.⁶ Rhys and Carpenter, quoted above, saw in him a dark side, an apprehension of turmoil and darkness, caught up in civil war and religious controversy. They were, in fact, postulating for

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4. Cf. Lionel Johnson, The Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher, Garland English Texts no.3, (New York, Garland, 1982), pp.6, 32, 46, 55-57; Tom Gibbons, Rooms in the Darwin Hotel, (Nedlands, University of Western Australia Press, 1973), viiiff.
 5. J. Addington Symonds, The Renaissance of Modern Europe, a Lecture delivered before the Sunday Lecture Society, 24th November, 1872, (London, Thomas Scott, 1872), p.32; René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950, The Later Nineteenth Century, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1966), pp.402-403.
 6. Robert Herrick, The Hesperides & Noble Numbers, ed. A.W. Pollard with a Preface by A.C. Swinburne, revised ed., 2 vols., The Muses Library, (London, Lawrence & Bullen, 1898, x.

him a fin-de-siècle consciousness which might be matched in Rhys's case to a dislike of Puritanism and longing for the past.⁷

J.H.B. Masterman in 1897, wrote of Herrick's "undercurrent of protest against....gloomy Puritan asceticism".⁸ Swinburne saw Herrick as choosing:

...to alternate poems of "the rankest and intolerable odour" with his many poems of "natural or artificial perfume" to relieve the monotony of his volume.⁹

Herrick is seen as light and dark, protesting against the gloom of Puritan England, but not himself above a little corruption, a little rankness or artificiality. So W.E. Henley called Noble Numbers a "homely mixture of the sacred and the profane", and thought them closer to Spanish Catholics than even "the erotic mysticism of Richard Crashaw".¹⁰ Herrick was entrancing because he was seen as combining the dainty and the dying in face of external threats from Puritanism and civil strife as the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties longed to, and sometimes, did.

Unto us they belong,
Us the bitter and gay,¹¹
Wine and woman and song.

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7. Cf. The Book of the Rhymers' Club (London, Elkin Matthews, 1892), p. 1.
8. Rev. Howard Masterman, The Age of Milton, introduced by J. Bass Mullinger, Handbooks of English Literature, (London, George Bell, 1897), p.94.
9. Elizabeth H. Hagman, Robert Herrick: a reference guide, p. 37; Robert Herrick, Pollard's ed., xii.
10. W.E. Henley, Views and Reviews: Essays in Appreciation, (London, Macmillan, 1921), pp.103-104.
11. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, ed. Desmond Flower, (London, Cassell, 1967), p.100.

It was out of these memories of excess that the Eighteen-Nineties constructed their revised version of Herrickian epicureanism, without the disclaimer which ends Hesperides:

To his Book's end this last line he'd have plac't,
Jocond his Muse was; but his Life was chast.¹²

But the proof of the pudding must lie in the general level of interest shared in Herrick and other Caroline writers during the time. "Few of those who wrote about Herrick before 1875 offered detailed analyses of his work" Elizabeth Hagman remarks, but if that is true, the flood after 1875 was considerable.¹³ Between 1831 and 1850 there were eighteen books or articles on Herrick or editions published; between 1851 and 1870 twenty-eight; between 1871 and 1880 twenty. After that, things took off. Thirty-seven came out between 1881 and 1890; fifty-two in the following decade, and sixty-nine in the decade after that. This figure then fell, to fifty-four, then by 1921-30 only thirty-two books and articles were published. The 1901-1910 peak was not reached again until 1951-60, when it was marginally overtaken. Thereafter the gap has widened.¹⁴

Of course, in recent years the growth of the modern university system has led to the generating of more articles about everyone, not just Herrick, and so it is little wonder that the 1901-1910 peak has been exceeded. That peak of course, may in itself be due to the late Victorian and early Edwardian expansion in the University system. But that does not explain why interest fell away between 1910 and 1950.

12. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, ed. L.C. Martin, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956), p.335.

13. Elizabeth A. Hagman, Robert Herrick: a reference guide, xv .

14. Ibid., pp.9-218.

F.W. Moorman's 1910 biography, placing Herrick squarely in the English tradition, was the combination of an interest which began with Grosart's Complete Poems in 1876.¹⁵ Saintsbury re-edited Herrick in 1893, by which time a few separate editions of Hesperides had been made, between 1884 and 1891, the latter by Pollard including Noble Numbers.¹⁶ Herrick's seventeenth century "choiceness of finish and attention to form" proved popular.¹⁷

But he was by no means the only example. If we take the following poets, we can make a small table illustrating their popularity measured by full or selected editions, in the period 1880-1910, as against before or since, according to the British Library Catalogue.

<u>Poet</u>	<u>Editions</u>		
	<u>1800-1879</u>	<u>1880-1910</u>	<u>After 1910</u>
Browne	7	13	13
Campion	1	8 (including one by Gray and one by Rhys)	6
Carew	2	3	2
Crashaw	5	6	7
Cowley	9	8	8
Donne	2	6	36
Drummond	9	2	4
Herbert	26	22	10
Herrick	16	38	22
Lovelace	2	2	5
Marvell	4	7	9-10
Quarles		"now for the first time ³ collected and edited" ³ - Grosart 1880,1	
Rochester	5	2	6
Sedley	1	2	3
Suckling	6	6	6

15. Robert Herrick, The Complete Poems, ed. Alexander Grosart, 3 vols, (London, Chatto and Windus, 1876); F.W. Moorman, Robert Herrick, (London, Thomas Nelson, 1910).

16. British Library Catalogue (London, K.G. Saur, 1982), 146, pp.303-305.

17. Elizabeth H. Hagman, Robert Herrick: a reference guide, p.53.

We can see from the above that although there are some indecisive cases, such as Lovelace, Drummond and Rochester; considering that a thirty-year period only is involved in the central column, as against seventy or eighty-year periods in the other two, a massive weight of editions occupies it. I have included 1800-1879 to guard against explanations of the sudden rush being solely due to the expanding horizons of scholarship.¹⁸

In some cases, as with Browne to some extent, Campion and Herrick, the results are decisive. Adding up all the columns shows us that of these fifteen selected writers, ninety-five editions were produced in the nineteenth century to 1880, 141 since 1910, and 128 in the intervening thirty-year period. Excluding Donne, in whom interest principally blossomed after 1910, under the guidance of Eliot, and Grierson's 1912 edition, the last two figures become 105 and 122 respectively.¹⁹

These writers were chosen entirely at random, but the evidence of the table suggests that while 1.19 editions per annum were produced of them an average from 1800-1880, and 2.01 since 1910 (to 1980 and including Donne), 4.31 were produced between 1880 and 1910, and this despite the literary industry of recent years.

18. British Library Catalogue, vol.44, pp.451-52ff; vol.53, pp.236-37; vol.53, pp.492-93; vol.72, pp.192-93ff; vol.71, pp.374-76; vol.85, pp.447-48; vol.87, pp.317-19; vol.145, pp.141-142; vol.146, pp.303-05; vol.201, pp.270-71; vol.213, pp.344-45; vol.268, pp.115-19; British Library General Catalogue, (London, 1965) vol.258, pp.838-840; New ed. vol.297, pp.167-169; vol.316, pp.458-60.

19. John Donne, The Poems, ed. Herbert Grierson, 2 vols., (London, Oxford University Press, 1912); T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays, 3rd ed. (London, Faber & Faber, 1951), pp.281-291.

Moreover, several of these were editions by prominent writers of the period themselves. Arthur Symons edited Massinger in 1887; Bertram Dobell not only edited, but helped to discover Traherne; J.A. Symonds edited Webster and Tourneur,²⁰ and Dowson was commissioned to edit Volpone²¹. Rhys and John Gray both edited Campion; Havelock Ellis edited the Mermaid Series and John Ford, Swinburne edited Middleton. Charles Sayle edited Sir Thomas Browne in 1904.²²

Not all of these are of course Caroline writers, and the interest in the darker side of the Jacobean which Swinburne had nourished, stretched forward into the Eighteen-Nineties also. But the convergence of interest was towards the delicacy of the Cavaliers and the piety of the divine poets, as can be seen from the sixty editions of Herrick and Herbert between 1880 and 1910.

At this time, although there was a great deal of translation from French authors, only two translations of Baudelaire were published and none of Nerval or Rimbaud, according to publisher's lists cited by Christophe Campos. Nor was there any trace of Pater's favourite Pléiade. Campos himself remarks that

There was a sharp rise in the selling appeal of France in 1903, a slight fall in 1910, and a slow decline beginning in 1913.²³

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20. Thomas Traherne, The Poetical Works, ed. Bertram Dobell, (London, 1903), lxxxvi; W.J.A. Symonds (ed.), Webster and Tourneur, Mermaid Series, ed. Havelock Ellis, (London, Vizetelly and Co., 1888); Arthur Symons (ed.), Philip Massinger, 2 vols., (London, Vizetelly and Co., 1887).
21. Desmond Flower and Henry Maas (eds.), The Letters of Ernest Dowson, (Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1967), p.445.
22. BLC 52, pp.236-37; BLC 111, p.290; BLC 44, p.451; BLC 221, p.54.
23. Christophe Campos, The View of France from Arnold to Bloomsbury, (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), pp.242-244.

Symons's The Symbolist Movement in Literature was not published till 1899, and Campos puts the height of French literature's appeal later than this.²⁴ By this time, much of the literature we associate with the "decadence" in England had been written. True, writers like Dowson knew French well, and would not require translations - indeed he made them.²⁵ But this specialised knowledge could hardly give a broad base to the period. It is my intention to detail that broad base: to show by use of editions, criticism, and periodical literature, that decadence's "English Tradition" was one that reflected a large amount of interest in diverse places, and requiring only a little specialized knowledge of a popular strain in literary history. To how the critics have assessed this strain, and to what they have noticed in or of it before, let us now turn.

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24. Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, (London, 1899). Christophe Campos, ibid.
25. Desmond Flower and Henry Maas (eds.), The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.444.

ii : Continuing Study

...the preceding century closed with the French Revolution and the First Consulate of Napoleon, and the sixteenth century closed with the destruction of the Armada and the appearance of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Spenser, Christopher Marlowe and Francis Bacon; whilst the close of the fifteenth century saw the Revival of Learning, and the discovery of America by Columbus and of Newfoundland by Cabot. One cannot avoid the temptation to speculate on the meaning of such fin-de-siècle occurrences...

- Holbrook Jackson The Eighteen Nineties²⁶

Johnson, who took his notions of French literature from Pater, detested Zola and the Naturalist school and, to say the truth, never impressed me as having more than a schoolboy's knowledge of modern French literature.

- Vincent O'Sullivan Opinions²⁷

There is a call to our time from the noble seventeenth century...

- Alice Meynell²⁸

Critical study of the Eighteen Nineties as a period, has, as we have noted previously, tended towards generalization about the aims of its authors as a whole, and the extent of the influence of French literature on them. I hope that we have taken some steps so far to break down into particular accuracies and inaccuracies the sweeping nature of their assessments. But it would be unfair to treat all criticism of the period as occupying the role of defendant, and so we now turn to look at these writers who have detected and anticipated something of the complexity of interests in the period, of which this thesis chooses one, one of the most obvious.

26. Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen-Nineties, (London, Grant Richards, 1913), p.18.

27. Vincent O'Sullivan, Opinions, ed. Alan Anderson, (London, The Unicorn Press, 1959), p.46.

28. P.M. Fraser (ed.), The Wares of Autolycus: Selected Literary Essays of Alice Meynell, (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), p.138.

Holbrook Jackson's The Eighteen Nineties, published in 1913, has in some ways never been surpassed as a general introduction to the period. In the above quotation, we see his consciousness of parallelism, the vehicle by which the fin-de-siècle sought other ages in which to find its reflection, as Pater wrote that in the poems of du Bellay the Renaissance was "putting forth in France...a refined and comely decadence".²⁹ Jackson by and large takes the view of "decadence" in its most limited form, that is one of a self-conscious movement concerning a small group of writers only, centred on Wilde.

The old romanticism began by being Catholic; Théophile Gautier strove to make it pagan, and succeeded for a time, but with Huysmans romanticism in the form of decadence reverted to Rome.

Jackson seeks the movement's larger terms continually. His interest in fin-de-siècle as a concept, his analysis of the development of the period in terms of its religious consciousness, and his (once again) comparison of Symonds with a poet of the 1620-70 period all show him working outwards in the tendencies of his argument, while its target stays within narrow bounds.³⁰

Vincent O'Sullivan says that A.J. Farmer sees the period as a new birth, rather than a decadence, and O'Sullivan himself has doubts about the overpowering strength of the French connection, as evinced in his comment on Lionel Johnson above. O'Sullivan suggested that Johnson's "gods were Pater, Newman, Arthur Galton, and the English eighteenth century".³¹ Although I intend to disagree with this as a

29. Walter Pater, Works, 8 vols., (London, Macmillan, 1900), The Renaissance, Vol.I, xiii.

30. Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties, pp.29-36, 79, 195.

31. Vincent O'Sullivan, Opinions, pp.192, 193.

total assessment (remember Johnson's comment on Pater as "a literary vampire"),³² once again it shows a tendency to reach out beyond the confines of Wilde or Mallarmé towards a wider tradition, in this case an English tradition.³³

George Saintsbury talked of decadence between the metaphysical and Jacobean schools. In his "conclusion" to his chapter on "Caroline Poetry" in A History of Elizabethan Literature (1887), he writes of decadence after Jonson and Donne:

The art is constantly admirable, but it is almost obtrusively art - a proposition which is universally true even of the greatest name of the time, of Milton, and which applies equally to Taylor and to Browne, to Massinger and to Ford, sometimes even to Herrick (extraordinary as is the grace which he manages to impart), and almost always to Carew. The lamp is seldom far off, though its odour may be the reverse of disagreeable.³⁴

This kind of assessment has been a staple of the twentieth century's succeeding attitude to the later stages of the Caroline period. Although recently challenged by writers such as Martin Butler, it remains a popular point of view. Yet what is this assessment? One depending on viewing Caroline poetry as a species of l'art pour l'art, a creative writing "almost obtrusively art". The last sentence passes verdict on that era's attractive artificiality, and in doing so, brings

32. Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater, 2 vols., (London, Everett & Co., 1907), Vol.II, p.156.

33. Cf. Some preliminary discussion of this in Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), p.110ff.

34. George Saintsbury, A History of Elizabethan Literature, (London, Macmillan, 1887), p.456.

us to a picture of the present. We do not have to substitute Tennyson and Browning for Jonson and Donne, even though Browning was compared with Donne,³⁵ but we see the Eighteen Nineties "decline" reflected back as judgement on the Caroline period. Not that Saintsbury may not have been objectively correct: but it is an explication that seems eerily to reflect the then current concerns with decadence and the parallel ages that had also experienced it.³⁶

W.G. Blaikie Murdoch published The Renaissance of the Nineties in 1911. He sees decadence as revived romanticism, and agrees that "The chief influences...were French". Yet an undercurrent runs through this book also: he writes that "The execution of Charles I dealt a terrible blow to artistic activity in England". To Murdoch Puritanism "is (not "was" we notice) the sworn enemy of aesthetics". "The Cromwellian herd...generally speaking...hated literature and painting". Shortly afterwards he remarks:

Thanks partly to the Jacobite risings, the mid-eighteenth century was the golden age of Scottish Gaelic poetry...

When he begins to assess the Eighteen Nineties, he says that

...the real departure from the Swinburne period was made by men who were less English than French or Celtic.

What all this adds up to is that once again we have a tendency running across the normal lines of argument. In the passage on

35. Martin Butler, Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.7; J.E. Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1959), p.50ff.

36. George Saintsbury, A History of Elizabethan Literature, p.455ff, for a discussion of Caroline decadence.

Charles I, Murdoch slips from past to present tense describing Puritanism. It is still seen as a current enemy. The tone of sympathy is for the Jacobite myth, running across the French influences on the period, and joining with Celticism via the Gaelic poetry of the 'Forty-Five. The Celticism of the period thus reflects the Jacobitism of earlier times, and is in opposition to Puritanism. Murdoch dislikes Augustanism (another Jacobite sign common in the 'Nineties) and the eighteenth-century poetry which he does praise is that of Scottish Gaelic, with its specifically Jacobite tendencies.³⁷

What are we saying? Chiefly, that more or less unconsciously, early critics of the period write in terms that expand their argument, rather than contracting it, as they seem to intend. One of the chief reasons why criticism of the period is still some way short of a definition of it today, is, I believe, because a reductive, generalising argument is continually undermined by the specific tendency of some of the literary situations encountered, such as the enthusiasm for Donne noted by Frank Kermode and others discussed below; the Celticism; the Jacobitism, and the persistent mixture of the miniature and the gross, the imprecise and the exquisite in the themes of the period from doppelgangers to Dorian.

But in these critics the larger tendencies of the period are not just inconvenient facts: they are enthusiasms. Jackson does not have to find parallels for the idea of the fin-de-siècle: he chooses to. Murdoch does not have to dwell on the Jacobite/Puritan opposition,

37. W.G. Blaikie Murdoch, The Renaissance of the Nineties, (London, Alexander Moring, 1911), pp.2, 3, 4, 16, 55.

but he does. Even the early critics who laid the groundwork for modern assessment of the period are betrayed by the enthusiasms they ignore in their evaluation of its interests.

Thomas Beer, in his book The Mauve Decade, which describes the contemporary situation in America, remarks that:

...a hundred younger writers were pounding about among the prosateurs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in search of some medium for themselves.

Of Stevenson he says:

...a sombre undertone welled up from somewhere and gave you Herrick.

It would appear that the English Tradition was not only eminently exportable, but might indeed be appreciated better elsewhere.³⁸

Critics since then have made isolated remarks which show their acquaintance with the concerns of the period in terms of Caroline poetry, but have by and large made no attempt to integrate these concerns in an overall picture. In fact, the closest approaches have come from writers who do not have decadence as their centre of approach.

Examples of entrancing isolated comments come in books like Poetry and Humanism by M.M. Mahood, where we read that

It is therefore to the poets of the Oxford Movement that we look for religious poetry worthy of comparison with that of the Metaphysicals.

38. Thomas Beer, The Mauve Decade: American Life at the end of the Nineteenth Century, (London, Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), pp.178, 179.

The same writer compares Herbert and Christina Rossetti, as Swinburne had earlier compared her with Vaughan, and remarks that

Through his brother's guidance, Henry Vaughan studied the writings of 'Thrice-great Hermes', and probably those of Dionysius the Areopagite.

In doing so he would have anticipated Yeats and the interest of the Eighteen-Nineties in these same figures on the borderland between religion and magic. She also mentions Traherne, who was of course discovered in the Eighteen-Nineties as "strongly influenced" by "the Florentine Platonists".³⁹

But these suggestive comparisons are merely examples. They once again entrance us with the possibilities of parallelism, without letting us come to terms with its consequences. One book that does so, however, is J.E. Duncan's The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, published in 1959. Again, it does not have the decadence as its centre of approach, but it reflects on it a very interesting light. Despite placing the beginning of the revival quite early, in the middle of the nineteenth century (Chapter III is devoted to "John Donne and Robert Browning"), it traces the revival reaching its peak in the last decades of the nineteenth century, quoting, for example, Alice Meynell:

In Hopkins' close-packed experiments, in Thompson's flood of lyrical imagery, and in Mrs. Meynell's brittle grace - in the work of three poets so similar and yet so distinctive - the Catholic revival's re-interpretation of the metaphysical style can be seen clearly.

39. M.M. Mahood, Poetry and Humanism, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1950), pp.22, 259, 301.

"Hopkins", he says "...admired George Herbert and he had read a little of Marvell and Vaughan".

To Duncan, this is a "revival" and a "re-interpretation" : not merely enthusiasm for the metaphysical poets, but a determination to use them constructively: indeed to base a whole movement on them. To proceed with his discussion of Hopkins:

He [Hopkins] very possibly depended on figures in Donne's 'The Extasie' and 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' in his own 'The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe' and Floris in Italy. Hopkins' late 'terrible' sonnets perhaps reflect his absorption of some of Donne's 'Holy Sonnets'. A passage in 'Rosa Mystica' and possibly some in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' indicate a sampling of Crashaw. A knowledge of Donne and Crashaw is apparently reflected in a very general way in the technique of some other poems.

Duncan is determined to show a detailed absorption in the style and technique of his predecessors on Hopkins's part. He later extends this in a more general way to Francis Thompson who

...carried on the metaphysical tradition and was classed with the metaphysicals by several of his contemporaries.

Later we learn

Thompson did not read Marvell until comparatively late in life and regarded him then as a good eclectic mixture of Donne, Vaughan, and Herrick. He protested vigorously against a tendency to dismiss the seventeenth-century metaphysicals as a product of decadence.⁴⁰

40. J.E. Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, pp.50, 91, 101, 102, 103; P.M. Fraser (ed.), The Wares of Autolycus, p.138.

Here Thompson is seen to complain against the very comparisons he was living out in poetic terms.⁴¹ His description of a passage in The Temple, "It is beautiful, beautiful", recalled by Katherine Tynan, seems almost to encapsulate the ideals of the Eighteen-Nineties, to "be beautiful".⁴² Perhaps not by coincidence, it also encapsulates the ideals of Laud, and the beauty of holiness.⁴³

Duncan then proceeds with a detailed discussion of Alice Meynell's poetry, comparing it with various examples of the oeuvres of Herbert, Cowley and Carew, before going on specifically to discuss the phenomena of the Donne revival. He denies that Grierson's Donne was the beginning of a modern era in Donne study, and says that "Eliot's essays were not so much a new note as a sensitive formulation of ideas that had become familiar by 1912". "Increased interest in Donne", Duncan says, "began during the later decades of the nineteenth century", and he finds that "Edmund Gosse's biography of Donne, published in 1899, climaxed a decade of excitement about the poet-preacher."

A decade of excitement that was of course the Eighteen-Nineties. According to Duncan:

During the later nineteenth century Francis Thompson and several American critics noticed the increased interest in Donne and the other metaphysicals.⁴⁴

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41. Cf. my discussion of Thompson's decadent traits in the chapter "Faithful in My Fashion".
42. J.E. Duncan, p.103.
43. Maryann Cale McGuire, Milton's Puritan Masque, (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1983), p.108.
44. J.E. Duncan, pp.111-114.

Duncan does not, however, link this growing enthusiasm with the Eighteen-Nineties as such, or as they are popularly conceived. But what he does explore is the interesting way in which images of Donne had an effect on literary creation and direction in the period. He cites W.J. Courthope as thinking that fresh interest in Donne arose from "the revival of mediaeval sentiment",⁴⁵ but E.K. Chambers had something more interesting to say. He credited the revival to

...men of letters, caught by the essential poetry of Donne, and literary historians, discerning his unique influence upon the fashioning of Caroline verse.⁴⁶

Duncan does not say why this particular aspect of Donne should be studied, but we may guess, given the love of Caroline poetry as in some sense the verse of a golden age. Duncan goes on to say:

From the mass of Donne criticism there emerged three closely related conceptions of the man: Donne the rebel, Donne the mystery, and Donne the unique individual.

Francis Palgrave apparently "expressed a common attitude in asserting that Donne was almost equally fascinating and repellent".⁴⁷

This is interesting. Donne is seen in three lights. All of them reflect facets interesting to the Eighteen-Nineties in their way: that of the rebel in an age of épater les bourgeois and anarchy; that of the mystery, in an age obsessed with the arcane; and that of the unique individual, in an age where the hero was one who

45. J.E. Duncan, p.114; W.J. Courthope, A History of English Poetry, 6 vols., (London, 1911), Vol.III, pp.167-168.

46. Ibid.; E.K. Chambers, "The Poems of John Donne", MLR, IX (April, 1914), p.269.

47. Ibid., pp.115-116; F.T. Palgrave, The Treasury of Sacred Song, (Oxford, 1889), p.333.

rejected ordinary life and its demands: an Axel, or a Des Esseintes, or Moore's Cromwell. As with Herrick, discussed above, the age made these poets into images of itself through its own nostalgia, as Pater had begun to do many years before. Palgrave returns the "fascinating" and the "repellent" aspects of Donne, and here we are reminded of Herrick, with his alternation of "the rankest and most intolerable odour" with "natural or artificial perfume" in Swinburne's 1891 analysis.⁴⁸

The period saw these writers in terms of light and darkness because they were reflecting upon them their own concerns for the lovely and the depraved. Herrick and Donne, in these analyses, move before the critic's eye like the living Dorian, while the critic takes pains to point out just where the picture is concealed. Herrick and Donne were seen as relevant, but at the same time Stephen might write of Donne:

...he has partly become obsolete because
he belongs...to the dying age.

There is to be something fin-de-siècle about Donne also, because he must participate in the age which demands that he reflect itself. And for those who doubt that a reflection was what the age was demanding, Stephen goes on to say that "Donne's depth of feeling... gains a new charm from modern sentimentalists", and that "his morbid or neurotic constitution has a real affinity for latter-day pessimists".⁴⁹

Perhaps these affinities, these reflections of the age are partly real ones. I do not deny that critical evaluation may find that

48. Robert Herrick, Pollard's ed., xii.

49. J.E. Duncan, p.125.

aspects of the Eighteen-Nineties indeed mirror Donne, and vice-versa. But what is interesting is that part of Donne's delight was thought to be not his relevance, but his closeness to the modern age:

...we can love the 'intense' and super-sublimated as much as if he were skilled in all the latest aesthetic canons.

And this is while Donne "belongs...to the dying age". The only reason why his obsolescence and his affinity can conjoin without paradox is the obvious one: that the present age itself is a dying one.⁵⁰

There was some fear of the end of the world in Donne's day. C.M. Coffin in John Donne and the New Philosophy suggests that Donne used images of the "notion of the decay of the universe" and the "Elizabethan inclination to reassert the claim of the ancient doctrine of the world's decay" "as images in his poetry which he sees as aligning Donne with the Elizabethans and anticipating "the disillusionment of the later Renaissance":⁵¹

And freely men confesse, that this world's spent,
When in the Planets, and the Firmament
They seeke so many new; they see that this
Is crumbled out againe, t'his Atomis.
'Tis all in p'eces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation.⁵²

This distrust of the new astronomy gave way to more serious millenarianism, that of the Civil War.

50. J.E. Duncan, p.125.

51. C.M. Coffin, John Donne and the New Philosophy, (New York, Humanities Press, 1958), pp.135, 264-65.

52. John Donne, The Epithalamions Anniversaries and Epicedes, ed. W. Milgate, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978), p.28.

In the Eighteen-Nineties, we learn of Francis Thompson:

He was frequently filled with what he referred to as an 'unconquerable foreboding' concerning the outcome of his own 'gloomy affairs' and the possibility of some universal disaster about to fall on the whole world. He wrote to Meynell: 'Disaster was, and is, drawing downwards over the whole horizon. And I feel my private fate involved in it'.⁵³

So Donne and the Eighteen-Nineties might share concerns of decay. Slightly later "De La Mare pictured Brooke himself as a kind of twentieth-century John Donne. He compared his era to the Jacobean era...." Donne might be valued simultaneously for his repulence and obsolescence, and for his vitality. Duncan argues that Donne was a model for the poets of the present, that "Brooke...identified himself with Donne".⁵⁴ Rupert Brooke is slightly later than our period, but Duncan has no difficulty in finding metaphysical identification in no less than the author of The Symbolist Movement in Literature, one of the chief Francophiles of them all, Arthur Symons:

Arthur Symons, dwelling on Donne's 'morbid state of body and brain and nerves' and the neurotic 'preying upon itself of the brain', concluded that his strange personality led Donne to seek to 'correct' English poetry and 'to make a clean sweep of tradition'.⁵⁵

Here Symons portrays Donne as he might de Nerval, a neurotic coming to vision and originality through morbidity. Duncan compares

53. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, Francis Thompson: A Critical Biography (New York, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1961), p.199; John Evangelist Walsh (ed.), The Letters of Francis Thompson, (New York, Hawthorn Books, 19690, p.208.

54. J.E. Duncan, pp.125-26.

55. Ibid., p.116.

Symons's own "For God's sake, let me love you" with "For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love", the opening of "The Canonization".⁵⁶ He goes on to quote from Symons's "The Alchemy":

No, we are strangers yet;
The divine alchemy
Not yet, or vainly, has set
Our longing currents free.

and remarks:

Symons also imitated the French symbolists and at times combined metaphysical and symbolist techniques. Something of the sad aestheticism and so-called decadence of the later nineteenth century was reflected in some of the poems Symons wrote in a metaphysical manner.⁵⁷

But this appears to be the closest Duncan comes to analysing the Eighteen-Nineties per se. Symons, Thompson, Hopkins and Brooke he all analyses in terms of metaphysical, particularly Donne-like, models, but a comprehension of what this means in terms of the period as a whole is lacking. The closest he comes is in passages like:

Donne...seemed the champion of social rebels.
Gosse, Stephen, and Symons evidently identified themselves with a Donne of their own creation in part of a complex revolt against strict Victorianism.⁵⁸

A Donne of their own creation is the Donne we are studying, as we are studying all other recreations of a period bent on finding "myself and not an image",⁵⁹ in the images of the past, whether it

56. J.E. Duncan, p.126.

57. Ibid., pp.127-128; Cf. Donne's "The Extasie": John Donne, The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets, ed. Helen Gardner, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965), pp.59-61.

58. J.E. Duncan, pp.102-129, p.205.

59. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1950), p.180.

was Francis Thompson using "Marvell's ode on Cromwell as a model for... 'To the Dead Cardinal of Westminster'" (Symons's opinion) or Symons himself, approaching:

...the delicate irony of Marvell's poetic dialogues in his own dialogues between the soul, the senses, and the seven deadly sins.

Brooke's Donne "seasoned with Baudelaire", as in Eliot's essays, were the inheritance from this world, concerned with the light and dark sides of the poets they sought to reflect their own era.⁶⁰

Yet still critical concern with the Eighteen-Nineties neglects these areas. Duncan's book, for all its powerful perceptions, is not concerned directly with the movements or multi-faceted obsessions of the era. Most other criticism boils down to isolated comments. Interesting hints in criticism of the seventeenth century itself show why the Eighteen Nineties might have found a kindred spirit there. F.J. Warnke writes that:

Douglas Bush is surely right in arguing against the popular notion of an all-embracing 'Jacobean pessimism' in England, but one must, nevertheless, note the prevailing sobriety of seventeenth-century European literature, its almost ever-present concern with religious truth.

While one may not acknowledge the sobriety of the fin-de-siècle, one would surely have to admit its pessimism. Warnke has an entire chapter on "The End of the World", saying that:

The vision of the end of the world is one of the most frequent of Baroque topoi.

60. J.E. Duncan, pp.124, 128.

He goes on to say that

...the refusal to entertain either a facile sense of order or a facile faith in progress, gives the writers in question an obvious modern relevance...

"The Baroque writers", Warnke goes on to say, "knew how to make art out of their agonies, lusts, frustrations, and doubts". In these remarks the concern about progress, the fear of the end of the world, and the making of art of anguish, are all very much the traits of the Eighteen-Nineties. Warnke then goes on to quote Browne.

"The world that I regard is my selfe", wrote Sir Thomas Browne; "it is the Microcosme of mine own frame that I cast mine eye on; for the other, I use it but like my Globe, and turne it round sometimes for my recreation".

How like Francis Thompson, who "swung the earth a trinket at my wrist": the genteel egocentricity of the instinctive symbolist.⁶¹

Lucy McDiarmid in Saving Civilization has recently put forward the importance of what she calls "The Myth of the Seventeenth Century" as a sustaining force in the poetic ideologies of Yeats and Eliot. She sees them as repudiating the change that was supposed to take place there. She writes that:

In 1690 the Battle of the Boyne (according to Yeats) 'overwhelmed a civilization full of religion and myths, and brought in its place intelligible laws planned out upon a great blackboard'.

61. F.J. Warnke, Versions of Baroque: European Literature in the Seventeenth Century, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972), pp.22, 130, 205, 220; Sir Thomas Browne, The Works, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 4 vols., (London, Faber & Faber, 1964), Vol.I, p.87.

"For Eliot...Marvell lived just at the moment before the English mind altered...". This loss of the medieval norm, means that "The Renaissance bears the burden, in this scheme, for all the fragmentation and alienation of the modern age".

Lucy McDiarmid is right to point out this significant part of Yeats's and Eliot's poetic ideologies, never more strident than in Eliot's "dissociation of sensibility". We note that this concept does not affect the early Caroline poets beloved of the Eighteen-Nineties. Eliot "bestows high praise on Donne, Herbert, Crashaw..." by linking them with medieval poets Dante and Guido Cavalcante...". Yet later, as Lucy McDiarmid points out, "Donne is not medieval enough for Eliot".

I do not suggest that the concept of the "dissociation of sensibility" is one that necessarily arises directly from Eliot's Eighteen-Nineties inheritance. But it is very suggestive that the fragmentation of the modern age should be seen as being paralleled in the Civil War period, and anticipated by it. Eliot clearly felt that in the area lay a crux for the traditions and possibilities of modern letters and society in England. Where did this identification of an area come from?⁶²

As late as 1942 "who but Eliot" says Graham Martin, "would be likely to have felt drawn away from the contemporary crisis by the "antique drum" of Charles the Martyr's confrontation with Oliver Cromwell?"⁶³ In this era, that of the White Rose which becomes

62. Lucy McDiarmid, Saving Civilization, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.35, 39, 47, 48.

63. Lucy McDiarmid, p.59.

"the spectre of a Rose" after the puritan or Whig victory lies much of Eliot's imaginative sympathy.⁶⁴

Yeats, of course, as an Irishman, hated Cromwell. He saw the fragmentation of the modern world as beginning "a little before Shakespeare's birth", and yet it is not conquered in Ireland till the Boyne. Where lay this survival? In Celticism perhaps, and those kings who were Scots and partly Celtic, the Stuarts.⁶⁵

The Eighteen-Nineties were the era of the Celtic Twilight as well as that of French Symbolism, and an era too, as we shall see, of Jacobite revival. Eliot became a Royalist and an Anglo-Catholic; Yeats adopted the aristocratic mode of compliment developed by Ben Jonson, one of the first to praise King Charles above the stars. Where did these tendencies come from?⁶⁶

I believe that they came from the Eighteen-Nineties, and their forgotten obsessions with just the tune that was to prove crucial in the ideology of the century's two largest poetical figures. Even today in a book as centrally unpretentious as The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse, George MacBeth finds time to compare Hardy with Herbert, Dowson with Campion and Johnson with Marvell, while of Eugene Lee-Hamilton he says:

His lyrical monologues...earn him the rank
of Webster to Browning's Shakespeare...

64. T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, (London, Faber and Faber, 1969), p.196.

65. Lucy McDiarmid, p.52.

66. Ben Jonson, Works, ed. G.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983), Vol.VI, p.494.

The urge to compare is there; but the analysis is absent. Why should these comparisons still be made today, and why should Eliot and Yeats find elements of seventeenth-century thought so appealing? Did their interest spring from nowhere?⁶⁷

Apparently not. It sprang from the Caroline era and just before, from sympathy with the Stuart order, from the people and concepts which the Eighteen-Nineties sought art and elevated in importance as mirrors for the age and vehicle for its nostalgia. Frank Kermode has written that "the doctrine of correspondence [ie the Symbolists' doctrine] used as metaphysical support for image-theory" would have been (he is talking about Blake) "acceptable to many seventeenth-century poets". He goes on to say:

The development of Symbolist thought in England could not have proceeded far before somebody saw that there was matter for thought in seventeenth-century poetry. Symonds did see this, and had a lively interest in Donne and the drama of that period, as any Symbolist historian of literature would. And, as the present century has so strongly associated the poetic with the Donne revival, it seems important, and this seems the place, to sketch very briefly the reason, why it ever became possible to think of Laforgue and Donne, Webster and Villiers de L'Isle Adam, as poets of the same sort.

Kermode has already seen the "modern symbol" as resembling to some extent "kinds of image used in seventeenth-century poetry". He evidently believes that it was not just literary nostalgia that led the poets of the period back to the seventeenth century, but a

67. George MacBeth (ed.), The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969), pp.300, 314, 401, 406.

real perception of the kinship that metaphysical poetry had with the symbol. However, he implicitly acknowledges the part that self-creation played in this perception when he says that "Poets began to find Donne-like qualities in their own work", and cites Francis Thompson. He goes on to say:

Gosse and Grierson alike saw the similarity between Donne and Baudelaire, and briefly hinted at the parallel between English-Jacobean and French-Symbolist which was later to prove so fertile. Arthur Symons in fact developed the parallel to a considerable extent; he is the link between nineteenth- and twentieth-century orthodoxes of the Image, and of Donne and the seventeenth century.

"Powerful aesthetic interests", Kermode remarks, "were being satisfied by the conversion of a little known poet into an English Laforgue".

I don't think we have to go as far to say that this is all the story. Symons is not just "the link", but part of a chain of interest in the image of the seventeenth century that goes far beyond Donne.⁶⁸ I want to argue that the Caroline period, with its connotations of the golden age and of impending doom, was at least as valuable as the "Donne-like qualities" which could align with Symbolism. But Professor Kermode identifies a direct link of interest between the two periods, and in this does my cause a service.

Yet his analysis is once again not bound in with the period as a whole. It is only a step on the way to explain the Romantic Image. But what it does tackle is the question of how far the

68. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), pp.112-114, 149.

literary influence of the metaphysical age was real and how far it was merely re-created in the Eighteen-Nineties own image. Both seem inextricably interlinked in any attempt to define the period: literary history is Siamese twin to literary mythology in the Eighteen-Nineties, as it is indeed in the theory of "the dissociation of sensibility".⁶⁹ We have looked at the way in which critics write of the period more narrowly than the concerns they raise warrant; we have seen isolated comments, and in Duncan and Kermode, two analyses of contemporary interest in the seventeenth century, yet neither integrated into a study of the fin-de-siècle period as such. We now turn to one of the most important myths of that period, Jacobitism, where history and mythology are inextricably mingled as they are throughout the era. We then go on to study three poets, Ernest Dowson, Francis Thompson and Lionel Johnson, to show their integration with, reconstruction of, and intertextual relationship with the Caroline era which was so important to the Eighteen-Nineties.

69. Cf. T.S. Eliot, To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings, (London, Faber and Faber, 1965), p.19ff.

Chapter VI : BY THE STATUE OF KING CHARLES :

THE JACOBITE REVIVAL

'Michael was for the Trojans against the Greeks...He was also for the Lancastrians against the Yorkists, and...for the Jacobites against the Hanoverians'

- Richard Jenkyns
The Victorians and Ancient Greece¹

Within the last very few years, however...a new Stuart literature has come into being : there is scarcely a magazine or review but has had its say upon some detail of the subject, from the Casket Letters to the death of the Cardinal who was king non desideriis hominum sed voluntate Dei.

- The Royalist April 16, 1890.²

What advance in pure intellectual and artistic culture have we made since that January morning when Charles the First laid his head upon the block? The greatest poets of our century have only strained their ears to catch the echoes of the Stuart lyre...

- The Royalist October 30, 1891³

...an esteemed correspondent...states that he recently proposed at the debating society of the largest college in Cambridge 'that the Stuarts should be restored to their lawful position on the Throne of England in the person of Queen Mary'. This motion was carried by five votes, a considerably larger majority than that which sufficed to establish the usurping line on the throne by the passing of the iniquitous Act of Settlement in 1701...

- The Jacobite, Volume IV, No.7,
July 30, 1903.⁴

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1. Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.194.
 2. Editorial, The Royalist, Vol. I no.1, (April 16, 1890), p.1
 3. H. Barton Baker, "Literature and Morals of the Stuart Period", The Royalist, Vol.II, no.7, (Oct 30, 1891), pp.105-111 (p.111).
 4. Comment, The Jacobite, Vol.IV, no.7, (July 30, 1903), p.49.

As we have seen already, it was by the process of literary nostalgia that the writers of the decadence in England isolated in the past the elements which they believed spoke to the present most clearly. I have suggested that the critical period of seventeenth century history from 1620 to 1670, roughly from the death of Prince Henry to the fall of Clarendon, was the one which many of them sought out as reflecting their age: through the conflict of High Church and Puritan, through its love of art and artificiality, its millenarianism and sense of impending doom. From this great era with its conflicting themes they drew a body of mythic thought, artistic and political. Jacobitism was possibly the most powerful political myth of all in the world of seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain;⁵ certainly it was the myth that appealed to these writers, and which they recreated and revived. Once again this was not a matter of a few dedicated artists and a Cult of the White Rose: it was a widespread revival which reflected many of the desires of the age. For the Jacobite stood for many of the causes that the writers of the time held most dear: nostalgia, romance, Anglo-Catholics and Catholicism, absolutism in an age of uncertainty; Celticism, love of art, recklessness and the personal cult. It was a political (no matter how feebly so by this time) statement of a creed that had all the marks of excessive sentiment and excessive loyalty; doom, martyrdom. In it the decadence found itself: beauty and death, the denial of progress, dislike of the bourgeois, and the cult of the dandy and the Cavalier.

5. Cf. Eveline Cruikshanks (ed.), Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobitism, 1689-1759, (Edinburgh, John Donald, 1982).

The disguised "Theodore" in Gautier's Mademoiselle de Maupin could find a parallel in British terms only in figures of the Cavalier age, such as Rochester, who made disguise a habit, and dressed as a woman for the purpose of seducing them.⁶ The death-bed repentances of poets like Rochester and Carew might be found a parallel to the conversions of such Eighteen-Nineties figures as Wilde and Beardsley; and of course, many of the Cavalier poets also share early deaths.

As with many of the other elements in the period, this affinity with Jacobitism has been noted in certain figures, but not studied in depth or commented on as a major facet of the period. Not because it wasn't one; but the misprision of the era is that it generalizes from too few particulars, and those often arbitrarily chosen from the pages of the commentators who popularized them first.

For example, in his introduction to the latest edition of Lionel Johnson's Collected Poems, Ian Fletcher writes that "A further affiliation in these years [the early 1890's] of which little evidence survives, is to Legitimism", and goes on to say that:

'By the statue of King Charles at Charing Cross',.... was published in the journal of the Jacobite Order of the White Rose in 1892. The late 1880s and early 1890s had witnessed an odd revival, not unconnected with the Stuart Exhibition of 1889, in this branch of Legitimism. These neo-Jacobites were rapidly in schism; one group being activist, the other, more strongly connected with the High Church, remaining antiquarian and sentimental...Johnson might well have leaned to the antiquarian wing of the neo-Jacobites; but more eloquent causes were about to command his attention.

6. The Right Honourable the Earls of Rochester and Roscommon, The Works, ed. St. Evremont, 3rd ed., (London, E. Curll, 1709), b2 verso.

Professor Fletcher then goes on to discuss the Rhymers' Club. We have seen elsewhere, however, that the aims of the Rhymers' Club were not altogether distinct from nostalgia for Jacobitism, for they too were connected with the Caroline period. In this context, Professor Fletcher's remarks that "The [Rhymers' Club] was a stiff, anglicized version of those explosive groups so characteristic of the Latin Quarter" may not be the whole truth.⁷

Much earlier than Professor Fletcher's study, Victor Plarr had noted of his friend Ernest Dowson that:

Like Lionel Johnson he was interested in the White Rose League, and told me that he had been solemnly presented to the authentic descendant and last representative of the Stuarts - not, by the by, the Duke of Buccleugh, [sic] but a solemn lady with grey hair down her back, who stood, pathetically enough, in the upper chamber of a small restaurant in Soho, where the restaurateur and his wife acted as her chamberlains. The lady strongly resembled Charles I, he averred.⁸

Plarr does not say whether this was Mary of Modena, whom the Jacobites of the time indeed thought was the rightful queen, Mary III, although it may well have been so. We shall in any case discuss the relationships of both Dowson and Johnson to Jacobitism when we come to examine them as individuals within the thematic context of the thesis. Our business now is to proceed with an analysis of the movement itself.

The Stuart revival was certainly popular in many places, although there were two sides to the coin, as evinced in Swinburne's criticism

7. Lionel Johnson, The Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher, Garland texts no.3, (New York, Garland, 1982), xli.

8. Victor Plarr, Ernest Dowson, 1888-1897, (London, Elkin Mathews, 1914), p.22.

of Carlyle as a "villain!" for his "Cromwell-Worship"^{9,10}. The Stuart Exhibition of 1899, for example, was paralleled by Professor Robert Bruce's Bicentenary Lectures given at London in the same year, "on the Occasion of the Bicentenary of the Revolution of 1688".¹¹ But there was certainly a great deal of explicitly Stuart material on the general market in those years. Not only was there a sale after the 1889 exhibition, but at Culloden House also in 1897, when the contents were put on sale.¹² In 1881, Duncan Forbes had already erected a famous monument on the site of the battle:

The Battle of Culloden
was fought on this Moor
16 April 1746
The Graves of the Gallant Highlanders
who fought for
SCOTLAND AND PRINCE CHARLIE
are marked by the names of their clans.

In about 1904 G. Whyte-Melville published The White Rose. In 1905 the Life and Letters of Queen Mary of Modena appeared, edited by Martin Haite; Herbert M. Vaughan had his The Last of the Royal Stuarts published by Methuen in 1906, and also wrote The Last Stuart Queen: Louise, Countess of Albany, which was published in 1911.¹³

Nor were these only marginalia in the period's literary history. The famous periodicals of the time also contain many references which

9. Cecil Y. Long (ed.), The Swinburne Letters, 6 vols., (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1960), Vol.4, p.152.
10. Cf. Thomas Carlyle, Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, 5 vols., (London, Chapman and Hall, 1888), Vol.I, p.lff.
11. Professor Robert Bruce, Bicentenary Lectures, (London, 1889)
12. A Catalogue of the Contents of Culloden House, (A. Fraser & Co.'s Sale, 1897).
13. Herbert M. Vaughan, The Last of the Royal Stuarts, (London, Methuen, 1906); The Last Stuart Queen: Louise, Countess of Albany, (London, 1911); Martin Haite (ed.), Queen Mary of Modena: Her Life and Letters, (New York, J.M. Dent, 1905); G.J. Whyte-Melville, The White Rose, (London, Ward, Loch and Co., c.1904). For Duncan Forbes monument vide National Trust guide to Culloden, p.37, and the battlefield site itself.

betray a growing interest in the legend and the cause. The Athenaeum for 9 January 1892, for example, has a note on "The Welsh Descent of Oliver Cromwell", evidently a symptom of the growing interest in Celticism of the time.¹⁴ During 1897 and 1898 there are several articles on various aspects of the Civil War and one on Mary Queen of Scots.¹⁵ On 3 June 1899, an article appears suggesting the plan of a memorial library of the great Civil War, the "Cromwell Tercentenary Library for Naseby".¹⁶ This is apparently written by an advocate of the Cromwellian cause. On 24 February 1900 a riposte comes from the other side:

I do not the least object to your renewer's amicable strictures, which are in accordance with the prevailing spirit of the Cromwell tercentenary - now, alas! woefully celebrated in South Africa by a new generation of saints. As I am the solitary Cavalier who has disturbed Oliver's glorification, I trust you will kindly insert this letter, notwithstanding its length.¹⁷

It is interesting to see here how the spirit of the "Independents" who supported Cromwell is seen by this correspondent as paralleled by the Boer War in South Africa: another example of parallelism between the eras. Clearly if the beleaguered letter-writer saw himself as a "solitary Cavalier" only, The Athenaeum must have seemed a very Whig publication! Other periodicals appeared to share, or at least had reviewers who shared, Puritan political attitudes. In a review of Gardiner's History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate in Literature for 30 Oct 1897, the reviewer writes:

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14. J.G. Evans, "The Welsh Descent of Oliver Cromwell", The Athenaeum no.3350, (9 January, 1892), p.53.
15. Cf. The Athenaeum, no. 3619 (6 March 1897), p.313; no.3659, (11 Dec. 1897), p.821; no.3681 (14 May 1898), p.631; no.3664 (15 January 1898), p.86.
16. Unsigned article, "Cromwell Tercentenary Library for Naseby", The Athenaeum, no.3736 (3 June, 1899), p.689; Cf. Ch.XII, n.113.
17. George Colomb, letter, The Athenaeum, no.3774 (14 February 1900), p.239. Cf. Ch.XII, n.114.

It is mainly...this combination of interests [maritime and commercial] which has raised Cromwell to the position of the national hero of the nineteenth century.¹⁸

Here is indeed support for Puritanism in its modern form. But other contributors to Literature adhered to the Royalist side of the case. In a review of 27 November 1897 of David Hay Fleming's Mary Queen of Scots, the reviewer commented:

If the idea of canonizing Mary Stuart ever makes a step towards fulfilment, the court charged with the process ought to read Mr. Hay Fleming's "Mary Queen of Scots".¹⁹

The veneration accorded to Charles I at the apex of the progress of Stuart pathos and martyrdom, and accorded to Prince Charles Stuart in Scotland, was also extended to the initiator of Stuart dynastic claims on England, Mary, Queen of Scots. The whole Stuart cause, was, as we shall shortly see, trembling into literary life. Pater, of course, had written of Ronsard in terms of the "forlorn hope" of Mary Queen of Scots, and how this French poet brought back to her "Italian gaieties", as we have seen above.²⁰ These literary images were being nurtured by the periodical literature of the Eighteen-Nineties, and by the practices of many of its more noted authors, as we have seen, and shall see.

Of course, much of what lay at the bottom of the Stuart cult was to be found in the artistic community's distrust of the Puritan inheritors of the seventeenth century's mantle. In an article on

18. Quoted in unsigned review, Samuel Gardener: History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, Literature, vol.I, no.2, (30th October, 1897), pp.38-39 (p.38); Cf. Ch.XII, n.115.

19. Unsigned review, David Hay Fleming, Mary Queen of Scots: From her Birth to her Flight into England, Literature, Vol.I,no.6, (27th November 1897), pp.164-65 (p.164); Cf. Ch. XII, n.117.

20. Cf. Walter Pater, Works, 8 vols., (London, Macmillan, 1901), Vol.I, The Renaissance, p.166. Vide supra, "Pater's Part".

"Poets and Puritans" in Macmillan's Magazine, J.G. Dow put the opposition between the parties thus:

...the one party [Cavaliers] lightly smiling on the flower-sprigs and the battle gear, the other too darkly pondering the hieroglyphic.²¹

"The Puritans", Dow goes on to say, "came to usurp seriousness for themselves". The Cavaliers "revolted from such a travesty, and were impelled to lay an exaggerated emphasis on the other side of life".

What Dow is saying is that the Cavalier "exaggerated emphasis" on "love among the roses" is a revolt from Puritanism's demands. He excludes the failings of the Cavaliers in terms of the wrong-headedness to which they were subject, the misappropriation of serious thought and meditation by the Puritans:

If the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them were to the Puritan the allurements of Satan, the Cavalier was only too ready to build up therein a heaven of his own.

The Cavaliers are seen as taking an extreme line in an attempt to strike a balance. Yet Dow himself is not as extreme a Cavalier as some of his contemporaries, and later in the article he writes in excuse of the Puritans that:

We are not to quarrel with the old Puritan or the new because he deems that life has more serious concerns than gathering rosebuds.

It is interesting that Dow explicitly here sees the concept of a "Puritan" as applying to both the past and present; and by

implication, suggests that there are past and present Cavaliers by his use of a paraphrase of Herrick "gathering rosebuds". Presumably there are those who do this now, as there were those who did it then. And so this discussion of Cavalier and Puritan becomes not merely historical, but is an attempt to look at these concepts in the light of a continuing dispute.²¹

What should be so surprising about this? Carlyle's invective in his edition of Cromwell's letters and speeches might well make us feel that here was a historical controversy by no means dead.

Our ancient Puritan Reformers were, as all
Reformers that will ever much benefit this
Earth are always, inspired by a Heavenly Purpose.

Carlyle urges us to "By no means...credit the widespread report that these seventeenth-century Puritans were superstitious crack-brained persons". Of Laud he writes:

...a Church presided over not by sham-priests
in "Fair surplices at Allhallowtide", but by
true god-consecrated ones...²²

This is a continuing controversy. On the other side it is no coincidence that we have already observed a comment on the Oxford Movement's seventeenth-century leanings, and indeed John Keble "was a tory of the old school, a Cavalier, and a lover of the Memory of Charles I...".²³ It was no accident that Laud should be the spiritual

21. J.G. Dow, "Poets and Puritans", Macmillan's Magazine, vol.LXI (1890), p.457-459.

22. Thomas Carlyle, Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, with Elucidations, 5 vols., (London, Chapman and Hall, 1888), Vol.I, p.68; Vol.II, pp.69, 70.

23. Entry on John Keble, Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, 22 vols., (London, Oxford University Press, 1917ff), Vol.X, p.1180.

father of a revival of Anglo-Catholicism in the traditional Royalist city. Novels like Mrs. Linn Linton's Under Which Lord? stressed the corruption of Anglo-Catholicism on the Puritan side of the argument;²⁴ on the Cavalier side, the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties blended the legacy of the Oxford Movement with the social commentary of Arnold,²⁵ and ended up as Cavaliers of literature.

Writers like M.R. James in stories such as "The Uncommon Prayer-Book", draw on the tradition of Cromwell's alliance with Satan.²⁶ The Cavalier ethos might also be combined with that of the decadent Romantic: de Quincey's dream of Charles I's ladies, for instance.²⁷ As we shall see later, attempts were made to trace Jacobitism from 1746 to the present in an attempt to turn a revival into a tradition. Some carried on the tradition themselves. Hubert Crackanthorpe married Leila MacDonald: reputedly a descendant of Flora.²⁸

Moreover, this love of the martyred king and his Church (although of course all three of the poets we shall be discussing are Catholic, their sympathies still lay with the Anglo-Catholicism of Charles) went along with a love of art and the beautiful. Here too, there was

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24. Mrs. Linn Linton, Under Which Lord?, (New York, Garland, 1976), pp.129-44.
25. Cf. Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, ed. J. Dover Wilson, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960); M.M. Mahood, Poetry and Humanism, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1950), p.22.
26. M.R. James, The Ghost Stories, 2nd ed., (London, Edward Arnold, 1974), pp.490-514.
27. Thomas de Quincey, The Collected Writings, ed. David Masson, 14 vols., (London, A & C. Black, 1897), Vol.III, p.437.
28. Hubert Crackanthorpe, Collected Stories, ed. William Peden, Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints (Gainesville, Florida, 1969), ix.

ample excuse for identification with the martyr-king who was, according to Lucy Hutchenson, the widow of one of the men who signed his death warrant "a most excellent judge, and a greate lover of paintings, carvings, gravings, and many other ingenuities..."²⁹

History tends to agree with Mrs. Hutchenson. Margaret Barnard Pickel, in her book Charles I as Patron of Poetry and Drama, writes that:

...Charles I was the last English sovereign who discharged in any fullness the functions of a literary patron.

After discussing something of the Platonism of the Caroline Court, which, she says, "apparently began to decay with the decline of the royal cause",³⁰ she quotes some lines of Cowley's which illustrated the height of panegyric reached by the age, and also its belief in the peaceful realm Charles had established:

Welcome, great Sir, with all the joy that's due
To the return of Peace and You.³¹

As if the Stuarts were Roman emperors, stars were noted "on the occasion of the birth of the Prince of Wales". Herrick, in dedication to Hesperides, recalls the "Prince of Wales" as "my Works Creator", the maker of "Immortall substances" (Charles II).³² The level of panegyric began to generate the legend of the Stuarts even while Charles was yet living.³³ To Ms. Pickel, "the Cavalier Spirit of poetry" is "the beauty of a lost cause and the glory of defeat", and acertainly this is reflected by the poets of the

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29. Quoted in Richard Ollard, The Image of the King, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p.31.
 30. Margaret Barnard Pickel, Charles I as Patron of Poetry and Drama, (London, Frederick Muller, 1936), pp.1, 36.
 31. Margaret Barnard Pickel, p.60; Abraham Cowley, The English Writings: Poems, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1905), p.22.
 32. Margaret Barnard Pickel, pp.70, 74; Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, ed. L.C. Martin, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956), p.3.
 33. Margaret Barnard Pickel, pp.72, 86.

Eighteen-Nineties, who when pathos was added to panegyric, found the great fall of the artist-king to martyrdom a fitting subject for their own fin-de-siècle nostalgia.³⁴ I quote from Lionel Johnson:

Go from me: I am one of those, who fall.
 What! hath no cold wind swept your heart at all,
 In my sad company? Before the end,
 Go from me, dear my friend!

Yours are the victories of light: your feet
 Rest from good toil, where rest is brave and sweet.
 But after warfare in a mourning gloom,
 I rest in clouds of doom.

Have you not read so, looking in these eyes?
 Is it the common light of the pure skies,
 Lights up their shadowy depths? the end is set:
 Though the end be not yet.

("Mystic and Cavalier").³⁵

Ms. Pickel thinks also that Marvell sympathised with Charles, and concludes that:

The secret is perhaps to be found in the way of life that king Charles stood for. In the world of the Cavaliers there was an elegance, a cultivated leisure, a gay interest in the arts; all these make a good world for poets.

"In the whole picture of the Cavalier world there is a grace in life and in death which must appeal to those who love beauty in the reality and the spirit..." she goes on to say. Clearly this

34. Margaret Barnard Pickel, p.68.

35. Lionel Johnson, The Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher, [Garland English Texts no.3], (New York, Garland, 1982), p.24.

mixture of elegance and art with death and defeat, with beauty the connexion between them, was not merely adapted by the Eighteen-Nineties to suit their needs, but was in itself of a natural affinity as an image for the age. Ms. Pickel goes on to discuss the image of Charles as the sun, and the development of the masque, "essentially and increasingly artificial". She discusses French influence on the drama at that time and whether "the movement towards classical regularity really came from France" in English poetry. Gosse had dated it back to this time, long before the Restoration. Ms. Pickel observes that "there was an increasing desire among English courtiers to read and write French". The vitality and relevance of this beginning of Anglo-French contact under the Stuarts, continued in the exiles of Charles and James, seems to have aroused similar nostalgic images of them in France, as we shall see later.³⁶

Earl Miner, in The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton discusses the strains of pleasure, joy and panegyric, as well as quoting yet another example of the loyalty that Charles I inspired, this time in the words of Sir Philipp Warwick:

When I think of dying, it is one of my comforts,
that when I part from the dunghill of this world,
I shall meet...King Charles and all those
faithful spirits that had virtue enough to be
true to him, the Church and the laws, unto the last.

Miner also mentions Van Dyke's picture of "Charles I clad in shining black armor on a white horse". To Johnson, as we shall see,

36. Margaret Barnard Pickel, pp.93, 94, 157, 165-68; vide infra Les Derniers Stuarts à Saint-Germain-en-Laye, n.97.

white is an important symbol of purity; and the "white horsemen" are the Cavaliers who ride with Christ. Charles and Henrietta Maria, in Albion's Triumph, had been associated with white, partly it appears because of his Scottishness: "quasi in Albania natus", "Alba for the Queen, whose nature beauties have a great affinity with all purity and whiteness".

Interestingly, Miner goes on to raise the question of mysticism in the Caroline era:

The as yet but barely understood middle decades of the century brought the century's peak of Hermeticism, other likely and unlikely 'neo-Platonic' strains, Rosicrucianism, astrology, natural magic, and inner light. The Cavalier need to retreat in those times may be viewed in obvious economic and political terms. But it may also be regarded as a version of the spirit of the age.

The last two sentences here are somewhat ambivalent. But Miner has raised the important point of the para-religious practices of the age. In this the Eighteen-Nineties were to be so similar, with their growths in neo-Platonism, theosophy and spiritualism, not to mention other more arcane beliefs. Miner sees the Cavalier need as one "to retreat", and I hope we have already seen just how far that need also was reflected in the Eighteen-Nineties.³⁷ Herrick might wonder "whither" he could "goe" "To shun/This publique overthrow", but in the period of the fin-de-siècle it was the anticipation of collapse that poets took refuge from, not the reality.³⁸ Horace had appealed to the Cavaliers; and their flight

37. Earl Miner, The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton, (Princeton Princeton University Press, 1971), pp.55, 63, 181.

38. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, p.211.

to the idealized country house, as their flight to mysticism, was one in which the Eighteen-Nineties joined.³⁹ The cult of friendship also was a refuge for the Caroline poets. It "provided a way to follow the pattern of the good life here below in order to prepare for a good life above". Jonson had been one of its main proponents, and Castor and Pollux were a type of friendship. The legacy of this cult can be found in the fin-de-siècle period in the friendship cults of Johnson, and in particular Yeats.⁴⁰

The Caroline idealization of the countryside and the country house, revived by Yeats, is in the process of seeking out icons of order to preserve the Caroline world from the threat it felt it was under. Laud's "beauty of holiness", "was the religious analogue to Charles's reliance on icons as a means of governing", Maryann McGuire remarks.⁴¹ The Cavaliers sought out an objectivizing medium for their apprehension of religion, art or government: the sight of Laud's prayer-book, the ceremony of his churches, the symbolic paintings of the King, the masque, the reliance on images of elegance and power. Milton "condemned the Caroline Church's overreliance on the senses", and yet this dependency on sense was one akin to the era of the Eighteen-Nineties, when it was the beauty and ritual of Catholicism that appealed.⁴² The Eighteen-Nineties objectified by mythologizing the past and seeking it out in a way appropriate to the present by putting their own questions to it.

39. Earl Miner, pp.92, 119.

40. Cf. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, pp.53, 134; W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1950), pp.139, 368; Earl Miner, p.250; Ben Jonson, Works, ed. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, vols., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1947), Vol.VIII, The Poems The Prose Works, p.246.

41. Maryann McGuire, Milton's Puritan Masque, (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1983), p.108.

42. Ibid., p.110.

The Caroline era objectified through the symbol as the decadence did except that its symbols were real things, painting and dress, the masque and the panegyric, not the inductive apprehensions of a visionary like de Nerval, as Symons would have it.⁴³ The doctrine of correspondences on the one hand was "real", in the sense that real loyalties were tested, real swords drawn, real masques acted, and real things done. On the other it was "decadent" in the authentic mythic sense: it was a symbolism itself based on a myth of what the past had been, or what the "truth" was. It was a something apprehended by the magician of the tribe, the decadent poet, a Janus; and yet accessible to all the tribe, insofar as it was a reflection of a period which had actually occurred: that of the Caroline. The symbols of that began the Jacobite myth, made real political and religious points, spoke of a real state, and apprehended a real crisis, that of the Civil War. The symbols of its revival were sentimental, mystical, unacted and apprehensive of a weary fin-de-siècle, not a real Civil War. The realization of the Neoplatonic in the ideals of the Caroline masques, the concept of the monarchy as central to the expression of the ideal in terms of the real were part of the Caroline ethos:

Caroline masques habitually assume that a compromise between the Neoplatonic extremes of Ideal Forms and the diminished reality of earthly appearances is embodied in the institution of the monarchy.⁴⁴

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43. Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, ed. Richard Ellman (New York, E.P. Patton 7 Co., 1958 (1899)), pp.10, 14, 75.
44. Maryann McGuire, p.75.

On the other hand, the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties would have no concrete frame in which to place these fruitful representations of symbolic truths. To Arthur Symons, Symbolism "seems to harmonise those instincts which make for religion, passion, and art, freeing us at once of a great bondage".⁴⁵ Such harmony might be found in Laud or Crashaw, but with the distinct difference that it arose not from self-discovery only, but from the apprehension of immortal truths, rendered mortally. Hence the Laudian love of temporal beauty symbolises, and does not contradict, the eternal provision of beauty by God. Sometimes writers like Francis Thompson approach this apprehension; but more often they succumb to the self-indulgence in sentiment and myth promised by Symons's apprehension of Symbolism.⁴⁶ Where the decadence rises above itself, is in its realization through nostalgia of the mythic past in a new way; when it tries to use it creatively to sustain itself, rather than indulging in it as if it were a mere reflection of the present. I hope in my later discussion of the poets to show how Johnson and Thompson in their different ways recreated the Caroline age and revived its symbols in order actively to advance the literary causes of the present.

The Jacobite myth then, to which we return, is always trapped between the actual, "real" symbolism of the Caroline period (and to some extent later events and actions in, particularly Scottish, history), and the sentimental indulgence in it revived in the Eighteen-Nineties, and not entirely dead today which reduces the apprehension of its symbols to mere nostalgia. The nostalgia of

45. Arthur Symons, p.95.

46. Cf. Francis Thompson, The Collected Poetry, (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), pp.86, 131ff; 148ff; 205ff.

the Eighteen-Nineties does, however usually in the end escape from the trap of the latter position by active recreation of the past: its belief in the continuing relevance of the Puritan/Cavalier conflict, by its reconstruction of an English tradition in Caroline terms, and by its intertextual commentary and re-commentary in poems of the period, such as the "Horatian Ode".⁴⁷ Symons's "eternal correspondences between the visible and the invisible universe", are better symbolic guides when placed in the context of a real history which acted upon them, even to the extent of the king being a manifestation of the Divine Right, than when they are located purely in the imaginations of poets exploring Axël's Castle for themselves, rather than defending it against Cromwellian troops.⁴⁸ It is for this reason that people may find the sufferings of the "Tragic Generation" rather factitious: Dowson and Johnson, unlike Montrose or Lovelace, had nothing to suffer for. The Charles who "lost his earthly crown to gain an imperishable crown in heaven" could truly be seen as a vehicle of correspondence between the visible and the invisible worlds, especially as he already had been seen in this light contemporaneously.⁴⁹ Charles's death as a Martyr could be seen as a symbolic fulfilment of his life:

The Martyr's blood was said of old to be
 The seed from whence the Church did grow.
 The Royal Blood which dying Charles did sow
 Becomes no less the seed of Royalty.

as Cowley wrote.⁵⁰ The Royal blood nourishes, both the Church and State. These are the two elements, earthly suffering and heavenly

47. Vide infra, Lionel Johnson, Ch.XII.

48. Arthur Symons, p.75.

49. C.V. Wedgwood, Poetry and Politics Under the Stuarts, (Cambridge, University Press, 1960), p.99.

50. Abraham Cowley, The English Writings: Poems, p.425.

joy, which compose the symbolic correspondence of the myth of the Martyr.⁵¹ C.V. Wedgwood remarks on "the fantasy world where the king and queen are stars of Heaven, and the planets revolve about the Court", and just as this in the symbolic world of Charles's life, so the symbolic world of his death elevates him from a star of Heaven in the abstract, to one in the concrete: a martyr.⁵² This, combined with the apparition of stars at his children's birth, becomes a symbol of Christ-like suffering and pathos, and from there develops into legend, paralleled on the other side by legends of Cromwell's Satanism, and the mysterious day of 3rd September, when Cromwell won Worcester and Dunbar, and when he died: a legend revived in M.R. James's short story mentioned above.⁵³

Of the height of the Caroline era C.V. Wedgwood writes:

The 1630's, that blessed time of peace, seen through the smoke and smother of the ensuing years of Civil War, acquired a magical beauty even for those who had not at the time been in close sympathy with the royal government.⁵⁴

It was natural that this era of the "brave Prince of Cavaliers" should be a period of nostalgic recollection congenial to the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties: a period of symbolic harmony to be contrasted with the symbolic conflict that succeeded, an era mythologized in peace, as the ensuing parts of the Jacobite struggle were mythologized in war.

51. Cf. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, p.12.

52. C.V. Wedgwood, Poetry and Politics Under the Stuarts, p.172.

53. Cf. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, ed. H.M. Margoliouth 2 vols., 3rd ed., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), Vol. I, pp.133-34; Cf. C.V. Wedgwood, p.121.

54. C.V. Wedgwood, p.34.

And yet it was an era that at the same time was viewed as a decadent age which could not "be fully understood without reference to the framework of evolutionary thought": a modern interpretation of the problems of the age.⁵⁵ We have already seen the above in Symonds's discussion.⁵⁶ The drama in particular was seen as in decline. So Charles's court, and Laud's Church were seen as mixed with a declining drama which had begun in another "Golden Age", that of Elizabeth.⁵⁷ So in this case also for the writers of the fin-de-siècle, "decadence" in art came before the disaster which they were expecting in their generation. This time it was not merely the "pious King's eclipsed Right" they mourned,⁵⁸ or the "hard gem-like flame" of men like Carew,⁵⁹ but the decline of western civilization itself.⁶⁰

J.M. Cohen writes of Marvell's garden as "a refuge for the mind afflicted by metaphysical anxieties, and for the man of action involved in the Civil War", although he expands these anxieties to some extent throughout the whole Baroque Movement.⁶¹ Certainly the Eighteen-Nineties used as their refuge from anxiety the whole myth of Charles I and the Jacobite myth that succeeded him. This was their garden.

The Exhibition of the Royal House of Stuart was launched in 1888 in the New Gallery in Regent Street. Sir Frederick (Later Lord)

55. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, p.25; Tom Gibbons, Rooms in the Darwin Hotel, (Nedlands, University of Western Australia Press, 1973), p.3.
56. Cf. René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950: The Later Nineteenth Century, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1966), p.402.
57. William A. McClung, The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977), p.183ff.
58. Abraham Cowley, The English Writings: The Poems, p.425.
59. Keith Feiling, A History of the Tory Party 1640-1714, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924), p.54.
60. Cf. Angela Lambert, Unquiet Souls, (London Macmillan, 1984), p.160.
61. T.M. Cohen, The Baroque Lyric, (London, Hutchinson University Library, 1963), p.90ff.

Leighton was on the executive committee, and Alma-Tadema, Burne-Jones, and Holman Hunt were on the consulting committee.⁶² It signalled a consolidation in the growing revival in Jacobite interest. The Legitimist Jacobite League of Great Britain and Ireland was founded on June 30th 1891, and various Jacobite bodies grew up around the country contemporaneously. In Huntingdon, the White Cockade Club was formed in 1890, in Lincolnshire the Great Grimsby Forty-Five Club in February 1893, and in Scotland clubs at Glasgow and Wishaw in 1894. Clubs were also formed at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. By the Seventh Annual Report of the League, there were clubs in Northumberland, Suffolk and Sussex, and a total of twenty-four branches throughout the country.⁶³

There was considerable concern at some of the activities which these bodies, and others like them became involved in (to some extent magazines like The Legitimist, The Jacobite and The Royalist were in competition). In an article in The Westminster Review entitled "Revival of Jacobitism", Colonel S. Dewé White attacked the new Jacobites.

62. Catalogue, Exhibition of the Royal House of Stuart, (London, [1888]), pp.4, 116-118.

63. The Legitimist Jacobite League of Great Britain and Ireland, Annual report. no.5, p.1; no.6, pp.1, 3; no.7, p.1.

The recent resuscitation of the Cavalier fantacism of the Restoration epoch, that on January 30, 1896, was witnessed at King Charles's statue in London, appears to me to have an ominous significance, favourable to the hereditary claims of Charles I's descendant through his daughter, the Duchess of Orleans, inasmuch as those time-worn claims, by the commemoration of the death of that king as a martyred saint, have become emblazoned with the odour of sanctity derived from the alleged transcendent merits of the pseudo-martyr king, his progenitor. Mr Herbert Vivian, President of the Legitimist Club, in his letter that appeared in the London Standard, February 1, 1896, styled 'King Charles the Martyr's Anniversary', has the assurance to declare, 'No prayers are needed for a canonised saint. Rather should we implore the Martyr's intercession at the Throne of Grace'. Another letter in the same paper, on the subject of the above celebration, makes the following declaration: 'It was not a requiem at all. As the King died for his religion, he is accounted to be with the saints and no prayers for him are necessary'.

Despite the Colonel's seeming inability to complete a sentence save when quoting the periods of another, he makes some interesting points. Clearly Jacobite feeling was high enough in some quarters to concern people (perhaps of a more eccentric kind themselves) about its revival as a political, let alone a cultural force. The Colonel goes on to say:

The commemoration of the 247th anniversary of Charles I's execution is strangely significant, following up, as it does, the commemoration in January last year, 1895, of the 250th anniversary of the execution of Charles' spiritual guide, Archbishop Laud, who was so favourable to the See of Rome that the Pope, in 1633, twice offered him a Cardinal's hat.

It is apparently Popery that concerns the Colonel. He goes on to quote Milton, that "Martyrs...bear witness to the truth, not to themselves", after he has attacked Charles I. The article goes on to mention the expunging of the Martyrdom service from the Prayer Book in 1859 and quotes Bishop Ryle on the increase in Romanism.

The Colonel is concerned about "revolutionary changes in Church and State".⁶⁴

It might hardly be thought that the Jacobites of the Eighteen-Nineties could have effected these. And yet, they or some of them, had the beginnings of a political programme as well as the weight of a sentimental reverence. The Legitimist, while asking for courtesy towards the present Royal Family, said in its April 1894 issue (it began in October 1893), that:

The responsibility of loyalty, faithfulness, and endeavour is only shifted from the heroes of Culloden to our own shoulders of today.

"Their cause is not dead", it proclaims.⁶⁵ Later in 1901, the cause was apparently still strong enough for The Legitimist Ensign to proclaim:

Let the various Orders and Clubs begin by teaching the ABC of Jacobitism...Rome was not built in a day, but when once the English nation has grasped and taken to heart the true story of the devoted Royalists and Jacobites of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who gave their lives and fortunes for the sacred cause of Divine Right, then they will have done a good work.⁶⁶

This demand for historical accuracy does not seem to realise that the English nation hardly had any part in the Jacobitism of the later period. But The Legitimist Ensign was more concerned with the current state of the movement. It vents its anger on the erection of statues of Cromwell at Westminster and St. Ives, and

64. Colonel S. Dewé White, "Revival of Jacobitism", The Westminster Review, Volume 146, no.4 (1896), pp.417-426 (pp.417, 422,425-26).

65. Editorial, The Legitimist, no.3 (April 1894), p.1

66. Unsigned article, "Jacobitism - what is it?", The Legitimist Ensign, no.3 (1901), ix; Vol. II (1902), V, xii.

tells us that one of "The Thames Valley Legitimists Club's aims was "to oppose in every way Republicanism, Atheism, and Socialism". Despite these more mundane politics, we also learn that James Stuart Y. Falco succeeds to the Duchy of Berwick.⁶⁷ Such details suggest contact with those Stuarts still left on the Continent. Certainly there was interest in continental Legitimism: articles in The Royalist on "The Rightful King of France" and "The Spanish Succession", suggest as much.

Indeed:

A message of friendship and sympathy was commissioned for delivery to the French legitimists, the "Blanco d'Espagne" at their banquet on the 22nd May - which, by the way, happens to be White Rose Day, old style.

The Journal de Paris published the above-mentioned article on "The Rightful King of France", so we presume that there was cross-channel interest in the subject also.⁶⁸

Certainly when politics ranked above sentiment, and it is not always easy to distinguish the two, the politics of these organisations were very far to the right. An article in The Royalist No.8 entitled "The Abolition of General Elections", and suggesting "the complete abolition of that menagerie known as the House of Commons", may seem to indicate a high level of unreality in the discussions of the present, as well as past issues, which these organisations and magazines entered upon.⁶⁹ However, this Neanderthal constitutionalism

67. Announcement, The Legitimist Ensign, No.3, (1901), ix; Vol.II (1902), V, xii.

68. Unsigned article, "The rightful King of France", "The Spanish Succession"; The Royalist, Vol.I, no.2 (May 16th 1890), pp.24-28; Vol.I, no.4 (July 16th 1890), p.60-63; note also Vol.I, no.3 (June 16th 1890), p.45.

69. Unsigned article, "The Abolition of General Elections", The Royalist, Vol.I, no.8 (November 16th 1890), pp.115-117 (p.115).

was combined with a respect for regional and national idealities of the British Isles probably associated with Jacobitism, since it was in those regions that it was strongest. The Royalist for May 16th 1890 carries an article on "Cornwall in 1715" strongly redolent of regionalism: "a Cornish man calls it part of England 'under protest' "⁷⁰ Scotland receives even more attention: in No.17 of the Miscellaneous Papers of the Legitimist Jacobite League, Theodore Napier argues against the "infamous Treaty of Union" and for "the days when Scotland was a real Nation".⁷¹ This being said, however, the Legitimist League was not committed specifically to the restoration of the House of Stuart; it concentrated on other political aspects of the Jacobite legacy still present in its time, such ones as religious disabilities for example. Yet the Marquis de Ruvigny and Raineval and Cranston Metcalfe, in No.14 of the Miscellaneous Papers, argue that "the use of the word 'Jacobite' in connection with Legitimism in this country is not very happy". They are clearly arguing for a new reactionary politics based on Jacobitism but not dependent on it.⁷²

However, the Legitimist League is inconsistent on this front. Nos. 33 and 37 of the Papers illustrate a poster which was sent by

70. Unsigned article, "Cornwall in 1715", The Royalist, vol.I, no.2 (May 16th 1890), pp.22-24 (p.22).

71. Theodore Napier, The Royal House of Stuart: A Plea for its Restoration being An Appeal to Loyal Scotsmen, Miscellaneous Papers of the Legitimist Jacobite League, No.17, (Edinburgh, 1899), pp.17, 19.

72. Marquis de Ruvigny and Raineval and Cranston Metcalfe, "Legitimism in England", Miscellaneous Papers of the Legitimist Jacobite League, no.14, p.1.

post in small format, and "affixed to hoardings etc. in London", in large format "on the night of June 20, 1902" asserting that Mary of Modena, not Edward VII, was the rightful monarch.⁷³ A pamphlet on this event, "High Treason", by Allen Upward, was reviewed in The Royalist of December 1903. Upward opined that as a result of this Jacobite action "The son of Queen Victoria had to be proclaimed in the capital of the British Empire by stealth". The reviewer is somewhat amused by Upward's exaggerated rendering of the Jacobite threat:

Amongst other valuable information vouchsafed in this wonderful brochure we learn that 'there are eighty Members of Parliament whose votes we [the Jacobites] can reckon on tomorrow', and 'not a few peers' prepared to repeal the Act of Settlement.

Upward reports that the German Emperor advised the shooting of the placers of these treasonable posters, who in Upward's words, wished to "put a poor Popish Princess on the Throne of this Protestant country".⁷⁴

Clearly, Upward's foolish alarmism is being gently ridiculed in this review. But the very act itself, and the fact that Colonel White, Allen Upward, or others like them thought a threat was there, demonstrates the strength of the revival, as does the importance of some of those associated with it. For example a dinner held on 26th November 1903 "to commemorate H.R.H. the Prince Regent crossing the border in November 1745" included among its guests the Marquis of Ruvigny, the Hon. FitzRoy Stewart, and the Misses McDonnell of

73. Miscellaneous Papers of the Legitimist Jacobite League, nos.33,37.

74. Unsigned review, Allen Upward, High Treason, The Jacobite, vol.IV, nos. 11,12 (Dec.1903), p.76; Cf. Allen Upward, Treason, 3rd ed., (London, The Tyndale Press, 1904), pp.13, 15, 17.

Keppoch. The Marquis of Queensberry sent regrets. Toasts were given to the de jure King of France and Spain, Don Carlos, and the de jure kings of Portugal and the Two Sicilies, as well as Emperor Franz-Joseph.⁷⁵

It was not unlikely that these organisations would be attractive to some eccentric noblemen, with their pledge to abolish the House of Commons. But what was surprising was the widespread dissemination of these sympathies with a cause long gone, with branches in places like Manchester and Middlesbrough.⁷⁶ Not necessarily great in absolute numbers, these Jacobites nevertheless issued many pamphlets with titles such as "The...Constitutional Position of the Jacobite Party in England" or "The Nineteen Descents of His Royal Highness Prince Robert from His Late Sacred Majesty King James I and VI" as well as a pamphlet stating that James III and not Victoria had had the longest reign of any monarch.⁷⁷ Branches at Oxford and Cambridge also flourished intermittently, and anniversaries were celebrated as far apart as Glencoe and London. Of course there were many appropriate anniversaries at this time: the 250th anniversary of Charles's death, the 300th of Cromwell's birth, the 150th of Culloden for example.

There is also a considerable amount of literary interest displayed by these periodicals. Their frequent reviewing testifies to their incorporating interest in all things Jacobite. Frequently also, they contain poems of which John Buchan Brodie's, in the December 1903 edition of The Royalist, is a fair example:

75. Unsigned article, "Crossing the Border", The Jacobite, Vol.IV nos, 11, 12 (26th November 1903), pp.74-75 (p.74).

76. The Legitimist Jacobite League of Great Britain and Ireland, Annual report No.6, p.4.

77. Miscellaneous Papers of the Legitimist Jacobite League, nos.25,30; J. Hewell Jones, "The Longest Reign", (London).

Ho! push about the jorum
 And charge each glass anew:
 Let's drink confusion to old Noll,
 And all his crop-eared crew.
 To-night we'll drown him deep in wine,
 And if he wine defy,
 To-morrow morn we'll drub him well,
 And hang him up to dry.

Once again this has the rhythm of Lovelace's "A loose Saraband" or Rhys's "Rhymers' Club Song".⁷⁹ But more than in these slight verses, it is the reviews and articles which show the ideology of Jacobite nostalgia. "Literature and Morals of the Stuart Period" was read at the Session of the Order of the White Rose on November 8th 1890:

What advance in pure intellectual and artistic culture have we made since that January morning when Charles the First laid his head upon the block? The greatest poets of our century have only strained their ears to catch the echoes of the Stuart lyre, and the height of their ambition has been to reproduce the charm, the natural grace and music of a Fletcher, a Jonson, a Suckling or a Lovelace; in dramatic poetry the writers of the seventeenth century are as far above as the stars; in art Vandyke and Rubens are as supremely great as they were two hundred and fifty years ago. The literature of the Stuart period is still and ever will be the literature of England, unapproachable for the vastness and splendour of its genius.⁸⁰

This is the English tradition. Although in this guise, which leans towards the Jacobite rather than the decadent interpretation of literary nostalgia, and does not see the "literature" of the Stuart era as decadent at all (not that it was in the early period.) If

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78. John Buchan Brodie, "A Cavalier Song", The Jacobite, Vol.IV, nos. 11, 12 (Dec. 1903), p.77; Cf. The Legitimist Jacobite League of Great Britain and Ireland, annual reports.
79. Richard Lovelace, The Poems, ed. C.H. Wilkinson, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1930), p.139; The Book of the Rhymers' Club, (London, Elkin Mathews, 1892), p.1.
80. H. Barton Baker, "Literature and Morals of the Stuart Period", The Royalist, Vol.II, no.7, (Oct. 30th 1891), pp.105-111 (p.111).

it is a differing interpretation from say, that of Symonds, it goes the same way home. The route it takes is one of literary nostalgia once more: this is the great era, forever gone, and we can but feebly echo it today. The Royalist also makes it clear that the cult of this Jacobite nostalgia is set up in direct reaction to those adversaries whom we have already met, the Puritans of the present day. In "Oliver Cromwell the Protector", carried by The Royalist on January 16th, 1891, we read these words:

For nearly half a century the worship of an idealized Cromwell has been the favourite cult of those Radicals who preached the false gospel of Revolution and yearned for a Republic. The new religion called for a new revelation; what the Book of Mormon was to the followers of Joe Smith, Carlyle's Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell became to such latter-day saints as these. On all sides the cry arose:- "There is no hero but Cromwell, and Carlyle is his prophet..."⁸¹

Like the letter quoted on p.157 above, here we see the belief that Cromwell was a hero to a large group of people, here identified punningly as "latter-day saints" referring both to Mormonism and the persistence of the Puritans. Their "worship" has led, or helped to lead, to the Jacobite reaction.

In a review of Cavalier and Courtier Lyrists: edited by W.H. Dicks in The Royalist for March 30th 1892, the reviewer attempts to define the nature of the opinion that the present age should hold concerning the Caroline poets:

81. Unsigned review of Reginald Palgrave's Oliver Cromwell, the Protector, (Jan. 16, 1891), p.149, 152 (p.149).

It is to the Stuart Kings that we owe the dower of poetic efflorescence which has descended to us under the misnomer of Elizabethan literature; and in the department of its minor verse we naturally look for a reflection of the feelings which actuated the writers thereof, both in their lives and in their versmaking.⁸²

Here we see, as we saw in Alice Meynell's definition of the seventeenth century cited earlier, that "Elizabethan literature" is not necessarily a category of literary history, but can be meant as an expression of enthusiastic spirit for a chronologically separate era.⁸³ The reviewer evidently finds a great deal of interest in the subject of the relation of feelings and poetry, for he goes on to take issue with the anthologist:

...who presents as mere lovers of pleasure, men who were really in a higher sense ascetics, who impoverished themselves willingly, who cut themselves adrift from their families and friends, who left houses and lands, who lived wandering and exiled lives, and who died wretched deaths of violence and starvation on fields of blood, in prisons, and London purlieus. 'Of whom the world was not worthy'.⁸⁴

Clearly the Jacobite cause had room for rather more than one martyr. This presentation of the Cavalier poets as "ascetics" rather than pleasure lovers, is in keeping with the kind of ethos sought out by those who imitated them in the present age. Lionel Johnson's "Go from me; I am one of those, who fall", and his self-dramatization as a martyr of beauty, who must love the beautiful

82. R. Duncombe Jewell, review of W.H. Dircks (ed.), Cavalier and Courtier Lyrists, The Royalist, Vol.II, no.12 (March 30th 1892), pp.182-85 (p.182).

83. Cf. Ch.IV, n.40, 41.

84. Review of Cavalier and Courtier Lyrists, p.182.

and suffer for his guilt in doing so, is a subject we shall study.⁸⁵

"The Tragic Generation", with their Catholicism, poverty, recluse natures and "exiled lives", as exemplified in Johnson, Dowson and Thompson, were the modern parallels to these poets, who saw themselves as ascetics or longing to be so, while living (with the possible exception of Dowson) lives that might very well qualify them for the epithet often given them, that of "decadents". It was Yeats, who helped to glorify their dual existence and its loyalty to artistic standards.⁸⁶ The age's tendency to convert the sensual into the ascetic as we see both in Francis Thompson and in Axël itself, was one appropriate to the interpretation of the Cavalier poets given here. Nor were the parallels ignored by the Jacobite magazines. The reviewer here goes on to comment on the editor of the anthology that

...perhaps he has said the final and most perfect word about Rochester in telling us that he 'may almost be regarded as the Verlaine of his period...'⁸⁷

It is clear that the Jacobite interest in literature extended not only to the past, but also to the present period, not only through comparisons such as the one above, but by a recommendation and encouragement of the revival of Stuart literary practice in the present age. The first edition of The Royalist (April 16, 1890), states the case for the revival in theory and practice firmly in its opening editorial:

85. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, pp.24, 52.

86. W.B. Yeats, Autobiographies, (London, Macmillan, 1956), p.277 ff; Collected Poems, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1950), pp.116-119.

87. Review of Cavalier and Courtier Lyrists, p.185.

Few, even among those who pay the least heed to such matters, have failed to notice the remarkable revival of general and popular interest in the Stuart period of our history. Not long ago such interest seemed dead...

It then goes on to state:

Within the last few years, however...a new Stuart literature has come into being: there is scarcely a magazine or review but has had its say upon some detail of the subject, from the Casket Letters to the death of the Cardinal who was king non desideriiis hominum sed voluntate Dei:⁸⁸

The study of some of the products of that literature is among our tasks in this thesis. What is clear from the above, though, is the way in which this was viewed as a revival, and a revival, which as we have seen, was intended to conflict with the "hero-worship, founded on Carlyle's Letters and Speeches", of Oliver Cromwell.⁸⁹

The revival was intended as "the advancement of Legitimism as against Rebellion, Democracy, and Anarchy"; and although The Royalist was not as extreme as The Legitimist League, there was nevertheless a political centre to them both.⁹⁰ Jacobitism was apparently widespread enough on a sentimental basis for Cardinal Manning to forbid "solemn Requiem mass...for the centenary of the death of King Charles III", in 1888, but by 1892 it had grown serious enough to propose a "Jacobite candidate for Parliament", although The Royalist did not approve.⁹¹

88. Editorial, The Royalist, Vol.I, no.1 (April 16th, 1890), p.1

89. Unsigned review of Reginald F.D. Palgrave, Oliver Cromwell the Protector, The Royalist, Vol.I, no.1 (April 16th, 1890), p.15.

90. Editorial, The Royalist, Vol.I, no.1, p.2.

91. Comment, The Royalist, Vol.II, no.10 (January 30th, 1892), p.145; Vol.II, no.12 (March 30th, 1892), p.180.

Contacts with Jacobites abroad included press cuttings, one from the Transcript in Boston commenting on the "numerous zealous Jacobites in the city".⁹² Perhaps it was here that T.S. Eliot first encountered "the spectre of a Rose".⁹³ Not only were contacts maintained abroad, but at home articles such as "Underground Jacobitism" in The Monthly Review sought to provide a continual history of Jacobitism from 1746 to the present day [1905], including supporting quotes from Doctor Johnson and Lord Liverpool. It concludes that perhaps "like Owen of the Red Hand, it [Jacobitism] did not die, and only waits for waking".⁹⁴ W.G. Blaikie Murdoch's The Spirit of Jacobite Loyalty continues the literary connection by using Swinburne as a poet who connects the historical legacy of those who fought for Jacobitism with its poetic revival, in terms like the following:

It is only giving honour to whom honour is due,
to praise those whose feelings have thus been
expressed in imperishable verse by one whose own
ancestors fought and bled for the Stuarts, and
who is distantly related to one of Prince Charles's
lifeguards:

Our name the night may swallow,
Our lands the church may take:
But night nor death may swallow,
Nor hell's nor heaven's dim hollow,
The star whose height we take,
The star whose light we follow
For faith's unfaltering sake
Till hope that sleeps awake.⁹⁵

It seems that there were those on both the literary and political sides of the revival who thought that the sleeping hope might awake.

92. Editorial, The Royalist, Vol.II, no.12 (March 30th, 1892), p.177.

93. T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, (London, Faber & Faber, 1969), p.196.

94. R.E. Francillon, "Underground Jacobitism", The Monthly Review Vol.21 (1905), pp.17-30 (pp.17, 29, 30).

95. W.G. Blaikie Murdoch, The Spirit of Jacobite Loyalty, (Edinburgh, William Brown, 1907), pp.165-66.

Andrew Lang, in Prince Charles Edward Stuart, remarks that " 'If he came again, I would go with him', enthusiasts say, even to this hour", and Jacobitism was by no means of the least of the enthusiasms of the Eighteen-Nineties which linked them with the Caroline period.⁹⁶

Any connexions with the age might have with France helped and might not have hindered the Jacobite myth, for in France too it was popular, fuelled by the long connection with the Chevalier and his sons. The Marquis Campana de Cavell, in Les Derniers Stuarts à Saint-Germain-en-Laye, published in 1871, quotes Voltaire:

'Si quelque chose', s'écrit Voltaire, 'justifie ceux qui croient à une fatalité à laquelle rien ne peut se soustraire, c'est cette suite continuelle de malheurs qui persécute la maison des Stuarts pendant plus de trois siècles'.

The author himself remarks: "ils avaient de l'intelligence et du courage, que leur a-t-il manqué? La main de Dieu". His attitude to them is much the same as those of the revivalists of the Eighteen-Nineties: they are the chief exponents of lovely majestic pathos.

His tone is elegiac:

Si l'hommage impartial que nous offrons à la vérité en livrant au public tant de souvenirs jusqu'ici inconnus de leur histoire, n'est pas pour eux une réparation des injustices qu'ils ont subies, ce sera au moins la couronne de fleurs la plus sympathique et la moins périssable que nous puissions déposer sur leurs tombeaux.

96. Andrew Lang, Prince Charles Edward Stuart: The Young Chevalier, (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1903), p.3.

"Plus tristes" is the whole message about the last Stuarts,⁹⁷ as it was the message of Lionel Johnson about the "king of sighs". (Johnson's "By The Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross" appeared in The Royalist for 29 February 1892.)⁹⁸ The Stuart revival enabled its adherents simultaneously to elevate pathos and martyrdom, earthly defeat and symbolic victory. Barbey d'Aurevilly had traced Dandyism back to the Court of King Charles II,⁹⁹ and though there are no explicit connexions to link its reappearance in Britain with the Jacobite revival, it was certainly an associated phenomenon. (Brummell himself after all, had been a French legitimist sixty years earlier, when the craze of Anglomania was at its height in Paris).¹⁰⁰ Ellen Moers writes that Baudelaire's vision of the dandy was "as the last representative of human pride drowning in a rising sea of democracy",¹⁰¹ and surely this too is an appropriate metaphor for the temporary resurgence of the Stuarts, the last true opponents of the ideas of constitutional democracy in Britain.

This kind of retreat to the past was not shared by all: Wilde, strangely enough, wrote poems in praise of Cromwell, "While England

97. La Marquise Campana de Cavelli, Les Derniers Stuarts à Saint-Germain-en-Laye, (London and Edinburgh, Williams and Norgate, 2 vols. 1871), Vol. I, 6, 117, 159.

98. Lionel Johnson, "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross", The Royalist, Vol. II, no. 11 (29 February 1892), p. 169.

99. J.A. Barbey d'Aurevilly, Of Dandyism and of George Brummell, tr. Douglas Ainslie, (London, J.M. Dent & Co., 1897), pp. 37-38.

100. Ellen Moers, The Dandy, Brummell to Beerbohm, (London, Secker and Warburg, 1960), pp. 108, 124.

101. Ibid., p. 283.

could be a great Republic show",¹⁰² and Victor Plarr wrote on Hampden;¹⁰³ and of course George Moore used Cromwell as one of his examples of great injustice.¹⁰⁴ But a retreat to the past of some kind there definitely was, whether on the Puritan or Royalist side, and the Royalist one was the one of pride, pathos, Anglo-Catholicism and mysticism which appealed to the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties. The resurgence of the aristocratic pose was an attractive one for those who feared democracy and anarchism, and made the cult of the self a reactionary one. Combined also with the revival of Celticism, the connexion of dying languages and cultures with areas which had retained the highest levels of Jacobite support, the Jacobite revival, in regionalist, political, and literary aspects, was fuelled by the routes along which the literary needs and nostalgias of the period developed.

Above and beyond this, the fin-de-siècle consciousness, the sense of an ending about to happen, directed the choice of nostalgia more precisely still at the Caroline era and its successor, Jacobite myths. For as Christopher Hill points out, belief in the end of the world was widespread "in the seventeenth century", and even more so in the years around the Civil War".

In 1659-60 even a sober and intelligent politician like Sir Henry Vane supported the millenarians in opposing an oath against government by a single person; the Fifth Monarchists were expecting the Second Coming in the near future, and it would never do for King Jesus to be excluded in advance by Act of Parliament.¹⁰⁵

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102. Oscar Wilde, Complete Works, ed. Vyvyan Holland, New ed., (London and Glasgow, Collins, 1966), p.715.
103. Victor Plarr, The Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher (London, Eric & Jan Stevens, 1974), p.71.
104. George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, (New York, Capricorn Books, 1959), p.146.
105. Christopher Hill, Puritanism and Revolution (London, Secker and Warburg, 1958, 1968), p.314.

Of course, the fin-de-siècle was not so closely associated with Christian millenarianism, more with an impending sense of doom. But their belief was in "this decrepit age of the world",¹⁰⁶ and although comparisons between Fifth Monarchists and Eighteen-Nineties anarchists are bound to be tenuous, the millenarianism of those who expected King Jesus, and those who fought for the impending arrival of an anarchist utopia partook of related kinds of thought.

The Eighteen-Nineties looked back with nostalgia to the Caroline era for these reasons, not merely out of sentiment, but because in it they saw their own reflection, partly created, partly there. For in some ways these two eras were similar, although mostly the latter made itself so. The House of Stuart, and in particular Charles I, were the actors and executors of a symbolism of Church and State which the Eighteen-Nineties could follow through in a symbolism of self-discovery, a correspondence with the invisible world through mythic realization. Part of the mythology which led them to these correspondences, was a mythology of reality: that of the Stuarts. Lionel Johnson's view of Charles I as actual martyr is a Symbolist one, like Axël's, who also dies for the apprehension of loveliness, with this difference: that Charles was a real king, and he is really dead. The dimension which the past brought to mythology, the element of certainty which it contained in the symbolic apprehension of things was one, which as we have seen earlier in Chapter I, appealed to the writers of this generation. This reconstruction of the past, and the seeking in it of the

106. Fulke Greville, quoted in David Norbrook, Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p.157.

reflection of the present, was the flesh and bone of "decadence", the factual manifestations of its yearning for the impossible and the invisible could be found only in one place: the past, which everything disappears into without actually losing the appearance it once made. And in that past, it was frequently to the era of the Caroline and Jacobite that they returned. For in it they found the conflicts of the present, the symbols of the past, its legends, Celticism, icons, Anglo-Catholicism, buckishness and artistry.

We now go on to look in detail at the work of three poets in particular with regard to their interest in the Caroline age, the relationship of which with the Eighteen-Nineties having now been discussed. These poets are Ernest Dowson, whose delicacy is that of a latter-day Cavalier poet; Francis Thompson, who wrote as inheritor to the Baroque and Metaphysical poets; and Lionel Johnson, who was a Jacobite sympathizer and modelled one of his best poems on King Charles as hero. All of these writers are indeed central to the era under discussion: and I hope to show through detailed study of their writings, their contribution to, and dependency on, the writing and ideas of the Caroline age. Thus is Lucy McDiarmid's "Myth of the seventeenth century" carried back a little;¹⁰⁷ carried back in fact, to its beginnings, from where we now start.

107. Lucy McDiarmid, Saving Civilization, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.34 ff, 39.

Chapter VII : AGAINST NATURE : DEFINING DECADENCE

In English, décadence and the literature thereof, mean this: the period, at which passion, or romance, or tragedy, or sorrow, or any other form of activity or of emotion, must be refined upon, and curiously considered, for literary treatment: an age of after-thought, of reflection. Hence come one great virtue, and one great vice: the virtue of much and careful meditation upon life and its emotions and its incidents: the vice of over subtilty and of affectation, when thought thinks upon itself, and when emotions become entangled with the consciousness of them.

- Lionel Johnson "A Note Upon the Practice and Theory of Verse at the present time obtaining in France".¹

Even when looking forward, the decadent mind is never 'forward-looking': if it turns towards the future, it is only to anticipate regress.

- Renato Poggioli²

The golden Age returns

- Thomas Carew.³

Decadence has always proved an extremely difficult notion to define. It is primarily a term which characterizes rather than describes: and since it characterizes so many different things and events, it places its foremost reliance on connotation rather than denotation. In the abstract, it means only as much to the person

1. Lionel Johnson, "A Note Upon the Practice and Theory of Verse at the present time obtaining in France", Century Guild Hobby Horse Vol VI (1891), pp.61-66 (p.64).
2. Renato Poggioli, "Qualis Artifex Pereo!", Harvard Library Bulletin, Vol.13 (1959), pp.135-159 (p.135).
3. Thomas Carew, The Poems, ed. Rhodes Dunlap, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949), p. 83.

who encounters it as its last context. Hence the ordinary person, unread in the technicalities of literary decline, might to some extent associate it with the sexually sleazy or perverse, its popular use, rather than with the notions of artificiality and extravagance that it connotes in the Eighteen-Nineties. To the historian, of course, the term might very likely mean something again.

We can see that this fluidity of the concept is not only present now, but was present in the period under discussion as an article by Russell Goldfarb indicates:

To Max Beerbohm, decadence was artifice; to Robert Hitchens, it was unconventional and exhibitionist behaviour; to John Davidson and Jocelyn Quilp, it was immorality; to G.S. Street, the lust for unusual experience.⁴

Clearly to most writers of the time also, the word connoted their prejudices rather than denoted any consistent features. Such writers would not recognise themselves as "decadent", for to them, the word was antipathetic.

To some writers it was not, of course, and in those, Dowson and Wilde for example, we see the consequences for what we largely regard as "decadence" today: self-indulgence in life and style; artificiality; perversity; morbidity. Indeed, these are the chief features of "decadence" as defined by Holbrook Jackson.⁵ However, they will be found inadequate to our discussion here. The word deserves a more thorough definition than can be given it within the confines of this thesis, but I shall attempt to shed some light on important, yet neglected, features concerning the definition of the term.

4. Russell M. Goldfarb, "Late Victorian Decadence", The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol.20, no.3 (Spring, 1962) pp.369-373 (p.371).

5. Ibid.

Certainly decline was an important part of it. It was Winckelmann who

...introduced into the study of art the conception of historical cycles within which a civilization's creative powers, like a living organism, went through a process of growth and decay.⁶

Later, Nisard, in Etudes de Moeurs et de critique sur les Poètes Latins de la Décadence, remarked of decadence that "C'est tout simplement un besoin de chercher dans les souvenirs du passé des détails que l'inspiration ne fournit pas". In his opinion in decadence, what you "avez gagné en méthodes, en théories, en préceptes, vous l'avez perdu en inspirations".⁷

In discussing "decadence" in this light, Nisard is the first to see it articulately in terms of the outworn repetition of once vital means of expression; but he also sees something else, which is less frequently acknowledged: that not only is "decadence" a decline from the past, but that it actively seeks in the past in "les souvenirs du passé", the means of expression it itself lacks. Such will be the argument of the English Tradition in this thesis.

Yeats saw his time as "The Autumn of the Body", an era preceding change,⁸ and Dowson's "favourite phrase is reported to have been "Après nous le déluge".⁹ The sense of foreboding in the fin-de-siècle age was one which began with a distrust of progress in Baudelaire,¹⁰

6. Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece, (Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.75.
7. M.D. Nisard, Etudes de Moeurs et de Critique sur Les Poètes Latins de la Décadence, 3 vols., (Brussels, Louis Hamman et Compee, 1834), Vol.III, pp.61, 87.
8. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions, (New York, Macmillan, 1961), p.189ff.
9. Quoted in Wendell Harris, "Innocent Decadence: The Poetry of the Savoy", PMLA 771 (1962), pp.629-636 (p.629).
10. Cf. Baudelaire, Selected Writings on Art and Artists, tr. P.E. Charret, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972), p.120ff.

and continued via a distrust of political individualism in Paul Bourget to Nietzsche, who saw a parallel to Bourget's fears in the characteristic of literary *décadence* which he identified: that the fact that "life no longer resides in the whole", and that the organic unit of the text fractures so that "the word becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence", a fact in parallel to "'freedom of the individual', morally speaking".¹¹ In a sense the anarchism of the late nineteenth century is the political aspect of such literary definitions. It was not for nothing that Nordau and Lombroso, with their Darwinian concepts of degeneration, linked the criminal and the artist:

Degenerates are not always criminals, prostitutes, anarchists, and pronounced lunatics; they are often authors and artists.

Interestingly enough, Lombroso also linked the nineteenth and the seventeenth centuries in this respect:

Some acquaintance with this new variety of literary madman will explain to us the existence, in the seventeenth century, of the French précieux, and at the present day, that of the Parnassians, Symbolistes and Décadents.¹²

Such applications of Darwinian thought continued in political-philosophical aspects in books such as Spengler's Decline of the West,¹³ and in the literary arena in studies such as Roger William's The Horror of Life, a most capable modern rendering of Nordau with a view to establishing the influence of syphilis on French authors of

11. Tom Gibbons, Rooms in the Darwin Hotel, (Nedlands, University of Western Australia Press, 1973), pp.30, 31.

12. Max Nordau, Degeneration, (London, William Heinemann, 1898), vii; Cesare Lombroso, The Man of Genius, (London, Walter Scott, 1891), p.230.

13. Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, abridged by Helmut Werner, tr. Charles Atkinson, (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1961).

the nineteenth century.¹⁴

But this idea of decline, and the extravagance and megalomania associated with the poet/lunatic/anarchist largely ignored the point made by Nisard about the value of the past to the present. Nietzsche was not so short-sighted in his analysis of the role of poets:

Insofar as they want to alleviate the life of man, poets either turn their eyes away from the toilsome present or they procure for the present new colours through a light which they direct upon it from the past. To be able to do this, they themselves have to be in many respects, backward-looking creatures: so that they can be employed as bridges to quite distant ages and conceptions, to dead or dying religions and culture. They are, in fact, always and necessarily epigones.¹⁵

This is interesting. As a definition of the role of all poets at all times, it will not stand up: Hardy and Sidney, Lawrence and Larkin, Pope (excepting the Pastorals) and Swift are hardly poets of this type. But considering it as a statement coloured by the period in which Nietzsche is writing, it shows the tendency against progress found in some of the European writers of the age, which in England led to the re-awakening of the English Tradition. It fits well, for example, with Lionel Johnson's statement at the beginning of this chapter, that the "decadence" in English meant "an age of afterthought" or Poggioli's acute statement about regress. Decadence is, I intend to submit, a philosophy of retreat as much as or more than, one of decline. Jean Pierrot in The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900 remarks that decadents were:

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14. Roger Williams, The Horror of Life, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980).
15. P.J. Hollingdale (ed.), A Nietzsche Reader, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977), p.125.

Convinced that the material universe is nothing but an appearance...they were to turn their gaze backward toward certain favored and prestigious past eras.¹⁶

The points are made, but the arguments are unformulated. As we shall see later in criticism of the English "decadence", commentators make the points on which our argument in this thesis rests, but do not incorporate them into an overall picture. Decadence remains an argument about decline, not about literary archaeology.

Symons did not help the exploration of the term by his dismissal of it as a prelude to Symbolism, which we have discussed in Chapter I.¹⁷ Yet since, as we have seen, "the obscure and fatal initiation of madness" is the way to discover the doctrine of correspondences, how does the arcana of symbolism differ from the actions of "decadence"?¹⁸ Symons eventually came to minimize "decadence" as a literary expression as "a term applicable to style only". It was "a noisy moment in literary history while the serious movement of Symbolism was in preparation", a technical hitch almost in the majestic rise and rise of the symbolist aesthetic.¹⁹

All rather doubtful, since it was Baudelaire who first rested his theory of poetic symbols on an "uncompromisingly mystical foundation".²⁰ some time before Symons's The Symbolist Movement in

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16. Jean Pierrot, The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900, tr. D. Gottman, (University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.10.
17. Cf. R.K.R. Thornton, The Decadent Dilemma, (London, Edward Arnold, 1983), p.200; Ruth Z. Temple, The Critic's Alchemy, (New Haven, College and University Press, 1953), p.155.
18. Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, ed. Richard Ellman, (New York, E.P. Patton & Co., 1958(1899), p.75; Roger Lhombreaud, Arthur Symons: A Critical Biography, (London, The Unicorn Press, 1963), p.238.
19. Ruth Z. Temple, The Critic's Alchemy, (New Haven, College and University Press, 1953), pp.154-55.
20. A.G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1968), p.53.

Literature appeared in 1899. Moreover Symons had made higher claims for the "morbid curiosity of form" which he believed helped to constitute "decadence" in his famous 1893 article in Harper's Monthly Magazine:

To fix the last fine shade, the quintessence of things; to fix it fleetingly: to be a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul; that is the ideal of Decadence, and it is what Paul Verlaine has achieved.²¹

This sounds rather more laudatory than Symons was subsequently to become.

After Symons, criticism of "decadence" as a concept in English has been remarkably thin on the ground. Mario Praz (not in English!) exhaustively annotated the symptoms while leaving the disease more or less untouched,²² while the only full-length philosophical enquiry published this century is by C.E.M. Joad who defined "Decadence" as "the valuing of experience for its own sake" and the neglect of objective moral criteria. This is of course, a shot at Pater, and later, as it turns out, Virginia Woolf, while Bourget's definition gets a mention via Plato on the "democratic man":

He knows no order or necessity in life; but he calls life as he conceives it pleasant and free and divinely blessed, and is ever faithful to it.

Joad argues closely and cogently, but fails in one signal area, besides that of literary nostalgia: in his view of decadence as a neglect of absolute moral criteria, he does not explain why guilt

21. Arthur Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature", Harper's Monthly Magazine, Vol.26. (1893), pp.858-867 (pp.862, 867).

22. Cf. Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony, tr. Angus Davidson, ed. Frank Kermode, 2nd ed., (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 36, 40, 154, 259, 270, 312, 390, 450-51.

was such an important part of the decadents' feelings: the desire to sin to repent to sin again we encounter in discussing Francis Thompson in this thesis, not to mention the alcoholic guilt of Lionel Johnson.²³

More recently, Richard Gilman in Decadence, The Strange Life of an Epithet, comes to the conclusion that there are so many different definitions that the whole is no more or less than a "portmanteau stuffed with emptiness".²⁴ Will this do?

I don't really think so. The period we are discussing is an age where there was simply too much going on of a radically different nature to sustain the idea that the word always used to characterize the period may be meaningless, no matter how meaningful the period itself is seen to be.

This is easy when faced with such a diversity of characteristics, but it is not the same thing as being just. I shall attempt a short but I hope, useful analysis of the word in the terms under which this thesis is operating: the "decadence's" tendency to regress and revive the past, to revolt against the politics and society of the present (Cf. Bourget's definition), and to anticipate disaster. Many of the circumstantial examples of these tendencies will be discussed throughout the thesis, but at this stage, I am aiming for a conceptual summation of their system of operation.

John Senior in The Way Down and Out asks "What is the metaphysical foundation of the symbolist movement?" and answers "occultism".²⁵

23. C.E.M. Joad, Decadence: A Philosophical Inquiry, (London, Faber, 1964), pp.54, 103.

24. Richard Gilman, Decadence, The Strange Life of an Epithet, (London, Secker and Warburg, 1979 (1975)), p.180.

25. John Senior, The Way Down and Out: The Occult in Symbolist Literature, (New York, Cornell University Press, 1959), xxiii.

As A.G. Lehmann points out, it was Plotinus who was "virtually the first philosopher to advance a definite 'symbolic', as opposed to imitative outline of the metaphysic of art". Given this aspect of Neoplatonic thought it was little wonder that Plotinus was much in vogue in the Eighteen-Nineties period, for a use of poetic symbols as means of transformation and escape infected the period.²⁶

Baudelaire had "rested his theory of poetic symbols on an uncompromisingly mystical foundation": and thus set the scene for symbolic art to depend on the hidden, the occult, rather than the real.²⁷

It is on this basis that I have already criticised Symons's belief that Symbolism could replace decadence by uniting real and ideal in the symbol. For there was no equal partnership in this new unity: instead perceptions of the real were based on the ideal, and hence subjectivized among different ideals to the point where the symbolist hero might be an Axël or a Des Esseintes. Symbolism rested on mystic assumptions reached by self-exploration, which might even include madness in the case of de Nerval. In this sense, it was indistinguishable from the subjectivity of decadence, with its creation and recreation of flamboyant selves. After all if Maclair's answer to the problem of how the "sign" can "gain more value (aesthetically) than the signified thing?" is "to appeal to the arithmetic of mysticism", in which two and two can make five, because one of the twos is really a three, how can we see symbolism as a stable doctrine of correspondences fit to supersede the morbid self-exploration of the decadents?²⁸

26. A.G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895, p.52; vide supra, "Craving Viaticum", for Plotinus's importance (Ch.I, n.38).

27. Ibid., p.53.

28. A.G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895, p.143.

As in any state of instability, stability was looked for; a proof that other people had used mystic arithmetic to do their artistic sums. Frank Kermode points out where this might be found, when he says that "Many seventeenth-century poets...were also perfectly familiar with the doctrine of correspondence used as metaphysical support for image-theory". Here he is talking of Blake, but later he goes on to write of the support symbolist thought in England gained from the seventeenth century.²⁹

And yet no-one has consistently formulated a view of the decadence in terms of literary nostalgia. Yet to reassure themselves of the value of Symbolism and its mystic foundation the decadents sought out past practitioners to reassure them, specifically those of the Caroline age. For there, as we shall discuss later, the iconic symbolism of Laud and Charles showed how the symbol could be related to the ideal through the real: "the beauty of holiness", the icons of Charles, the white horse, the prayer book, the masque, symbols of government.³⁰ The Anglican Church and the iconic king stressed values not of individual self-exploration but of community interest through their symbolic use of art.

The Roman Catholic Church might seem to offer this kind of stable home to symbolists in the Eighteen-Nineties. But the antipathy of the artist to bourgeois society, the new Puritans, led to concentration on the self and the self's message, and nostalgia for the past opponents of the Puritan bourgeoisie, notably Charles I. In some cases, symbolism turned to magic. Writing of *The Golden Dawn*, Senior says that:

29. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), pp.113-114.

30. Maryann McGuire, Milton's Puritan Masque, (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1983), pp.75, 108.

Magic rituals are "technical methods of exalting the individual consciousness, until it comes to a complete realization of its own divine root, and that universal pure essence of mind which ultimately it is".³¹

In other words, magic was a route to the self-discovery demanded by symbolism in its nineteenth-century form: "a medieval mysticism surrounded by its aesthetic flesh of art and music", though whether the mysticism of Thomas à Kempis or Gilles de Rais depended on the practitioner.³²

So what is "decadence"? It is mythic thinking. The world becomes an "aggregate of mythical powers and effects".³³ So Bourget and Nietzsche were right: the collapse of literary organic unity which can be paralleled with political individualism comes from a collapse of certain kinds of rational thought. Ernst Cassirer writes that myth which "from moment to moment manifests itself as something different, can be given only a mythical representation".³⁴ This is the point of the symbol. Axël is not about a nun who decides to go and sleep with her brother: it is a document of the power of subjective apprehension, where the role of the castle changes from that of a nobleman's defence to a treasure-chart, to a fantasy world of escape (as Axël describes defending it against the state) to a marriage-chamber, and then to a tomb. The retainers have a choric commentary on Axël's changing role.³⁵

31. John Senior, The Way Down and Out, p.155.

32. Ibid., p.125.

33. Ernst Cassirer: The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms II: Mythical Thought, tr. Ralph Manheim, ed. Charles Hendel (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1955), p.1.

34. Ibid., p.3.

35. Jean Auguste, Count de Villiers de L'Isle Adam, Axël, tr. H.P.R. Finberg, ed. W.B. Yeats, (London, Jarrold, 1925), pp.30, 144, 215, 216, 260, 262, 279.

Cassirer writes that "To the factual world which surrounds and dominates it the spirit opposes an independent image world of its own".³⁶ Again this is the case with Axël, and also the case of a writer like Francis Thompson, who builds up worlds entirely out of images and magical settings: he flees down "nights...and...days", not along any real path or road.³⁷

Likewise Lionel Johnson's recreations of Marvell in "By The Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross" and the frequent commentary on Charles throughout the poems are images created solely out of legend or the past. Wilde's "The Sphinx", Dorian Gray or "The Harlot's House" are not real narratives: they are developed in images independent of any real thought-process, as in "Arthur Savile's Crime" where it is the idea of fate that leads to criminality, not any real motive or desire: Savile has been symbolised before an audience as a criminal, and so proceeds to become the symbol of himself in seeking out criminality.³⁸

Cassirer attaches importance to word and image-magic in his account of this kind of thought: one thinks of The Picture of Dorian Gray once more, and the recurrent words of Dowson's poetry: "pallid", "vanity", "oblivion".³⁹ "Mythical consciousness", Cassirer goes on to say "postulates...a cause" for every event.⁴⁰ There are no accidents. The river is "spectral, vague and dumb" in Dowson.⁴¹

36. Cassirer, p.23.

37. Francis Thompson, The Collected Poetry, (London, Hielder & Stoughton, 1913), p.52.

38. Oscar Wilde, Complete Works, ed. Vyvyan Holland, (London and Glasgow, Collins, 1966), pp.17ff, 168-92, 789, 833-41.

39. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, ed. Desmond Flower, 3rd ed., (London, Cassell, 1967), pp.39, 43.

40. Cassirer, p.47.

41. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, p.72.

"The land of dreams" is "a gathering place of fears" for Johnson. The whole world is "autumnal...and pale": everything is infected with the subjective vision of the poet. It is "The Stars" that "Work out a perfect will" to some extent in Lionel Johnson, as we shall see. This regression to astrological ideas of fate mixed with Christianity shows a return to mythic patterns of thought.⁴²

Satanic figures and doppelgangers like James Durie and Jekyll and Hyde further colour the world with the idea of conscious purpose, one directed towards evil. Dracula's living death, like James Durie's "resurrection", is a violation of rational approaches to reality, a reversion to symbolic apprehensions of purpose via the token: the bat, the wolf in the case of the vampire; James Durie's parody of the suffering servant.⁴³ Reversion to Irish myth colours Yeats's approach in "The Land of Heart's Desire" or "The Countess Cathleen";⁴⁴ Huysmans' Durtal lives half-way between the worlds of the succubus and Gilles de Rais, and those of Catholicism and novel-writing.⁴⁵ Des Esseintes creates a world where not only every event, but every object is deliberately arranged with a deliberate purpose. To have life as a ritual is only another means of ensuring that nothing happens by accident.⁴⁶

42. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher, [Garland Texts No.3] (New York, Garland, 1982), pp.12, 52, 65.

43. Cf. Bram Stoker, Dracula, ed. A.N. Wilson, The World's Classics, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983), xvi.

44. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Plays, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1952), pp.1, 51.

45. J.K. Huysmans, Là-bas, (New York, Dover, 1972), pp.55-239.

46. Cf. J.K. Huysmans, Against Nature, tr. Robert Baldick, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1959), pp.84-95.

Cassirer says that

...it lies in the essence of mythical thinking that whenever it posits a relation, it causes the members of this relation to flow together and merge...

Hence the real and the ideal will be united in the symbols and Pater's rendering of his subjects is subjectivized into a rendering of Pater himself.

Cassirer continues:

While in scientific thinking number appears as the great instrument of explanation, in mythical thinking it appears as a vehicle of religious signification...⁴⁷

Hence rational numeration can be suspended in favour of Mauclair's mystic arithmetic. Such is mythic thought, which shows that "ideal significance" is realized in "le monde extérieure", the sensual in the spiritual, as the writers of the 'Nineties thought.⁴⁸

"Decadence" partakes of these elements of mythic thought because it is escapist, as all its extravagances and flamboyances show. It is a world defined out of associations, reflections, symbols, perspectives: fundamentally an age of insecurity is the age we think of when we think of the Eighteen-Nineties.

"Decadence" in other ages too partakes of these elements of mythic thought: indeed this analysis connects with Joad's belief in subjectivity being a characteristic of "decadence", a word hard to pin down, precisely because of the diverse nature of its associations.

47. Cassirer, pp.110, 143.

48. Quoted by A.G. Lehmann, p.274.

George Macdonald in Lilith provides an example of the way mythic thought invaded the literature of the late nineteenth century:

Every one, as you ought to know, has a beast-self - and a bird-self and a stupid fish-self, ay, and a creeping serpent-self too - which it takes a deal of crushing to kill! In truth he has also a tree-self and a crystal-self, and I don't know how many selves more - all to get into harmony. You can tell what sort a man is by his creature that comes oftenest to the front.⁴⁹

This is only a totemistic version of the doctrine of the mask, and shares with it the belief in shape-shifting so much a feature of the liquid, subjective literature formed out of the changing patterns of symbolism.

But the aim of this thesis is specifically to encounter the past which the writers of the period in question sought as a validation for their symbolic world - the Caroline era. This looking-back to the past (as the Caroline era itself looked back to Elizabeth) is of a totemistic kind: in the world of mythic apprehension, it is the totem which guarantees the safety of the tribe as well as threatening it if it is disobeyed. Before Yeats and Eliot came to "purify the dialect of the tribe",⁵⁰ the dialect of the tribe struggling under the poetic weight of Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne and Baudelaire, turned back to the past for the validation of their symbols through the icons of the Caroline era, totems of Anglo-Catholicism, Jacobitism, heroic actions and metaphysical poetry.

In an article on Walter Benjamin in New Left Review, we read, in a totally different context, these words:

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49. George MacDonald, Lilith, 2nd ed., (London, Chatto & Windus, 1896), p.37.
50. T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, (London, Faber & Faber, 1969), p.194.

True experience survives mainly as memory of a collective past, present in 'rituals with their ceremonies, their festivals', it is at the heart of Baudelaire's Conception of correspondances which relates to a form of experience possible only within the realm of the ritual. And here reappears the figure of the edenic age: The correspondances are the data of remembrance - not historical data, but the data of pre-history.⁵¹

But it was not only in pre-history that such Correspondances might be found by the English poets of the Eighteen-Nineties, for in history also there are edenic ages, edenic ideals to those committed to reviving them through nostalgia, and it was thus that the Caroline era of legendary king, lyrical grace, and Cavalier/Puritan conflict was revived and turned into the English Tradition of Decadence that the writers of the Eighteen Nineties sought and found. In conflict with society, they turned to the Jacobite legend; in looking in the past they looked for icons and symbols, and in fearing the deluge they looked at the calamity of the Civil War.

Ride on with all white Omens; so that where
Your Standard's up, we fix a Conquest there.⁵²

Robert Herrick: To The King, Upon his
comming with his Army into the West.

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51. Michael Lang, "Revolution against Progress: Walter Benjamin's Romantic Anarchism", New Left Review, 152 (July/August, 1985), pp.42-60 (p.56).
52. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, ed. L.C. Martin, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956), p.25.

Chapter VIII : FRANCIS THOMPSON, FAITHFUL DECADENT - 1

Catholics and Criticism

Thou need'st not make new Songs but say the Old.

Abraham Cowley¹

Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain...

S.T. Coleridge²

Where between these two quotations, the first a motto of Thompson himself, does the thematic concern of his poetry lie?³ He has been assessed as a writer by many critics, but almost always their analyses reduce to one of the statements above. To John Thompson, he is:

...a seventeenth-century poet, born in the nineteenth, bringing with him the solace of old time melody - melody like unto the richest strains of Crashaw and Cowley.⁴

Allied by critics like John Thompson with the seventeenth-century baroque and metaphysical poets, Thompson is also associated with a revival of past tradition by Catholic apologists. Thus Paul van Kuykendall Thomson speaks of his "intense feeling of excitement"

1. Abraham Cowley, The English Writings of Abraham Cowley: Poems, ed. A.R. Waller, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1905), p.48.
2. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Complete Poetical Works, ed. E.H. Coleridge, 2 vols., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1912, 1962), Vol.I, p.222.
3. Everard Meynell, The Life of Francis Thompson, (London, Burns and Oates, 1913), p.35.
4. John Thompson, Francis Thompson the Preston-born Poet, (Preston, 1912), p.26.

"over Crashaw or Donne";⁵ a sister of Notre Dame remarks that he was "not of the nineteenth century",⁶ as does G.K. Chesterton.⁷ The most extravagant praise comes from Archbishop Kenealy:

The intellect of the world has been corrupted.
Francis Thompson is the antidote.⁸

To this school of criticism, Thompson is a loyal defender of spiritual faith, "the greatest, of English Roman Catholic poets of post-Reformation times",⁹ and a writer in "the opulent, prodigal manner of the seventeenth century", as Lionel Johnson put it, although with rather more reservation.¹⁰

To the other school of critics, however, his opulence and prodigality are those of a mind decayed by opium and overcome by megalomaniac fantasy. To J.C. Reid:

Thompson, at the centre of his fantasy-universe, swinging the earth like a censer or a trinket, seeing the stars as egg-yolk, or the sun as an angry bee, is shrinking the cosmos to the dimensions of his own dreams.¹¹

This "acquisition of domination" is seen as that of the opium-addict, "lord of his supra-mundane kingdom", full of egocentricity.¹²

5. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, Francis Thompson: A Critical Biography, (New York, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1961), p.27.
6. A Sister of Notre Dame, The Message of Francis Thompson, (London, Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1920), p.26.
7. Gilbert Keith Chesterton, The Victorian Age in Literature, (London, Williams and Norgate, 1913), p.203.
8. Quoted by the Reverend T.L. Connolly, Francis Thompson: In his Paths, (Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1944), p.5.
9. Quoted by J.C. Reid, Francis Thompson Man and Poet, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p.68.
10. Quoted by Viola Meynell, Francis Thompson and Wilfrid Meynell, (London, Hollis and Carter, 1952), p.40.
11. J.C. Reid, p.105.
12. Ibid., p.33.

The attitudes of Kenealy and Reid are the extremes between which Francis Thompson's reputation oscillates. On the one hand he is a Catholic of great moral power; on the other the outcast drug-addict. It is said that after his rescue by the Meynells, he abjured the down-and-out lifestyle; but he was still unable to get up in the morning.¹³ Certainly as a poet, he provides matter for both extremes, for of all the writers of our period, he presents one of the most paradoxical mixtures of Christianity and Paganism, tradition and invention, and holiness and sexuality. His "Ode to the Setting Sun", for example which develops into a poem in praise of Christ, has beneath its ostensible subject, an undercurrent of paganism and sun-worship.

Yet, in this field where the Cross planted reigns,
I know not what strange passion bows my head
To thee, whose great command upon my veins
Proves thee a god for me not dead; not dead.¹⁴

The "strange passion", by implication contradistinct from "the Cross" is raised by the Sun's "great command upon my veins". The Sun was "a god" "ere Olympus", and is "nurse at once and sire!" to the world (Poems, p.208). After praising the deeds and development of the now-setting Sun, Thompson eventually compares this "golden bee" which stings "the West to angry red" to "a type memorial" of Christ:

Like Him thou hang'st in dreadful pomp of blood
Upon thy Western rood;

(Poems, p.212)

13. Everard Meynell, pp.325-26.

14. Francis Thompson, The Collected Poetry, (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), p.205. All subsequent references in the text are to this edition.

In other words, as the light of the sun vanishes, the shadow of the Cross is something which, like all shadows, blots out the remaining sunlight and becomes a "dread symbol". Hence the Sun is not a type of Christ at all, firstly because it is a god in its own right, and secondly because the Cross is seen as antipathetic to it, not complementary: it is "that other sun of Song", but is "a presaged dole", a "shadow", rather than sunlight (Poems, p.213). Here Thompson is writing a poem ostensibly about the Sun as a type of Christ (itself rather a doubtful comparison given the early conflict between sun-worship (Cf. Julian the Apostate's hymn to Helios, for example), and Christianity).¹⁵ However, the poem actually welcomes the sun as a god and speaks of the Cross in terms antipathetic to the sun which is being celebrated: the sun has "exultant tread" (Poems, p.212) whereas the Cross is the "heavy sheaf" (Poems, p.213). The past of the Sun is praised:

Ha! but methink thee what thou gazedst on,
 Ere yet the snake Decay had venom'd tooth;
 The name thou bar'st in those vast seasons gone -
 Candid Hyperion
 Clad in the light of thine immortal youth!

(Poems, p.207)

Such praise is not in terms which can be easily reconciled with Christian theology. At length Thompson escapes from some of the difficulties of the comparison by appealing to the "tender Lady, Queen Mary" to make gentle "The Cross's rigorous austerity" (Poems, p.214). So in other words, the Cross is only made as attractive as the sun which is a type of it when a third party, distinct from either,

15. Cf. D.R. Dudley and D.M. Long (eds.), The Penguin Companion to Literature 4 (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1969), p.100.

intervenes. Or is she distinct? For we have already seen that the sun is "nurse at once and sire" (Poems, p.208); a kind of pagan version of God and the Virgin. In that case however, it can't be a direct type of Jesus on the Cross alone.

It is in these kinds of paradoxical directions that Thompson's theology becomes enmeshed. His tendency towards exaggeration and imprecision (for example, in the indirectness and contradiction of the parallels drawn above between the Sun and Christ), form the grounds for the central difficulty of his poetry: one which I wish to call his faithful decadence. For although "Ode to the Setting Sun" sets out to be about Christ, it can hardly be said to succeed in being so; and its lack of success is due to the tendency of Thompson to find the hyperbolic and artificial material of the poem more directly conducive to his imagination than its ostensible subject:

The earth was suckled at thy shining breast,
 And in her veins is quick thy milky fire.
 Who scarfed her with the morning? and who set
 Upon her brow the day-fall's carcanet?
 Who queened her front with the enrondured moon?
 Who dug night's jewels from their vaulty mine
 To dower her, past an eastern wizard's dreams...

(Poems, p.208)

The subject of the poem might survive if it was in accordance with the heap of images, but it is not. The Cross is a simple symbol "planted", as opposed to the artificialities quoted above (Poems, p.205). It has no extravagance in itself: so the way Thompson writes about it is not to write about it, but to write about the beauty of the setting sun and his dreams of its past and purposes, while claiming to write about the Cross. Here is a Keats writing as if he thought himself a Crashaw.

Of course the baroque poets used sensual imagery to write of sacred subjects. It is intended to discuss in the next chapter just why Thompson fails to measure up to their integration of flesh and spirit, but at the moment I think we can point out that Thompson's extended similes, such as the one discerned above, do not integrate the two, but set them at opposites. Thompson sees the Cross quite clearly in the last stanzas as "Twixt me and yet bright skies" after the glory of the sun (Poems, p.213). Here he is not like Crashaw, who even in his notorious "portable, & compendious oceans" intends a compliment to St. Mary Magdalen.¹⁶

In this chapter however, I intend to deal with the history of Thompson criticism, and to see how it has coped with the contradictory elements in his poetry which have themselves led to contradictory judgements. Then I shall go on to relate this paradoxical vein in Thompson to the revival of Caroline literature during this period, which for the purposes of this thesis is called the English Tradition.

Thompson was born on 16 December 1859 at 7 Winckley Street, Preston, and was educated at Ushaw College and Owen's College, later part of the University of Manchester.¹⁷ There he failed to become a doctor, reading in the library instead of attending lectures.¹⁸ This was apparently the beginning of his identification with De Quincey.¹⁹ The parallels between them have been pointed out by Everard Meynell, and J.C. Reid:

Both read copiously in the Manchester libraries, were unhappy and solitary at school, became opium addicts, set off for London, lived there in desolation and were befriended by a golden-hearted prostitute.²⁰

16. Richard Crashaw, The Poems, ed. L.C. Martin, 2nd ed., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957), p.312.

17. Everard Meynell, Life, p.35.

18. Ibid., pp.35-48.

19. Ibid., p.47.

20. J.C. Reid, p.25.

Everard Meynell draws our attention in his biography of Thompson to similarities not only in life, but in literary style:

...both made their vocabularies robust and rare from the same Elizabethans, both fattened to the marrow the bones of their English from Sir Thomas Browne.²¹

Meynell is claiming that Thompson's participation in the English Tradition comes via De Quincey.

Having wandered London desolate for some years, Thompson was rescued by Wilfrid Meynell when he submitted "Paganism Old and New" (an apt title for some of Thompson's own work) to Meynell's Magazine, Merry England.²² He left the streets never to return except in a fitful way to look for the girl, who like De Quincey's Anne, had befriended him there.²³ But soon he turned to the Meynell family, and began to idolize Mrs. Meynell, who became to him a type of the Virgin.²⁴ In her, her daughters, and the world and its physical presences, he found the types of Heaven. To his fellow-Catholic, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Felix Randal and the Margaret who grieves over autumn, are changing human beings bemoaning change.²⁵ Only God's "beauty is past change".²⁶ But to Thompson, ordinary human beings become symbols of divine power. In "The Making of Viola" for example, God calls on His Son to:

21. Everard Meynell, Life, p.47.

22. Ibid.; p.88.

23. Ibid., pp.82-83.

24. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, Francis Thompson: A Critical Biography, pp.94-95.

25. Gerard Manley Hopkins, The Poems, ed. W.H. Gardiner and N.H. Mackenzie, 4th ed., (London, Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.86, 88.

26. Ibid., p.70.

Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes,
 Wood-browned pools of Paradise -
 Young Jesus, for the eyes,
 For the eyes of Viola.

(Poems, p.70)

Christ is called on to make special the eyes of Viola Meynell. In "Her Portrait" Thompson writes of Alice Meynell in these terms:

At the rich odours from her heart that rise,
 My soul remember its lost Paradise,
 And antenatal gales blow from Heaven's shores
 of spice...

(Poems, p.27)

This kind of reaction to ordinary human beings has more in common with Donne's Anniversaries than Hopkins. It operates through excessive praise, and shares the period's tendency to idealize the real in order to make it into a symbol: to give it correspondence with the world of the abstract or spiritual by idealizing it away from the real and temporal.

However with praise such as this lavished on the family, it is hardly surprising that Thompson's biographer, Everard Meynell, had a soft spot for him.²⁷ The Meynells were Roman Catholics. Thompson therefore, was involved in the Roman Catholic literary scene from the beginning; and since he too was a Catholic, it was natural that he should be seen in the role of an apologist. Patmore, a friend of the Meynell's, told him that he looked to him "to crush all this false mysticism . Crush it; you can do it if you like; you are the man to do it".²⁸ So developed the Thompson who wrote with a "message", and critical appraisals since the death of the poet have contained a

27. Cf. Everard Meynell's comments on Thompson's opium habit, Life pp.48, 343.

28. Everard Meynell, Life, p.148.

continuing vein of this analysis of him: The Message of Francis Thompson came out in 1920,²⁹ and books such as this, and J.A. Hutton's Guidance From Francis Thompson in Matters of Faith show clearly enough the doctrinal trend in critical assessment.³⁰ Nor is it a co-incidence that a Roman Catholic priest, T.L. Connolly, has been the foremost of Thompson scholars. Critics like Connolly relied on Wilfrid Meynell and living memory of Thompson a great deal; and the Meynells always took a lenient view of Thompson's drugtaking: it was a problem they tended to minimize.³¹

Thompson himself saw his poetry as a revival of traditional models, in particular those of the seventeenth century, with a strong leaning towards doctrinal Catholicism. He wrote of an enclosure of poems, including "Assumpta Maria":

They are almost entirely taken from the office of the Assumption, some from the Canticle, a few images from the heathen mythology. Some very beautiful images are from a hymn by St. Nerses the Armenian, rendered in Carmina Mariana. You will perceive therefore the reason of the motto from Cowley: "Thou needst not make new songs but say the old."³²

Thompson specifically made his allegiance to the metaphysical and baroque poets of the Caroline era obvious, seeing them as a foundation for the development of his style, although he claimed that at least one of the initial resemblances was co-incidental:

29. Vide supra, note 6.

30. John A. Hutton, Guidance from Francis Thompson in Matters of Faith, (London, Hodder and Stoughton), 1926.

31. Everard Meynell, Life, p.343.

32. Ibid., p.173.

Just Crashaw and a little Cowley - and I had found my style before I knew Cowley, whom I really did curiously resemble; though none perceived it, because none had read Cowley.³³

There was no doubt from the beginning of his resemblance to Crashaw, though. Arthur Symons, in The Athenæum of 3 February 1894,³⁴ compared him with Crashaw and Patmore. Patmore himself spoke of "qualities which ought to place him...with Cowley and with Crashaw", thus rather contradicting Thompson's own statement above, although Thompson might have said much the same sort of thing to Patmore himself at an earlier date, and thus provoked a closer scrutiny of his own poetry in the light of such comments.³⁵

Certainly Thompson himself made no secret of his allegiance to the poets of this era and to Sir Thomas Browne throughout his poetry.³⁶ Everard Meynell notes his extensive revival of Caroline coinages. Besides this, he made many coinages of his own.³⁷ Thompson's "From the Night of Forebeing" is a poem with a title originating in Sir Thomas Browne's "In the Chaos of pre-ordination, and night of their forebeings",³⁸ a sentence which Thompson quotes at the head of the poem (Poems, p.158). "Assumpta Maria" has the line of Cowley's quoted at the beginning of this chapter to head it (Poems, p.176); and Thompson's dependence on Crashaw has never been doubted by his

33. Everard Meynell, Life, p.166.

34. Arthur Symons, unsigned review, The Athenæum no.3458 (3 Feb. 1894) p.143.

35. Everard Meynell, Life, p.146

36. Ibid., p.155.

37. Ibid., pp.153-155.

38. Sir Thomas Browne, Works, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, New ed., 4 vols., (London, Faber and Faber, 1964), Vol.I, p.170.

positive critics: those who praise his tradition and/or faith, rather than see him, as J.C. Reid does, as feeding "upon the manna of his illusions".³⁹

Pierre Danchin, in his Francis Thompson: La vie et L'oeuvre d'un poète writes that "il nous faudra donc prêter une attention très spéciale à Crashaw...".⁴⁰ Thompson himself paid special attention to the Caroline era in his own critical work, and it was an enthusiasm he shared with Alice Meynell herself, as we have already seen in this thesis. In his review of Alice Meynell's The Flower of the Mind in The Academy of 13 November 1897, Thompson writes:

And certainly she loves those "fair and flagrant things" which the plain man calls "conceits", but which really testify to a type of poetic imagination that beholds the world shot through and through with symbolism, and caught in a network of strange relations beyond the plain man's understanding. Crashaw, and, in a less degree Marvell and Lovelace, are far more liberally represented than in most anthologies.⁴¹

Quoting these lines, Danchin remarks:

C'est en cela que Donne est le premier de toute un école dit depuis "métaphysique" et dont Thompson, après Crashaw, Vaughan, Herbert, Cowley, et bien d'autres, relève à sa manière...⁴²

Thompson is seen by Danchin as adopting the same literary manner as the metaphysicals, and it is interesting that Danchin speaks of Donne as "pleine d'un symbolisme oriental et spontané et

39. J.C. Reid, p.37.

40. Pierre Danchin, Francis Thompson: La Vie et L'Oeuvre D'un Poète, (A Paris, A-G. Nizet, 1959), p.460.

41. Francis Thompson, "A New Anthology", The Academy, No.1332NS, (13 Nov. 1897), pp.391-392 (p.391).

42. Pierre Danchin, p.466.

d'une imagerie biblique et liturgique à la fois".⁴³ It is R.L. Mégroz, who will be discussed in detail later, who talks of "the oriental fervour of Thompson's imagery".⁴⁴ Although Danchin does not draw the comparison, this is clearly another shared area of interest, as is the "imagerie biblique et liturgique" in view of Thompson's own statement concerning the use of "the office of the Assumption" in his poetry mentioned earlier.⁴⁵

Danchin goes on to compare Crashaw's "Death's Lecture" and "Charitas Nimia" to Thompson's "Any Saint"; his "The Flaming Heart" to Thompson's "Love in Dian's Lap" and his "Sospetto d'Herode" to Thompson's "Retrospect". Danchin mentions how both poets rhyme similar pairs of words: "eyes...sacrifice", "eyes...deities", and "eye...contrarities".⁴⁶

Danchin's analysis is a thorough one, but even those who do not go as closely into textual relationships as he does, come to much the same conclusion about Thompson. Ifor Evans, a critic who perhaps balances the views of Thompson as great traditionalist and over-innovative decadent, writes of his attempt to elevate imagery to the supreme place in poetry that:

...he lacked the mental alertness, the intellectual strenuousness, which, as Donne had shown, can alone sustain such a method.⁴⁷

43. Pierre Danchin, p.467.

44. R.L. Mégroz, Francis Thompson: The Poet of Earth in Heaven, (London, Faber and Gwyer, 1927), p.229.

45. Cf. note 32.

46. Pierre Danchin, pp.475-77.

47. Ifor Evans, English Poetry in the Later Nineteenth Century, (London, Matheson, 1966 (1933)), p.175.

But other commentators did not necessarily detect such inadequacies. John Thompson mentions H.D. Traill, who enthused over Thompson's idealization of woman;

Where...unless perhaps here and there in a sonnet of Rossetti's, has this sort of sublimated enthusiasm for the bodily and spiritual beauty of womanhood found such expression between the age of the Stuarts and our own?⁴⁸

To writers such as this, Thompson was the equal of his antecedents.

John Thompson's study, although more a memoir than a work of criticism, and written only a few years after Thompson's death, identifies his place as "a seventeenth-century poet, born in the nineteenth",⁴⁹ and talks of Thompson as "mixing heaven and earth",⁵⁰ thus already distinguishing the two chief marks of Thompson's poetic identity: dependence upon seventeenth-century tradition, and sensual poetry mixed with spiritual concerns. Yet in common with many of the critics who were to follow, he does not analyse these adequately; and the two poles of criticism we have already mentioned at the opening of this chapter are intended to distort Thompson by seeing him either as a hyperbolic sensualist with religious pretensions, or a restrained Catholic with regrettable lapses.

K. Rooker, in a 1912 doctorate presented at the University of Paris also finds links between Thompson and the metaphysicals, and interestingly enough, identifies a connection between the buckish and religious traits that characterized that revival in the seventeenth century, which may throw some light on its relationship with the Eighteen-Nineties:

48. Quoted by John Thompson, p.26.

49. Ibid.

50. John Thompson, p.48.

L'intelligence virile de Donne qui diagnostiquait tous les symptômes de l'amour idéal jusqu'à la sensualité presque brutale, et le temperament doux et dévôt de George Herbert procèdent, de manière différente, du meme esprit analytique, peut-être inconscient, qui pénétrait leur poésie.⁵¹

Thompson himself wrote of the "primal sex of heaven and poetry" and this is a phrase which will prove significant when we come to examine his work in detail (Poems, p.27). But the direction of "L'intelligence virile" and "le temperament doux et dévôt" which Rooker separates above, were brought together in Francis Thompson. They are represented in poems like "Ode to the Setting Sun", where we have seen that the invocation of splended artificialities is difficult to reconcile to the humility which Thompson feels that the Cross will force him to acknowledge. Elsewhere also, as we shall discuss later, Thompson mixes sexuality and faith inextricably, without even the escape-route of simile, and in transparent metaphors.⁵²

Rooker speaks of Thompson's "précision fantastique chez Crashaw, Donne et Vaughan", and compares Thompson's "The self-shut cabinet of an unsearched soul" with Crashaw's "The purple wardrobe of Thy side", and Crashaw's "Though I spoke her own carved perfect way" to Thompson's "Would have a song carved to their ears".⁵³ He compares Thompson's prose to Milton⁵⁴, and says that "l'ode à forme libre" of Thompson and Patmore has been employed "depuis William Drummond of Hawthornden".⁵⁵

51. K. Rooker, "Francis Thompson", (D. Univ. thesis, Paris, 1912), p.145.

52. Francis Thompson, Collected Poetry, pp.56, 109, 125, for example.

53. K. Rooker, pp. 147, 154, 156.

54. Ibid., p.234

55. Ibid., pp.206, 208.

Later critics continue in this vein. F.C. Owlett, in Francis Thompson, writes that in Thompson was "the new burgeoning of a generous stock, deep-rooted in seventeenth-century soil, and brought to leaf a flower and fruit again after more than two hundred years".⁵⁶ In keeping with the attack on Puritanism of the Eighteen-Nineties and the Cavalier ethos they adopted in opposition to it, Owlett discusses those who attack the "alchymists of eloquence"⁵⁷ and proclaims that "we have no quarrel with the Roundheads of literature - it is they who insist on picking a quarrel with us".⁵⁸ This metaphor for literary conflict has, as we have seen, considerable implications for the literary development of the Eighteen-Nineties.⁵⁹ It is used here by Owlett in order to excuse Thompson from his excess by referring to other writers, like Marlowe and Shakespeare, who are said to have shared the same ethos of literary extravagance.⁶⁰ To back up this conflict, Owlett chooses an argument from Woodstock, Scott's novel of the Civil War.⁶¹ Hence here, Thompson is excused from excess (he is called "happily free from the extravagances that flaw the seventeenth-century writers")⁶², and is also placed in the context of a Cavalier/Puritan conflict in literature, as explored throughout this thesis. His "obscurities" are seen to be "those of the mystic" only.⁶³

56. F.C. Owlett, Francis Thompson, (London, John and Edward Bumpus), 1936, p.16.

57. F.C. Owlett, p.19.

58. Ibid., p.20.

59. Cf. "By the Statue of King Charles : the Jacobite Revival" in this thesis (Chapter VI).

60. F.C. Owlett, p.19.

61. Ibid., p.21.

62. Ibid., p.33.

63. Ibid., p.32.

This kind of assessment, which integrates Thompson into a tradition that can excuse extravagant writing, has gone hand-in-hand with a more specific comparison of him to Crashaw and seventeenth-century religious poetry. Although secular critics have compared Thompson with Crashaw (Cf. the early reviews, discussed above),⁶⁴ the importance of this alignment has come from Roman Catholic critics, who intersect with those critics who postulate Thompson as a reviver of "old songs", to paraphrase the quotation from Cowley which forms the basis for the critics who offer a positive assessment of Thompson.

In the Manresa Press edition of Crashaw's poems published in 1914, R.A. Shepherd spends seventeen pages comparing Crashaw with Thompson.⁶⁵ Everard Meynell writes that Thompson's "Little Jesus" is "Most exquisite at moments, generally when it resembles Crashaw".⁶⁶ A more modern critic in the Catholic school of Thompson Criticism, P. van Kuykendall Thomson, after saying that "Much of what he wrote... looks back...to the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century",⁶⁷ traces Thompson's early contact with seventeenth-century writers to the library at Ushaw, where there was an "excellent collection"; and there Thompson would "exclaim over Crashaw or Donne".⁶⁸ Thompson's "Hound of Heaven" is compared to Donne in its startling quality, and to Herbert's "The Collar" in its childlike acceptance.⁶⁹ Paul van

64. Cf. Everard Meynell, Life, p.135ff.

65. Richard Crashaw, The Religious Poems, ed. R.A. Eric Shepherd, (London, The Manresa Press, 1914), pp.9-26.

66. Everard Meynell, Life, p.217.

67. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, Francis Thompson: A Critical Biography, p.9.

68. Ibid., p.27.

69. Ibid., p.90.

Kuykendall Thomson writes that the poet "delighted in Sir Thomas Browne".⁷⁰ In regard to ideas of decadence concerning the Caroline age then in circulation, the critic quotes Thomson as saying it was:

...far better to understand the metaphysical poets, for example, as men who were trying to seek out and display the pure "poetic element" than it was to examine them as the products of social disintegration.⁷¹

Yet despite this apologia, and his defence of the metaphysical poets, Thomson was "weary and possessed of a sense of doom, not only for himself but for his world."⁷²

It is hard to see how this belief can be balanced with the traditionalism ascribed to Thomson by Paul van Kuykendall Thomson unless in terms of a flight to literary nostalgia, as explored in this thesis. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson himself is slightly less uncritically admiring of Thomson than Owlett or the Archbishop Kenealy school of criticism. He does mention that "suggestions of schizophrenia" have been made concerning Thomson, by "a qualified psychiatrist...Dom. Thomas Moore".⁷³ As we move towards more modern critics (Thomson's book was written in 1961) who did not have the chance to meet and talk with Wilfrid Meynell, the Catholic critics begin to substitute analyses for praises. Despite the fact that Thomson clings as much as ever to the idea of the poet as a reviver of seventeenth-century traditions, he begins to acknowledge another side to Thomson, that of a mentally unstable poet.

70. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, p.116.

71. Ibid., p.181.

72. Ibid., p.135.

73. Ibid., p.28.

Thomson writes that Alice Meynell and "the Blessed Virgin" were "at times....almost indistinguishable" in the poet's imagination, and this kind of admission, coupled with suggestions of schizophrenia,⁷⁴ undermines Thomson as a doctrinal writer with a "message" as a guide to faith.

But the reservations of Paul van Kuykendall Thomson are small, partly due to the fact that his book is written as a partial rebuttal to one which was published two years before, J.C. Reid's Francis Thompson: Man and Poet.⁷⁵ Reid is far more uncompromising over Thomson, and is the foremost exponent of the critical school which regards Thomson as extravagant and rhetorical, without any real claim to authority and tradition. This attitude had begun contemporarily with reactions like that of Lionel Johnson, himself a Catholic, who thought that Thomson had "done more damage to the English language than the American press",⁷⁶ despite having the "opulent, prodigal manner of the seventeenth century."⁷⁷

Reid however, not only sees Thomson as being "unreal" and "sentimental",⁷⁸ incapable of shared love,⁷⁹ and an opium-taker, "lord of the supra-mundane kingdom",⁸⁰ but also denies his kinship with the seventeenth century. He writes:

As the nineteenth century receded too, it became manifest that Thomson had very little in common with the metaphysical poets some of his contemporaries thought he resembled. There is a kinship with Crashaw, perhaps, the most baroque of the metaphysicals, in his ecstatic flights, as well as in his frequent

74. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, p.95.

75. J.C. Reid, Francis Thompson Man and Poet, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959).

76. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, p.153.

77. Cf. Viola Meynell, Francis Thompson and Wilfrid Meynell (London, Hollis and Carter, 1952), p.40.

78. J.C. Reid, p.4.

79. *Ibid.*, p.19.

lapses of taste. But his roots, it is now plain, are in the nineteenth century; he shares his vision with that of the stricken band which includes Poe, Mangan, de Quincey, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, even James Thomson [sic], as well as Francis Thompson's own co-religionists, Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson.⁸¹

The difference between "kinship" and "roots", itself not very apparent as a metaphor of division, given its basis in organic relationships, is not defined by Reid. But he clearly wishes to leave the seventeenth-century connection behind in order to associate Thompson with the "stricken band" of decadent poets and their fore-runners. Of Thompson's poetry he writes that it is "life-denying, which religion is not, and often enough the poem is wrenched back from indulgence in laudanum-memories to a religious context by a hasty last-minute reference".⁸² We have already seen this in our brief analysis of "Ode to the Setting Sun", but as we have seen and will see in this thesis, to associate Thompson with the decadents is in no way a negation of his connection with the seventeenth century. Reid denies one to concentrate on the other, but we shall be looking at both.

Reid is very scathing concerning Thompson's use of words:

...clotted consonants halt the tongue everywhere
the whole nests of wretched sibilants hiss in line
after line of his poems like vipers spun out of
opium-smoke.⁸³

Rather than connecting this with an exaggeration of metaphysical or baroque poetic vice, Reid finds Thompson "reminiscent of Swinburne"

81. J.C. Reid, p.207.

82. Ibid., p.213.

83. Ibid., p.99.

and says that he "shows the state of the nineteenth-century poetic vocabulary when the original romantic inspiration and the succeeding aesthetic one had run to seed".⁸⁵

This combined with "his immaturity as a man and a poet" and "the nature of his vision" precludes him from much serious consideration,⁸⁶ except in the poems in which we can find a "plain poetic beauty"⁸⁷, according to Reid, in writing like "The Heaven", and especially "In no Strange Land", which Reid considers "Thompson's most perfect poem".⁸⁸

Instead of schizophrenia however, Reid attributes the findings in Thompson's personality to "opium-addiction"⁸⁹ and "neurotic character"⁹⁰ which perhaps shows how once we begin to attempt psychoanalysis on a dead subject, opinions radically diverge. Certainly he writes of Thompson's early poetry as "only doubtfully religious", and sees him as a victor of a "subliminal impulse to retreat back into his childhood."⁹¹ In making this analysis of Thompson, and in the analysis he makes of his verse, Reid is interested in seeing him as a product of his age, where personal depravity and artistic excess have for so long been thought to be widespread.⁹² In doing this, Reid attempts to disconnect Thompson from the seventeenth century, and in writing of his verse, attempts to isolate it from the models which might give it credibility:

85. J.C. Reid, p.99.

86. Ibid., p.95.

87. Ibid., p.216.

88. Ibid., p.215.

89. Ibid., p.32.

90. Ibid., p.74.

91. Ibid., p.73.

92. Cf. J.C. Reid, p.207.

In respect, then, of vocabulary and style, Thompson has little in common with the seventeenth-century Metaphysical Poets, with whom enthusiastic contemporaries compared him, but shows the state of the nineteenth-century poetic vocabulary when the original Romantic inspiration and the succeeding aesthetic one had run to seed.⁹³

This appears to sum up Reid's position. Yet on the very same page, he tells us that Thompson would "select a rhythm...only because Marvell did", and elsewhere offers no criticism of statements like that of Arthur Symons:

If Crashaw, Shelley, Donne, Marvell, Mr. Patmore and several other poets had not existed, Mr. Francis Thompson would be a poet of remarkable novelty.⁹⁴

In fact Reid does not offer a refutation of the claims of seventeenth-century kinship throughout his book, except in the very indirect way of claiming Thompson's relationship to nineteenth-century poetic vocabulary, one certainly not incompatible with an earlier kinship, as we see from Symons's article above.⁹⁵

Reid is a reaction to the long school of Catholic and other sympathetic criticism. There had been contemporary detractors, such as Johnson and Patmore,⁹⁶ but the "fulsome praise" of Catholic critics had outweighed them.⁹⁷ Reid is right in seeing the "Catholic conviction of Thompson's greatness", as springing "largely from non-literary causes",⁹⁸ but in his haste to correct this view, denies

93. J.C. Reid, p.99.

94. Arthur Symons, unsigned review, The Athenaeum, p.143. Cf. note 34.

95. J.C. Reid, p.99.

96. Ibid., pp.70, 94.

97. Ibid., p.70.

98. Ibid., p.71.

other traditional criticism of Thompson, from the perspective of his relationship with certain of the seventeenth-century poets, and denies this without sufficient argument.

Most critics of Thompson have come to praise him, partly because he awakes enthusiasm in them, often through his religious beliefs. Those in whom he does not awake enthusiasm often simply do not even write about him, unless in spleen like J.C. Reid. Balanced criticism is hard to come by, although the later productions of Catholic criticism treat Thompson's reputation rather less as a proving-ground for complimentary adjectives than used to be the case.⁹⁹

One critic however, does seem to offer a view of Thompson between the two extremes discussed in this chapter. R.L. Mégroz in Francis Thompson: The Poet of Earth in Heaven (1927) pinpoints in the very title of his book Thompson's simultaneous relationships with the sensual and the sacred. Mégroz writes of the "Three Chief Forces of Western Civilization" - Hellenism, Christianity and Science, as the elements in Thompson's mysticism, although science seems to be a little bit of a sleeping partner.¹⁰⁰ Paul van Kuykendall Thomson sees Neo-platonism as influential,¹⁰¹ but does not analyse Thompson's poetry as a whole in these terms as Mégroz does.

First of all though, after excusing Thompson's tendency to regression in the terms of Shelley (he "fled to the tower of his own soul"),¹⁰² Mégroz discusses the question of Thompson's relationship

99. Cf. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, p.28.

100. R.L. Megroz, ix.

101. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, p.100.

102. R.L. Mégroz, p.20.

with the seventeenth century, one he sees no need to doubt. He writes that Thompson has "the intimacies and fervent niceties of Crashaw, Donne, Vaughan, Traherne and Herbert".¹⁰³ Mentioning Donne specifically, he says that

Warfare between the spirits and the intellect, Donne's peculiarity, which alienated him from his own age and attracts the present one, is a combination of intellectual dissatisfaction and emotional fervour.¹⁰⁴

This could be true of Thompson. And yet of course, with Donne, as Mégroz says, "fantasy took on a mystical coherence", and dissatisfaction and fervour could be inextricably mingled.¹⁰⁵ With Thompson as we have seen, the underlying fervour for beauty and sensuality can undermine the direction of the ostensible reading, and extravagance of language is a means of escape from the crisis of opposed values (Sun and Christ). This is shown by his inexact use of the Sun as a type for the Cross, while hyperbolically exalting it in its own right as a means of escape from the very type postulated (Poems, pp.207, 212-13).

With Donne it was different. The hyperbole and misuse of definitions and metaphors was only possible because of his underlying confidence in them. If "The Flea" were sincere, it would be grotesque: it is because Donne has faith in the images, and not the uses to which they are being put, that the poem is pulled in another direction and succeeds in reconciling seemingly conflicting uses of language, since being on different levels of sincerity, they do not clash.¹⁰⁶

103. R.L. Mégroz, p.145.

104. Ibid., p.145.

105. Ibid., p.146.

106. John Donne, The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets, ed. Helen Gardner, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, p.53. Cf. "Oh stay three lives in one flea spare/Where wee almost, nay more than maryed are".

Such underlying faith was lacking in the Eighteen-Nineties among many poets. In the age which succeeded Arnold's and Pater's, it was the aesthetic side of religion which proved attractive: to Johnson, the saints are "White Horsemen with Christ their Captain",¹⁰⁷ paralleling the Cavaliers of King Charles. To Wilde, Roman Catholicism was, until the last, an aesthetic experience.¹⁰⁸ Thompson's underlying pagan imagery in poems like "Ode to the Setting Sun" undermines its subject; for there is no indication that this imagery is in any way supportive of the main argument, or even tangentially relevant. In him we have the conflicts of Donne and not the reconciliations. The ambivalence which can support wit has become the contradiction which increases tension; complexity of imagery shows a lack of faith in images.

Mégroz continues by writing of Thompson as "an enthusiastic admirer of Browne",¹⁰⁹ and then goes on to discuss him as a poet concerned with an ideal representation of nature, a "symbolic vesturing of the inner spirit", "nature poetry as creative fantasy".¹¹⁰ Thompson, Mégroz says, demands "The smouldering core of mystery" in the processes of Nature.¹¹¹ However, Mégroz does not appear to see that "mystery" may be just another word for "uncertainty" when applied to Thompson. The ambivalence of his poetry, its conflicting levels of narrative, and the critical polarization which surrounds it suggests that there is more uncertainty in it than Mégroz's formulations can dispel.

107. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher, (New York, Garland, 1982), p.167.

108. Cf. Heskett Pearson, The Life of Oscar Wilde, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985 (1960)), p.361.

109. R.L. Mégroz, p.161.

110. Ibid., p.179.

111. Ibid., p.189.

However, Mégroz goes on to argue that Thompson's formulations about Nature can be clarified by means of another kind of faith: faith in science. In a chapter entitled "Science and Sanctity", he offers Thompson's "two great odes to the Sun" as "clear evidence of his intellectual alertness to the scientific knowledge of his day", and says that "The case made of science by Lucretius as in its penetrating effect an anticipation of Thompson's".¹¹² This seems to be a statement as Thompson-centric as any made by the poet's Catholic apologists, and Mégroz doesn't really have the ammunition to back it up.

Exactly what science Thompson knew is left a little vague, except for a suggestion of a "hint at the electronic theory of matter and the relativity of time and space".¹¹³ This does not seem to amount to a great deal. The most interesting ideas that come out of this section are those which link Thompson with earlier practitioners of science-related poetry. Mégroz writes that Donne "shows a comparable attitude" and mentions "Vaughan's alchemical brother" as possibly responsible for some of what we see in Vaughan's poetry.¹¹⁴ The distinction which Mégroz does not seem to see in this interesting comparison, is that while he is claiming that Thompson was using science in a positive way (although apparently never positive enough to allow of his passing any university examinations),¹¹⁵ he does not see that Donne's use of science is primarily sceptical, and in this

112. Mégroz, p.197.

113. Ibid.

114. Mégroz, pp.199-200.

115. Cf. Everard Meynell, Life, pp.54-55.

sense part of his "intellectual dissatisfaction", rather than a reconciling force in his poetry.¹¹⁶

After he has completed a brief discussion of Thompson's relations with science, Mégroz writes of those he had with mysticism, citing Coventry Patmore:

The Babe sucking his mother's breast, and the lover returning after twenty years' separation, to his home and found in the same bosom, are the types...of Mystics.¹¹⁷

In this context Thompson is seen as the child and the lover returning to childhood in God. Once again making connections with the seventeenth century, Mégroz says:

There is perhaps a greater proportion of the poetry of the seventeenth century than of any other which can be classed as poetry of childhood, and the seventeenth century in England is pre-eminently the century of religious poetry.¹¹⁸

Having made this comparisons Mégroz makes some comments assessing Thompson as inferior to his forerunners. He mentions that "Thompson's love poetry shows a static ecstasy rather than a dynamic ecstasy", and suggests that phrases of this kind such as "enchanted movelessness" "passionless passion", and "wild tranquillities", are signs of infantile reactions of sexual maturity.¹¹⁹ Yet he shies away from any detailed assessment of Thompson in comparison to the poets of the seventeenth century in this context. To write:

116. Vide supra, note 104.

117. Mégroz, p.211.

118. Ibid., p.214.

119. Ibid., p.225.

Where psychological analysis is useful is in its unconscious and unintended affirmation of the profound wisdom of mystical symbolism... 120

is perhaps wisely to avoid, but still to avoid, the point. The very reason that questions of psychology arise with Thompson is that his "mystical symbolism", as Mégroz has indeed already remarked, seems in some way flawed and inadequate. Since Megroz is one of the few writers who attempts to evaluate Thompson without an excessive parti pris, this is perhaps disappointing. Although he covers many aspects of Thompson's creativity, and relates as many of them as possible to the poets' relationship with the seventeenth century, Mégroz does not engage with the ideas he detects in action. Because of this, he does not try to resolve the polarisation of attitudes to Thompson by close study of the work, yet in the themes he raises, there is the material to do the job.

In the next chapter I shall attempt to engage Thompson the poet at the level of his work: and by looking at it, attempt to make explicit his links with the seventeenth-century poets he chose as his models. I hope thereby to show how he re-wrote some of their attitudes in his own poetry; and to show how the underlying conflict of his work modifies both any assessment of his relationship with them, and also any assessment of the relation of the Eighteen-Nineties as a whole to the past period they sought to recreate.

Chapter IX : FRANCIS THOMPSON, FAITHFUL DECADENT - 2

Faithful in My Fashion.

Hot Jacobite as I am for England's one legitimate laureate by native grace and right divine...

Louis Garvin to Francis Thompson,¹
22 June 1897.

Since the days of Crashaw, Vaughan, and Herbert, many have felt themselves called, but few have been chosen.

Francis Thompson.²

Poems had been greeted with mixed reviews on their appearance in 1893.³ By 1897, on the appearance of Sister Songs and New Poems, voices were being raised in question of Thompson's spirituality. Reviewers took him to task for his linguistic extremities. But for Canon Sheehan, he was "the great Catholic poet, for whose advent we have been straining our vision".⁴ Apparently, Canon Sheehan was unaware that in the desert of published English Catholic poetry in the nineteenth century, what he saw might be a mirage.

The sectarianism of those such as Sheehan has left its legacy in Thompson criticism. But it is my part here to argue that in the very grounds of that sectarianism, in Thompson's allegiance to Crashaw and the baroque, lies the route to making unsectarian sense of his poetry, through its links with the seventeenth century.

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1. Everard Meynell, The Life of Francis Thompson, (London, Burns & Oates, 1913), p.332.
 2. Ibid., p.143.
 3. Ibid., pp.136-137.
 4. Ibid., p.143.

Thompson regularly transcribed quantities of Suckling, Drayton and Browne, and Everard Meynell writes that Chesterton might have said "that the seventeenth century was best described by saying that in it was Francis Thompson".⁵ Meynell writes of Thompson's descent from Crashaw by way of Coleridge.⁶ But his debt to these writers was not merely imitative. Rather, it was a method of writing about passion and the world and heaven in the way he felt they ought to be treated: these poets were to be voices to help him sing.

Thompson had a theory of poetry. He felt that "the function of poetry" is "to see and restore the Divine idea of things; freed from the disfiguring accidents of their Fall". To him, "that is what the Ideal really is, or should be", and the wasting or perverting of the gift is an "account of...stewardship" we must render to God.⁷ The poet will be guilty before God unless he can render an adequate defence of his use of the gift of poetry. And what is this gift?

....it is the property of earthly as of the heavenly beauty to create everything to its own image and likeness. Painting is the eye of passion, poetry is the voice of passion, music is the throbbing of her heart.⁸

This gift of which the poet must render account to God is therefore one of passion, a passion of perception or feeling. "eye, "voice", "heart". The passion of perception does not merely restore "the Divine idea of things"; it transforms them. Thompson's belief

5. Everard Meynell, *Life*, p.165.

6. Ibid., pp.165-66.

7. Ibid., p.204.

8. Ibid.

that "Earthly beauty is but heavenly beauty taking to itself flesh", may sound spiritually acceptable, but it is an apprehension of the nature of beauty which starts out from wrong premises.⁹ Thompson's premise is not Heaven or "Plato's doctrine of Ideals",¹⁰ but rather the personal, fleshy and particular. "No common aim can triumph, till it is crystallized in an individual", he writes.¹¹ For Thompson, the portrayal of heavenly beauty comes from a perception of earthly beauty, which is the premise by which he betrays himself. The "symbolism" which "is...the manifestation of Imagination", is to him realized in the personal.¹² His analysis of symbolism is more honestly subjective than the claims made for it by Symons, being dependent on imagination rather than the doctrine of correspondences,¹³ but Thompson's application of it claims, by its imaginative apprehension of heavenly beauty, to reach some objective appreciation of things as they are; *Romantic to the point of fantasy!*

I would fain beguile even death itself with a sweet fantasy...I believe that in Heaven is earth. Plato's doctrine of Ideals, as I conceive, laid its hand upon the very breast of truth, yet missed her breathing. For beauty - such is my faith - is beauty for eternity.¹⁴

The "sweet fantasy" of imagination which "beguiles", rapidly becomes a doctrine of belief, faith and conception in this quotation. From the last sentence we see that Thompson's attitude to beauty is one which transforms it into the eternal, rather than transferring

9. Everard Meynell, Life, p.215.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, ed. Richard Ellman, (New York, E.P. Dutton and co., 1958), p.75.

14. Everard Meynell, Life, p.206.

the eternal back into the temporal. The doctrine of symbolism as imagination is one which speedily changes into a faith in the imagination's own transforming power, its ability to create by belief a perception of eternal verities out of the sweet fantasies of temporal beguilements. The Thompson who "swung the earth a trinket at my wrist" (Poems, p.56), is clearly fantasising; but Thompson himself insists that this fantasy is the same as the perception of eternal beauty which is the poet's duty before God, created out of passion.

I hang 'mid men my needless head,
 And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread:
 The goodly man and the sun-hazed sleeper
 Time shall reap, but after the reaper
 The world shall glean of me, me the sleeper.

(Poems, p.78)

Despite the fact that Thompson's own food is admitted to be "dreams", he still believes that these dreams of "the sun-hazed sleeper" will live to be gleaned after he is dead, having perceived through a passion for the temporal the truth of the eternal. Thompson claimed from Aquinas that "individualities of things" "all form multiplied representations of the one Simple Essence of God".¹⁵ The difference between this kind of perception and the perception of Hopkins's "haeccitas" for example,¹⁶ is that whereas God is the premise for Hopkins's metaphysics, the "individuality of things" is in itself the attraction for Thompson, and in no case more so than when the individual or human, especially a child, has a rôle which defuses the sexual overtones of the passion of perception. Children are supposedly innocent, and the perception which E.J. Ellis saw as tempting to error,¹⁷

15. Everard Meynell, Life, p.218.

16. Gerard Manley Hopkins, The Poems, ed. W.H. Gardner and N.H. Mackenzie, 4th ed., (London, Oxford University Press, 1967), xxi.

17. Everard Meynell, Life, p.219

is one which breaks down the "sense of possession and privacy in possession of the beauties of nature" which belongs at a level which "Exceeds Traherne's" to Francis Thompson.¹⁸

Thompson's praise of passionate perception, and his belief in the child's possession of innocence ("child! and innocency," Poems, p.96) parallels that of Vaughan, who wishes to "return" "In that state I came",¹⁹ much as Thompson hopes to be found "in the nurseries of Heaven" (Poems, p.75).

Where we see a distinction between the poets, however, is in their attitude to the inevitable process of growing up. In "Regeneration" Vaughan is attempting to escape God, as Thompson does in "The Hound of Heaven". He steals "abroad" in "high-spring" (we remember how Thompson used Spring as the setting in Sister Songs).²⁰ The way Vaughan, or Vaughan's persona, escapes seems to him "Primros'd and hung with shade", the attractions of beauty, leisure and sensuality which attend adulthood, which Vaughan is venturing into. But he realises that all is not as it should be: "frost within" and "...surly winds/Blasted my infant buds".²¹ Part of his growth into adulthood is a growth into guilt: there are two sides to the path which is "Primros'd". The second stanza of the poem shows Vaughan's gradual reconciliation of the attractiveness of the way he has escaped to with his inner feelings of guilt:

Stormèd thus; I straight perceivèd my spring
Meere stage, and show,
My walke a monstrous, mountainèd thing
Rough-cast with Rocks, and snow... 22

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18. Everard Meynell, Life, p.285.
19. Henry Vaughan, The Works, ed. L.C. Martin, 2nd ed., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957), p.420.
20. Henry Vaughan, The Works, p.397.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

The attractiveness of spring is deceptive because under it lies winter and decay. To grow up with a second innocence, where "An age of mysteries",²³ requires regeneration at the hands of God: the "Ward" must loose his bonds of the limitations of childhood and being a "Ward", to become in bond under the lighter yoke of God.²⁴ Childhood is precious because it foreshadows the way we will be in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thompson writes in "The Hound of Heaven" that he has "pulled my life upon me" in "the rash lustihead of my young powers". (Poems, p.55). Under pressure from "heavy griefs" his "linked fantasies" where he "swung the earth" "Are yielding". Maturity brings a crisis in his ability to fantasise ideality. And why? Because "My freshness spent its wavering shower; the dust", and "the pulp" is "bitter" (Poems, p.56). We see that Thompson's basis of maturity is a sexual one. The awakening to his own fertility is to be an awakening to death. The "wavering shower" comes to dust; the essence of his fertile self, the "pulp", is "bitter". His emotions, his "tear-drippings stagnate", and he asks whether the love of God is "...an amaranthine weed, /Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?" (Poems, p.56). From Sister Songs, we know that flowers are symbols of phallic awareness to Thompson,²⁵ hence God's love is a threat to Thompson's own sexuality and the guilt which is awakened in him by the constant presence of that love leads him to associate his "lustihed" with stagnation and death.

This shows Thompson in a very similar light to Vaughan in the former poem. The Vaughan who hoped "by meer playing" to "go to Heaven"

23. Henry Vaughan, The Works, p.521.

24. Ibid., p.397

25. Cf. Francis Thompson, The Collected Poetry, pp.56, 78, 85, 125.

is surely the same as the Thompson who longed for its "nurseries"²⁶ (Poems, p.75). Yet there are crucial differences. Thompson's approach to the pain and guilt of adulthood is more overtly sexual: to Vaughan sexuality is only one of a procession of the vignettes of vanity; "the doting lover in his quaintest strain" as we read in "The World".²⁷ To Vaughan childhood is a symbol of the means to the end of Heaven; to Thompson it is the end itself, once again a case of the reversed premises we discussed earlier. The "heart of childhood" is "divine" for Thompson, not the other way about (Poems, p.96). This leads Thompson as we have seen and we shall see, to view childhood in terms of a regression rather than a renewal.²⁸ Childhood is not just free from the guilt of responsibility: it is a place where sexuality can be idealized:

A Kiss? for a child's kiss?
Aye goddess, even for this.

(Poems, p.96)

Another object for his idealization is Alice Meynell, the symbol of the sexually unattainable woman found in "Her Portrait", and "The Mistress of Vision" where she is a mixture of the Magdalen and the Virgin.²⁹ Here there is a resemblance to Crashaw, himself like Thompson a poet of paradox. The Mistress of Vision is "sweet and sore", (Poems, p.131), just as Crashaw's weeper has "Sweetnesse so sad, sadnes so sweet".³⁰ For Thompson the Mistress is "The Lady of fair weeping" (Poems, p.131). The Mistress of Vision's tears are "divine

26. Henry Vaughan, The Works, p.520.

27. Cf. Francis Thompson, The Collected Poetry, p.67, and Vide infra.

28. Cf. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, Francis Thompson: A Critical Biography, (New York, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1961), p.94. This poem has overtones also of Crashaw's "The Weeper".

29. Richard Crashaw, The Poems, ed. L.C. Martin, 2nd edition, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957), p.81.

conservers" (Poems, p.132), as Crashaw had commented on his weeper:

Heavens thy faire eyes be,
Heavens of ever-falling starres.³¹

We see here, however, that while Thompson's Mistress has eyes which conserve, Crashaw's weeper gives freely with hers: the stars are "ever-falling".

Both poets have a preoccupation with eyes. Crashaw writes:

It was THY day, SWEET: & did rise
Not from the EAST, but from thine eyes.³²

and:

All will be darkness to the Day
That breakes from one of these bright eyes.³³

In the poem on "Saint Mary Magdalene" quoted above ("Heavens thy fair eyes be/ Heavens of ever-falling starres"), Crashaw writes perhaps his best known conceit, once again concerning eyes, that they are "portable, & compendious oceans".³⁴

Thompson writes in "The Mistress of Vision":

But woe's me, and woe's me,
For the secrets of her eyes!
In my visions fearfully
They are ever shown to be
As fringed pools, whereof each lies
Pallid-dark beneath the skies...

(Poems, p.133)

31. Richard Crashaw, The Poems, p.308.

32. Ibid., p.248.

33. Ibid., p.252.

34. Ibid., p.312.

In "The Making of Viola", the Father of Heaven commands:

Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes,
Wood-browed pools of Paradise -...

(Poems, p.70)

And again, in "Her Portrait":

...nigh her lids eclipse
Each half-occulted star beneath that lies;
And in the contemplation of those eyes,
Passionless passion, wild tranquilities.

(Poems, p.30)

For Crashaw, eyes are outgoing, the source of cosmic rejoicing, "ever-falling starres", or bleeding tears which signify a parallel to the pagan sacrifice of Christ, as in "Sancta Maria Dolorum" where "Her eyes bleed TEARS, his wounds WEEP BLOOD".³⁵ The "Day" "breakes from...bright eyes". For Thompson by contrast, they are "dark", "pools"; they "eclipse" "half-occulted stars", hiding stars rather than letting them fall as does Crashaw's Weeper. While in Crashaw we are witnessing a celebration, or the forerunning event of a celebration, with Thompson we are in a world of retreat from the joyful. The eyes are dark, secretive; they are full of "phantasmal mysteries" and "Over-gloomed" (Poems, p.133). Even where Jesus is said to be creating the eyes like "pools of Paradise", they are dark, "Wood-browed" pools (Poems, p.70).

Crashaw's eye-symbolism is a vehicle for expanding the connotations of the poem, a distributive literary effect. Thompson's by contrast, suggests retreat and alienation. The darkness that he sees

35. Richard Crashaw, The Poems, p.285.

in eyes is summed up by paradoxes which side-step illumination for the sake of suggestions as in "Passionless passion, wild tranquillities" (Poems, p.30). This paradox, like that of the "primal sex of heaven and poetry" suggests a paradox inherent in Thompson himself and his work, rather than showing us any real understanding of Alice Meynell, whose portrait is being described.

Echoes of Crashaw appear elsewhere. "Saint Mary Magdalene" is almost a parallel poem to "The Mistress of Vision", for where Crashaw's saint experiences "sweetnesse so sad, sadnes so sweet",³⁶ Thompson's Mistress sings "a song of sweet and sore" (Poems, p.131) "The lily kept its gleaming/In her tears" in Thompson's poem (Poems, p.132), while for Crashaw "The deaw no more will sleepe, /Nuzzel'd in the Lillies necke".³⁷

In "On a prayer booke sent to Mrs. M.R.", Crashaw comments:

It is loves great Artillery,
Which here contracts it selfe and comes to lye
Close coucht in your white bosome...³⁸

Violence converts itself to love through diminution which leads to intimacy. So in Thompson the "trumpet" which "...sounds/From the hid battlements of Eternity" in "The Hound of Heaven" (Poems, p.56), becomes the intimate presence of God:

Halts by me that footfall
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched
caressingly?
'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekst!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me!'

(Poems, p.57)

36. Richard Crashaw, The Poems, p.81.

37. Ibid., p.80

38. Ibid., p.127.

In Crashaw's poem cited above, the end result is similar:

What joy, what blisse,
How many heavens at once it is,
To have a God become her lover. ³⁹

Both poems deal with a diminution of scale suggestive of intimacy after the ostensibly threatening imagery they use in moving towards it.

For Thompson, the concern of Heaven for the child is detailed by his representation of his own relationship with God, "And that child even I" (Poems, p.306). Crashaw anticipates Thompson's love of and identification with children shown here and elsewhere, ⁴⁰ when he writes in his "Hymn to St. Teresa" of God:

Weell see him take a private seate,
And make his mansion in the milde
And milky soul of a soft childe. ⁴¹

But Thompson's view of the "private seate" which can be taken in the heart of children is one not so innocent as Crashaw's. A comparison of two passages, not otherwise related, might serve to illustrate this. First, a section from Sister Songs:

Thou whose young sex is yet but in thy soul;-
As hoarded in the vine
Hang the gold skins of undelirious wine,
As air sleeps, till it toss its limbs in breeze;-
In whom the mystery which lures and sunders,
Grapples and thrusts apart; endears, estranges,
The dragon to its own Hesperides -
Is gated under slow-revolving changes,
Manifold doors of heavy-hinged years.
So once, ere Heaven's eyes were filled with wonders
To see Laughter rise from Tears,
Lay in beauty not yet mighty,
Couched in translucencies,
The antenatal Aphrodite,
Caved magically under magic seas;
Caved dreamlessly beneath the dreamful seas.

(Poems, p.109)

39. Richard Crashaw, The Poems, p.130.

40. Cf. Francis Thompson, The Collected Poetry, pp.70, 235, 261.

41. Richard Crashaw, The Poems, p.131.

Now compare a passage of Crashaw's, from "Musick s Duell":

Then starts shee suddenly into a Throng
 Of short thicke sobs, whose thund'ring volleyes float,
 And roule themselves over her lubricke throat
 In panting murmurs, still'd out of her Breast
 That ever-bubbling Spring; the sugred Nest
 Of her delicious soule, that there does lye
 Bathing in streames of liquid Melodie...⁴²

Crashaw is writing of music in poetry; Thompson is writing of song in the same terms. Both poems deal with the idealisation of the female through cosmic imagery. Crashaw's poem is "couched in translucencies": we see through the sobs to the breast and then to the spring within it whose source is ~~the~~ soul. The passage progresses from the real to the ideal, by showing that the external features of behaviour which we see have their source in metaphysical phenomena. In Thompson, we see the "young sex" of the soul as having a further source, "the antenatal Aphrodite". Again it is typical of Thompson that sexuality enters the metaphysics of the poem. Sex is "hoarded in the vine" like "the gold skins of undelirious wine". It is a "mystery" as is the mystery of Aphrodite. Why Aphrodite? Thompson's comparison with the Greek goddess of love is illuminating, showing both pagan and sexual references. Yet his Aphrodite is no classical model: she is clearly a femme fatale of the Eighteen Nineties. The fact that she is "caved" "magically" and "dreamlessly" under the "seas", suggests a character such as Pater's La Gioconda who "has been a diver in deep seas", and "keeps their fallen day about her".⁴³

42. Richard Crashaw, The Poems, p.150.

43. Walter Pater, The Works, 8 Vols., The Renaissance, (London, Macmillan & Co., 1900), vol.I, p.125.

Likewise the mystery "which lures and sunders", a sexual one, like the shrines on the vine, has no part in Crashaw's "delicious soule". The "panting murmurs", the "ever-bubbling spring" and "shorte thicke sobs" all may suggest sexual imagery, but they indeed only mean so in a context inextricably bound to that of music, which is being written of. The "liquid melodie" is a clear response to music, and if music is itself sexual, then that is only because it partakes of the same nature as we do. With Thompson, the "mystery", the "cave", the grappling and thrusting all suggest a somewhat less delicate ambivalence as well as suggesting once more the regressive, rather than outflowing, tendency of his metaphysics. The passage is full of literary concealment: "mystery", "hoarded", "sleeps", "doors of heavy-hinged years", "couched", "beneath", "antenatal", and most of all the repeated "caved". Crashaw however, is in the open from the beginning with his "Throng", "thund'ring volleys", "ever-bubbling", "streams" and "suddenly". Movement rather than concealment is implied. Thompson on the other hand, despite his passage being about the potential of adulthood (the "young sex" is still in the "soul") writes in praise of regression.

These elements of retreat are in opposition to the kind of joyous openness we find in Crashaw:

Awake & sing.
And be All Wing; 44

We are reminded of Mrs. Meynell's comment on Lovelace, that he "was winged",⁴⁵ and indeed these lines of Crashaw accord well with the phenomenon of "the power of the wing" we discussed earlier.⁴⁶

44. Richard Crashaw, The Poems, p.240

45. Alice Meynell, The Wares of Autolycus: Selected Literary Essays, ed. P.M. Fraser, (London, Oxford University Press, 1965), p.22.

46. Vide supra, "Walter Pater: The Man of England and the Works of France", Chapter II.

It was not only from Crashaw that Thompson took his poetic wings. His allegiance to the old songs and their singers led him also, as has been noted above, to Cowley.⁴⁷ Cowley's cosmic imagery bears a relationship to Thompson's, in that both poets sometimes see themselves as the centre of attention for cosmic phenomena: as Thompson "swung the earth a trinket at my wrist" (Poems, p.56), so Cowley writes that "...Lightnings in my way/Like harmless Lambent Fiers about my temples play".⁴⁸ Cowley's "lusty Sun", which "gently kisses every thing",⁴⁹ becomes in Sister Songs "the all-kissing Sun" (Poems, p.97).

Vaughan's relationship with Thompson we have already examined through a comparison of "Regeneration" and "The Hound of Heaven" above. He also shares, as we have noted, Thompson's love for childhood, save that for him it is a means to renewal rather than an end in itself.⁵⁰ There are similarities also in their approach to the language of sin. In "Unprofitableness", Vaughan writes:

"Twas but Just now my bleak leaves hopeles hung
Sullyed with dust and mud...⁵¹

Thompson in "The Hound of Heaven" stands "amid the dust o' the mounded years" and "tear-drippings" are "split down ever" from "the sighful

47. Vide supra, "Francis Thompson, Faithful Decadent" I: Catholics and Criticism (Ch.VIII).

48. Abraham Cowley, The English Writings: Poems, ed. A.R. Waller, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1905), p.204.

49. Abraham Cowley, The English Writings: Poems, p.143.

50. Cf. Henry Vaughan, The Works, pp.520-521, although n.b. also p.420: "Some men a forward motion love/But I by backward steps would move", suggesting that the two poets are not as dissimilar as all that.

51. Henry Vaughan, The Works, p.441.

branches of my mind", an autumnal image, like Vaughan's "bleak leaves" (Poems, pp.55-60). Again, Thompson is "of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot" (Poems, p.57).

Like Crashaw and Vaughan, George Herbert shares the preoccupation with childhood and innocence, as we read in "H. Baptisme (II)", where he writes "O let me still/Write thee great God, and me a childe", and again "The growth of flesh is but a blister/Childhood is health".⁵² But once again the childhood Herbert is praising is the childhood of obedience, as in "The Collar":

Me thoughts I heard one calling Child!
And I reply'd, My Lord.⁵³

For Thompson the "twenty shrivelled years" (Poems, p.77), is what divides him from the love of childhood. The fact that apart from when he writes of himself in the context of keeping "a younger company" in Heaven (Poems, p.74), he writes always of female children: in "Daisy", "The Making of Viola", "The Poppy", "To Monica Thought Dying", Sister Songs or "A Girl's Sin". The only exception to this is "To My Godchild". Whether he is writing of his withered flower, (Poems, p.125), or "withered dreams" (Poems, p.78), Thompson is always making an approach to the children concerned of some kind. This is again a clear example of his inverted praise: the children do not symbolise heavenly obedience, but are in themselves the beautiful objects of his imagination through which he is attempting to approach heavenly beauty.

In Herbert also we find a slight foreshadowing of the oriental note found in Thompson, as in "Prayer (1)" for example, "Church-bells beyond the starres heard, the souls bloud/The land of spices..."⁵⁴

52. George Herbert, The Works, ed. F.E. Hutchinson, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1941), p.44.

53. George Herbert, The Works, p.154.

54. Ibid., p.51.

A flower in Sister Songs is "that Indian maid, the pansy" (Poems, p.89). "Orient Ode" deals specifically with the exotic, "...the spiced/Regions and odorous of Song's traded East" (Poems, p.153).

Thompson's feeling that the earth is "a trinket at my wrist" (Poems, p.56) is again related to the anthropocentric view voiced by Herbert:

Nothing we see, but means our good,
As our delight, or as our treasure,
The whole is, either our cupboard of food
Or cabinet of pleasure.⁵⁵

But we do not lose sight of the fact that for Herbert, "Man is one world" only, and although another may attend him, he is attended by "Musical and light" only because God wills it so.⁵⁶ The world only "means our good" through God's grace and providence in making it. For Thompson, when God's love comes it is not as a consummation of the "cabinet of pleasure", but an alien assault on the pleasures of life: "A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed". God's "harvest fields" are "dunged with rotten death". The conquest of God comes when the "dream" fails "The dreamer", in other words when imagination and the "linked fantasies" with their "blossomy twist" (we remember Thompson's sexual flower-imagery) are overcome (Poems, p.56). For Herbert, God's "sweets" exceed all others;⁵⁷ for Thompson the divine command is an assault on these same sweets; and yet he celebrates God through them elsewhere in his poetry, not all of which shares the perspicacity of "The Hound of Heaven", where instead of the world gleaming from the sleeper who has done his duty to God through

55. George Herbert, The Works, p.91.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., p.42.

the symbolic apprehensions of imagination, dreams are exploded, and "linked fantasies" yield to "heavy griefs". (Poems, p.56). But the "heavy griefs" are what Thompson tries elsewhere to escape from the responsibility of, by comparing the Cross to the sun he can transform its "presaged dole" (Poems, p.213) into the sensuality he much prefers; that of the Sun as God. By inverting the premises he hopes to avoid the argument.

The comparison with Herbert shows once again how Thompson is alienated from the apprehension of the world as dependent on Heaven which he pretends to. Herbert, like Crashaw, can enjoy the sensual delights of the world as gifts from God. Thompson, despite his Catholicism and sympathy with these poets, cannot. God's attitude to them is one of assault for Thompson; so he evades the issue, by concentrating on their attitude to God. When Herbert speaks of fountains flowing, as he does in "Man",⁵⁸ it is a fertile gift from above, not a source of retreat and guilt, as it is for Thompson, who must spend his "wavering shower" "the dust" (Poems, p.56) before he can be delivered.

Herbert can sometimes feel he has "no harvest but a thorn",⁵⁹ but Thompson never quite feels he escapes from the "claws of Time" (Poems p.78) and "his barbed minutes" (Poems, p.96). Herbert sees that the way out of such a situation is obedience;⁶⁰ for Thompson it is his "withered dreams" (Poems, p.78), which despite his claiming to have left behind at the end of "The Hound of Heaven", return throughout his poetry. Yet still he writes of the "carved perfect way", (Poems,

58. George Herbert, The Works, p.90.

59. Ibid., p.153.

60. Ibid., pp.153-54.

p.26), which Alice Meynell seems to have taught him at least some of with "the heaven of her mind" (Poems, p.29), another example of Thompson's idealization of individuals, which may remind us of Donne:

Here the admyring her my mind did whett
To seeke thee God;⁶¹

Donne's contribution to the Eighteen-Nineties was considerable, as we have seen elsewhere in this thesis, in terms such as Donne the man of nerves, or Donne the believer in degeneration of the world.⁶² He "turned to his own uses his reading in the Neoplatonists" as Helen Gardner says,⁶³ and in this sense is kin to Thompson, who as we remember wrote that "Earthly beauty is but heavenly beauty taking to itself flesh".⁶⁴ Thompson's view that "No common aim can triumph, till it is crystallized in an individual", found its execution in his poems on Alice Meynell and her daughters.⁶⁵ The eyes of Viola "drown" a "burning star" (Poems, p.71) (We are reminded once more of the inwardness of Thompson's eyes which consume and do not give).

Of Alice Meynell he writes:

Herself must with herself be sole compeer,
Unless the people of her distant sphere
Some gold migration send to melodise the year.

(Poems, p.28)

Just as Thompson sees the absolute as being emblemized in an individual, the "sole compeer", so Milgate says of Elizabeth Drury that she "is

61. John Donne, The Divine Poems, ed. Helen Gardner, (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1978), p.15.
62. Cf. J.E. Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1959), p.113ff.
63. John Donne, Elegies and Songs and Sonnets, ed. Helen Gardner, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965), xxx .
64. Everard Meynell, Life, p.206.
65. Ibid., p.215.

something like a Platonic 'idea' ";⁶⁶ and indeed she is, an emblem of the world's beauty, now an "ugly...monster" at her death.⁶⁷

Just as Thompson feared the end of the world, so Donne in the Anniversaries, deals with the question of degeneration:⁶⁸

Thou knowst how lame a cripple this world is.
And learnst this much by our Anatomy,
That this worlds generall sickness doth not lie
In any humour, or one certaine part;
But, as thou saw'st it rotten at the hart...⁶⁹

Both poets deal with the idealization of the individual and the fear of the end of the world.

We have seen Thompson's manifold connexions with the poets of the seventeenth century whom he chose to imitate. They were to him as to Lionel Johnson, men on whom to base his language, expression, and ideas. As Johnson idealized his friends and the world of the "half-courtly and half-cloistral",⁷⁰ so Thompson followed some of the metaphysical and baroque poets in his pursuit of extravagance, his idealization of the individual, and of the Magdalen, his growing consciousness of sin, and his poetic attitude to children.

Yet all is changed from the "old songs" he claims to sing. Whereas about them there is an air of experiment and worship, about his poetry there is an air of obscuration and retreat. Where Crashaw is open and joyous, Thompson is crabbed and confined by an effort

66. John Donne, The Epithalamions Anniversaries and Epicedes, ed. W. Milgate, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978), xl.
67. John Donne, The Epithalamions Anniversaries and Epicedes, p.31.
68. Cf. C.M. Coffin, John Donne and the New Philosophy, (New York. The Humanities Press, 1958), pp.135, 264, 274. But v. p.279.
69. John Donne, The Epithalamions Anniversaries and Epicedes, pp.28-29.
70. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy, (London, Elkin Matthews, 1894), p.136.

to compromise the division between passion and worship in his poetry, the "primal heaven of sex and poetry". His childhood is not one of regeneration, but of regress and the admiration of little girls. This it is that helps to save him from being an "outcast" (Poems, p.96). He remembers the child who saved him on the London streets, like De Quincey's Ann,⁷¹ and a little like the girl in Dowson's "Souvenirs of an Egoist".⁷² he associates the "child" of whom he is writing with her:

Therefore I kissed in thee
Her, child, and innocency...

(Poems, p.96)

Thompson then goes on to write of the "Authentic cestus of two girdling arms" and "The subtle sanctities" of "childish lips' unvalued precious brush", writing in surprise "Then, that thy little kiss/should be to me all this" (Poems, p.97). The daughter of Alice Meynell and the girl of the streets are being associated in the kind of satisfaction they can give to Thompson. It is not altogether a pleasant passage; and that "childish lips" should convey "subtle sanctities" says much of Thompson's own attitudes towards the divine and profane, as in "Ode to the Setting Sun" where sensuality and brightness, although theoretically a type of the Cross, is much to be preferred to the Cross itself, with its "presaged dole" (Poems, p.213).

Thompson's excess as a poet is not experimental; it is escapist, and for this reason decadent. In his biography of Thompson, Everard Meynell writes:

71. Thomas De Quincey, The Collected Writings, ed. David Masson 14 vols., (London, A & C Black, 1897), Vol.III, pp.222, 360.
72. Ernest Dowson, The Stories, ed. Mark Longaker, (London, W.H. Allen, 1949), p.14ff.

Verlaine made a fashion, and his tragedy came easily, even to minor poets, and was not altogether impious. The young men anxious to fall as he fell were anxious also to share in the depths of his contrition. The duet about commission of sin and contrition for sin had great vogue...⁷³

This was the tragedy of the extreme virtue or the extreme vice; the cult of the indulgent ego, and the cultivation of the individual at its most excessive, whether of a past hero like King Charles as with the nostalgic decadents, or with a present one like Nietzsche's superman. This was the excess that generated the decadent ideal of the sinner caught in the half-world between the anguish of the sin committed, and the luxury of the repentance postulated, the "foul delight" or "two despairs" of Lionel Johnson's *Dark Angel*.⁷⁴ Yet with this went a morbidity arising from the inability truly to decide either for evil or good, epitomized in Dowson's:

They are not long, the weeping and the laughter
 Love and desire and hate
 I think they have no portion in us after
 We pass the gate.

They are not long, the days of wine and roses:
 Out of a misty dream
 Our path emerges for a while, then closes
 Within a dream.⁷⁵

Although the "dwellers with the Christ" are to "pray" for "our heedlessness",⁷⁶ Dowson never suggests that he himself can do anything

73. Everard Meynell, *Life*, p.322.

74. Lionel Johnson, *The Collected Poems*, ed. Ian Fletcher, (New York, Garland, 1982), p.53.

75. Ernest Dowson, *Poetical Works*, 3rd ed., ed. Desmond Flower, (London, Cassell, 1967), p.32.

76. *Ibid.*, p.98.

about his membership of the "perverse and aimless band" of vanity.⁷⁷

Francis Thompson was not a poet of such explicit paralysis between death and life. But in his poetry, the excess of language serves a purpose of concealment and retreat such as that postulated of Oscar Wilde by Hugo van Hoffmannsthal:

All the jewels among which he pretended to live
so voluptuously were like eyes petrified in
death by the threat directed against him by life.⁷⁸

Thompson's "elfin swarms" and the "amber-clear and glossy gold" of his verse (Poems, p.91), serve the same purpose; a passion of perception, ostensibly directed at God, which conceals an unrealized sexuality. His own inability to find an adult terminology which discoursed of reality is shown by his insistence on the imagination's subjective creativity as a measure of objective truth, whereas in fact the "sleeper's" "dreams" (Poems, p.78), far from being a legacy of truth to the future, seem often largely meaningless:

...We must long,
A floating haze of silver subtile song,
Await love-laden
Above each maiden
The appointed hour that o'er the hearts of you...

(Poems, p.123)

The "primal sex" of poetry waits "love-laden" for the "appointed hour" which never comes, for when it does, all that happens is that "our coarsening musics" are turned "back to love" (Poems, p.123), and the poetry, rather than the poet, is turned in on itself and remains

77. Ernest Dowson, Poetical Works, p.127.

78. Quoted in Richard Gilman, Decadence, The Strange Life of an Epithet, (London, Secker and Warburg, 1979), p.131.

onanistically null in the very act of its own creation; a made sterility, for where "his frightened flower" "fell, it withered" (Poems, p.125).

Arthur Symons thought that "decadence in literature...is that learned corruption of language by which style ceases to be organic, and becomes, in the pursuit of some new expressiveness or beauty, deliberately abnormal".⁷⁹ This statement also helps to place Thompson in his period:

The beamy-textured tent transpicuous
Of webbed coerule wrought and woven calms,
Whence has paced forth the lambent-footed sun.
And Thou disclose my flower of song upcurled...

(Poems, p.86)

Apart from this being yet another example of Thompson's "flower of song" serving profane purposes in the sensual imagery of the poem, it is a language which as a whole hovers on the verge of abnormality: "webbed coerule" expresses little to the reader; "lambent-footed" and "beamy-textured" are adjectives as much in excess of ordinary communication as possible. They slow down the verse, preventing its movement by the time they make us take to linger over their artificiality in an attempt to understand it. We take so long dwelling on them that our attention is distracted from the recognizable elements of the poem; the sun, the song, and evening. We know what these are: but the adjectives force us into a nominalist world ordered by Thompson through blocking communication with the vocabulary of experience. They are artificialities of language designed to protect the poetry from movement and realization.

79. Quoted by Richard Gilman, p.15.

Lionel Johnson, said Thompson had the "opulent, prodigal manner of the seventeenth century".⁸⁰ This is the case: but his prodigalities are not those of expansion, the "power of the wing" or "Angels alone that soar above/Injoy such liberty". Rather they are the "Stone Walls" and "iron bars" of a gilded cage.⁸¹ His prodigalities are a protection from the tension of ageing in "the responsibilities of adult life", as Professor Butter calls them.⁸² The loveliness of the world attracts him: he draws "the bolt of Nature's secrecies" (Poems, p.54), but there is a sense of imprisonment also in the physical world of which he prefers to write. The "gold gateway of the stars" have "clanged bars" to imprison him on earth unless he accepts God (Poems, p.53). But as we have seen, much of his poetry denies the message of the Hound of Heaven, and sees the Cross as an assault on the world he loves which can be avoided by identifying the two, as in "Ode to the Setting Sun", no matter how inadequately.

"The Hound of Heaven" is a great poem of commission and contrition. But since commission is so often the subject and the metaphor of Thompson's poetry, contrition is a leap unjustified by the events of the poem. When it occurs, as the "type memorial" of the sun being in theory the Cross (Poems, p.212), it is a change of status for sensual apprehension like Yeats's "artifice of eternity",⁸³ or the smithies which "break the flood" in "Byzantium",⁸⁴ a form of

80. Quoted by J.C. Reid, p.94.

81. Richard Lovelace, The Poems, ed. C.H. Wilkinson, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1930), p.79.

82. Peter Butter, Francis Thompson, Writers and their Work, vol.141 (London, Longmans, Green and co., 1961), p.11.

83. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan and Company, 1950), p.218.

84. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, p.281.

words that gestures to eternity without experiencing it, a high poetic sleight of hand which asks for all it has now, transformed onto the eternal plane.

Thompson's metaphors, his flowers and fountains, his "appointed hour" (Poems, p.123) which never comes, are of a sexuality frustrated yet longing for the lovely world it knows is wrong. He is incapable of movement or choice; hence his use of childhood as an image, a sexuality conveniently inaccessible. This is an example of the essential sterility of the decadent thought of sin and repentance: the experience of commission with the hope of contrition lying outside all that which the experience is arguing for, attainable only by a sleight-of-hand in imagery, or a change to wistful tune, where the possibility of repentance itself becomes part of nostalgia:

And yet! and yet! O royal Cavalry!
Whence divine sorrow triumphed through years past:
Could ages bow before mere memory?
Those passion-flowers must blossom, to the last.

Purple they bloom, the splendour of a king:
Crimson they bleed, the sacrament of Death:
About our thrones and pleasaunces they cling,
Where guilty eyes read, what each blossom saith. ⁸⁵

Age did bow before mere memory in the past constructed by the decadent poets, and although Lionel Johnson's repentance may have been more genuine than most, it is still one influenced by nostalgia.

Decadence returns again and again to more extreme sins in the hope of approaching closer and closer to contrition while by its own

85. Lionel Johnson, The Collected Poems, p.54.

action moving further and further from it. "Renewal of lost innocence", is what Dowson writes of in "Extreme Unction",⁸⁶ but he nevertheless continues in the "perverse and aimless band" mentioned above.⁸⁷ So Thompson writes of innocence in the language of excess and artificiality: a "perverse and aimless band" of words and metaphors, which some critics have thought little more than opium dreams.⁸⁸

But if mine unappeasèd cicatrices
 Might get them lawful ease;
 Were any gentle passion hallowed me,
 Who must none other breath of passion feel
 Save such as winnows to the fledged heel
 The tremulous Paradisal plumages;
 The conscious sacramental trees
 Which ever be
 Shaken celestially,
 Consentient with enamoured wings, might know my
 love for thee.

(Poems, p.104)

Sylvia's "sweet, feat ways" (Poems, p.86) are drowned in a flood of adjectives some of them almost laughable in their apparent nonsensicality, such as "conscious sacramental trees". The message of the last six simple monosyllables, "love for thee", is thus smothered in a vocabulary endeavouring to conceal its subject, and write sensually in a way apparently distinct from, and yet connected with, the way the child is being written of.

Thompson's place in the decadent period is determined both by his allegiance to one part of the seventeenth-century revival, and by his relationship to contemporary poetry.

86. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, p.77.

87. Ibid.

88. Cf. J.C. Reid, pp.32-34.

On the public stage of the period he had little or no rôle: a single appearance at the Rhymers' Club being the only contact he had with the mainland of Eighteen-Nineties poets in London.⁸⁹ Like one of his heroes, De Quincey, he was a loner.

But that did not place him outside his period. In his book, The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900, Jean Pierrot writes of the cult of De Quincey in nineteenth-century France and Belgium.⁹⁰ Drugs were seen (we remember the opium den in The Picture of Dorian Gray),⁹¹ as saving us from "an ungraspable reality"; this was a way of "courageously" augmenting "one's inner power to feed off illusion".⁹² "Opium and hashish...are one way of unlocking the door to a more intense, more systematic, and more opulent dream world in this assessment".⁹³ Pierrot also writes that Des Esseintes's hallucinations in A rebours are "quite clearly inspired by the famous Consul Romanus episode from the Confessions".⁹⁴ Later we read that "In that same year...he [Huysmans] compared the impression produced by Whistler's paintings to De Quincey's opium-induced hallucinations, and speaks of a "De Quincey vogue".⁹⁵ This had its part in "the creation of compensatory worlds",⁹⁶ which we see in the imagery of Francis Thompson; it also created the "penitential loneliness" of De Quincey's Confessions,⁹⁷ which Francis Thompson admitted to: "my fruit is dreams

89. Peter Butter, Francis Thompson, p.7.

90. Jean Pierrot, The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900, tr. D. Goltman (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.33ff.

91. Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray, ed. Isobel Murray, The World's Classics, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 187ff.

92. Paul Bourget, quoted by Jean Pierrot, p.35.

93. Paul Bourget, quoted by Jean Pierrot, p.36.

94. Jean Pierrot, p.36.

95. Jean Pierrot, p.37.

96. Jean Pierrot, p.45.

97. Thomas De Quincey, The collected Writings, Vol.III, p.210.

as theirs is bread" (Poems, p.18). The opium user is a creature apart; and thus his is another facet of the cult of the individual believed in by Francis Thompson and many of the writers of the age.⁹⁸

In Confessions, De Quincey recommends opium as "intercepting whilst likely to be formed - the great English scourge of pulmonary consumption",⁹⁹ and it is thought that Thompson, at least latterly, used it partly for that and,¹⁰⁰ although it is a blow to the Catholic apologists who see its use as medicinal, that Thompson himself thought that he was "dying of laudanum poisoning".¹⁰¹

It is the "just, subtle and all-conquering opium" which confer a lonely dream world on both De Quincey and Thompson.¹⁰² De Quincey writes of "the fierce chemistry of my dreams...insufferable splendour that fretted my heart"¹⁰³, which appears to have a great deal in common with Thompson's dream world of excess and obvious escapism and frustration. We can never say how much opium was responsible for this; we have Everard Meynell's assurance that Thompson had given it up when he wrote "Ode to the Setting Sun" for example,¹⁰⁴ but we can never be sure how far this is an example of looking kindly on the "great Catholic poet", who could hardly be a long-term addict of a hard drug and fulfil that rôle.¹⁰⁵

98. Vide supra, "Craving Viaticum".

99. Thomas De Quincey, The Works, 3rd ed., 16 vols. (Edinburgh, A.&C.Black, 1871), vol. I, ix.

100. Cf. Everard Meynell, Life, p.53.

101. J.C. Reid, p.203.

102. Thomas de Quincey, The Collected Writings, vol.III, p.395.

103. Ibid., p.434.

104. Everard Meynell, Life, p.95.

105. Ibid., p.143.

The Decadents, as Pierrot writes, were "convinced that the material universe is nothing but an appearance", and that "they were to turn their gaze backward toward certain favored and prestigious past eras."¹⁰⁶ Bourget had written that "faith will depart, but mysticism...will linger on in the sensations".¹⁰⁷ Hartman "coldly envisaged the disappearance of the human race as a beneficial event".¹⁰⁸ With such a prospect of the present age in decline, faith vanishing, humanity at risk, and the past beckoning, it was little wonder that the writers of the Eighteen-Nineties era turned to literary and religious nostalgia, which, as we have discussed, was embodied in several cults and enthusiasms, Jacobitism being one of the chief.

For Thompson, the tensions of the time and of his own personality took on a religious form. The great individuals to whom he looked back, and whom he sought to emulate, were in the main, the religious poets of the seventeenth century.

Not only does he show his interest in them through his verse; he also studies them, as Alice Meynell did, through criticism. On 19th June 1897, he wrote a review of Chambers's Vaughan in The Athenaeum,¹⁰⁹ in The Academy, he wrote on Cowley and the seventeenth

106. Jean Pierrot, p.10.

107. Quoted by Jean Pierrot, p.15.

108. Jean Pierrot, p.47.

109. Francis Thompson, The Real Robert Louis Stevenson and Other Critical Essays, ed. T.L. Connolly, (New York, University Paperbound editions, 1959), p.87ff.

century,¹¹⁰ later in The Athenaeum once more he reviewed Saintsbury's Minor Poets of the Caroline Period,¹¹¹ the poems of Strode and Stanley,¹¹² and an article on Crashaw.¹¹³ In The Academy of 18th November 1899 he speaks of the "great masters of style, Taylor, and Browne, and Hooker".¹¹⁴ Later, in his long essay on Shelley, Thompson claimed that Crashaw was "the highest product of the Metaphysical School", and says of Shelley that "he is what the Metaphysical School should have been..." The seed of Crashaw, Thompson believed, had been "choked with thorns".¹¹⁵

Never actually sympathetic to the French Symbolist movement,¹¹⁶ it was to these writers that Thompson looked back in the construction of the kind of poetry which was called "A dictionary of obsolete English suffering from a fierce fit of delirium tremens".¹¹⁷ His excess, his "Asian" and "African" side (R.L. Mégroz writes on Arabian influences) seem related to Sir Thomas Browne.¹¹⁸ "From the Night of Forebeing" is a poem written from a Brownian starting point:

110. Francis Thompson, The Real Robert Louis Stevenson and Other Critical Essays, p.64ff.

111. Ibid., p.59ff.

112. Ibid., p.81ff.

113. Ibid., p.66ff.

114. Ibid., p.235.

115. Francis Thompson, Shelley, ed. George Wyndham, (London, Burns and Oates, 1911), pp.50-51.

116. Cf. Paul van Kuykendall Thomson, p.65.

117. Ibid.

118. Cf. R.L. Mégroz, p.229ff.

"In the chaos of preordination, and night of our forebeings" (Poems p.158), just as in writing of "the ghost of a rose" in "The Mistress of Vision" Thompson is quoting The Garden of Cyrus.¹¹⁹ For Thompson, "The world's unfolded blossom smells of God" (Poems, p.161) and this is the key to his work. He is a decadent, and yet believes himself not to be one, although as we have seen, his theological statements vary from the doubtful to the perverse. Yet he accepts the idea of his age as an age in decline, for it was the idea that led so many writers of the era to turn to the past for a poetry or a mythology of renewal. In Health and Holiness, Thompson accepts the decadent thesis of degeneration, talking of "The existing valetudinarianism of our overspent bodies",¹²⁰ and how "The weak, dastardly, and selfish body of to-day needs an asceticism - never more".¹²¹ He quotes Luther twice, and while dismissing pecca fortiter as a maxim, still admits:

....but he that sins strongly has the stuff of sanctity, rather than the languid sinner.¹²²

This is Verlaine's and Symons's commission and contrition paradox, one of the avenues into the Decadence which we have been discussing.

Health and Holiness as a whole is a curious earnest of Thompson's divided personality: he writes in terms of a period thesis, that of degeneration, accepts the period's attitude to strong sinning (although

119. Sir Thomas Browne, The Works, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, new ed. 4 vols., (London, Faber and Faber, 1964), vol.I, p.226.

120. Francis Thompson, Health and Holiness, (London, Burns and Oates Ltd., 1905), p.62.

121. Francis Thompson, Health and Holiness, p.49.

122. Ibid., p.53.

admittedly this was at one with, in its way, a long theological tradition); and yet he rejects these arguments in favour of asceticism. The past, he admits, could bear more than the degenerate present: but by implication, the adoption of asceticism may allow the present to rival the past. But the past was still better: hence his nostalgia, historically, for the Catholic tradition, poetically, for the seventeenth-century religious poets, and personally, for childhood.

The Reverend T.L. Connolly has written of Thompson that "Nature is for him the veil through which we catch, however darkly, authentic glimpses of the Infinite".¹²³ This is the sympathetic, Catholic reading. But how does Thompson have these "authentic glimpses"? None of us having seen the infinite, we cannot be sure. Yet his method of approach to reality is surely more akin to the way defined by Odette de Mourgues in Metaphysical Baroque and Précieux Poetry, when she writes that "The précieux's use of hyperbole is even more characteristic of their wish to escape not only the complexity of reality but reality itself".¹²⁴ This is surely the route which Thompson takes, elevating his nouns to the level of unreality through his indulgent choice of adjectives, whether in "conscious sacramental trees", or "tremulous Paradisal plumages" (Poems, p.104).

In Degeneration, Max Nordau writes of the Symbolists that:

They cannot make use of definite words of clear import, for their own consciousness holds no clearly-defined univocal ideas which could be embodied in such words. They choose, therefore, vague equivocal words, because these best conform to their ambiguous and equivocal ideas.¹²⁵

123. The Rev. Terence L. Connolly, Francis Thompson: In his Paths (Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1944), vii.

124. Odette de Mourgues, Metaphysical Baroque and Précieux Poetry, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1953), p.127.

125. Max Nordau, Degeneration, (London, William Heinemann, 1898), p.118.

Largely discredited as Nordau may be, what he says here is at least partly true with regard to Thompson, who after all as we have seen (vide supra, p. 235) believed that subjective imagination could render objective truth, and that this was one of the aims of symbolism. His use of coinages and unfamiliar words (over one hundred and thirty coinages in all)¹²⁶ were to generate connotations where none already existed because of the unfamiliarity of the words. These would allow him to appear to control material he does not really understand, but which in its vagueness, avoids his being found out. His redundant polysyllables allowed him to expand the sense of what he really has to say into as large a space as possible, and there is no larger space than heaven.¹²⁷ His adjectives cover his escape from the ostensible subjects of much of his poetry into the "linked fantasies" of childhood and sensuality in which he really seeks to indulge. (Poems, p.56).

Yet this does not mean that the J.C. Reid school of criticism is correct. The contradictions in Thompson do not make him a less interesting poet: rather the reverse. For he shares what J. Hillis Miller in The Disappearance of God sees as the response to an endangered faith in the nineteenth century, in its most extreme form:

126. Everard Meynell, Life, p.154.

127. Ibid.

But Browning, like De Quincey, Arnold, Hopkins and Emily Bronte, was stretched on the rack of a fading transcendentalism, and could reach a precarious unity only by the most extravagant stratagems of the spirit.¹²⁸

To Hillis Miller, "The unspeakable stress of pitch" in Hopkins is another attempt to escape via hyperbole from the threat to faith.¹²⁹ Thompson is the ultimate exemplar of these "extravagant stratagems". His "fading transcendentalism" is reflected in a retreat to childhood rather than a commitment to regeneration. His Platonic theory without a Platonic apprehension, idealizing the real rather than realizing the ideal (vide supra, 234ff), is another stratagem to plant his apprehension of the beyond firmly in the here and now.

Vaughan had been a Platonist. L. Martz has written in The Paradise Within, with reference to Vaughan, that the "early days" of the individual's childhood become one with the "early days" of the human race, as related in the Old Testament, and he compares "The Retreat" and Plato's Phaedo.¹³⁰ Of course, nostalgia for childhood is connected by association with the theory of Platonic pre-existence, believed by Origen,¹³¹ and adopted by Wordsworth.¹³²

128. J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God, (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press (1963), 1975), p.359.

129. J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God, p.270.

130. Louis L. Martz, The Paradise Within, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1964), pp.28-30.

131. Charles Begg, The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1886), p.198.

132. William Wordsworth, Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest de Selincourt, (London, Oxford University Press, 1969), p.460.

In the late nineteenth century, Pater introduced this longing for childhood into his own work. Marius "set so much store...on the sentiment of home".¹³³

For Gaston de Latour, "Plato...the Christian Platonists", "the music of the spheres", were the guides to his intellectualization of experience.¹³⁴ For such inward looking Platonism, summarised by Pater's notes of "experience is for all of us ringed round with that thick wall of personality",¹³⁵ was that which Francis Thompson subscribed to, as a stratagem of the spirit to avoid the pressure of reality, finding in his inward-looking dreams and his idealization of the real an escape from reality itself. The regression to where Aphrodite is "Caved magically under magic seas" (Poems, p.109), is anti-Platonic, just as in "Alastor" Shelley's hero returns from the world to the cave,¹³⁶ so Thompson is doing here, whereas the true philosopher should leave the cave for the world.

Thompson's Platonic idealism is flawed. In "Buona Notte", Thompson's Shelley addresses his Mary at the last:

"Go'st thou to Plato?" Ah, girl, no!
It is to Pluto that I go.

(Poems, p.301)

133. Walter Pater, The Works, Vol.II, Marius The Epicurean, Vol.I, p.45.
134. Walter Pater, The Works, Vol.IV, Imaginary Portraits and Gaston de Latour, pp.306, 311.
135. Walter Pater, The Works, Vol.I, The Renaissance, p.235.
136. Percy Bysshe Shelley, The Complete Poetical Works, ed. Neville Rogers, 4 vols., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975), Vol.II, pp.56-58.

This resignation to the underworld seems appropriate to one who spoke of the Cross as a "dread symbol" (Poems, p.213). This is a vision Thompson reiterates in "To the Dead Cardinal of Westminster" where he writes of Manning that "You smelt the Heaven-blossoms" whereas "I, ex-Paradised" find "The grave...in my blood". (Poems, pp.38, 39).

As sap foretastes the Spring;
As Earth ere blossoming
Thrills
With far daffodils,

And feels her breast turn sweet
With the unconceived wheat:
So doth
My flesh foreloathe

The abhorred spring of Dis,
With seething presciences
Affirm
The preparate worm.

I have no thought that I,
When at the last I die,
Shall reach
To gain your speech.

(Poems, pp.39, 40)

Thompson here seems to understand that his love for life is his love for death. The loveliness of the fertile yet sexually innocent earth ("blossoming" is a definition of freshness or unplucked ripeness) feels the sweetness of "the unconceived wheat", but Thompson's own fruition is one of "seething presciences". The "preparate worm" is not necessarily, although it may be, the threat of phallic guilt. At the least it is the fear of coming death. The "abhorred spring" certainly seems to be in apposition to the natural sap which "foretastes the spring". The fertility of this spring is one to be avoided, just as the freshness spends its "wavering shower i' the dust"

in "The Hound of Heaven" (Poems, p.56). Yet despite his loathing of the "preparate worm", Thompson feels doomed to suffer: he does not believe that he can be in Heaven with Manning, having "no thought that I" "shall reach/To gain your speech". Religious poets doubt, but Thompson's doubt seems close to despair: he has "no thought" at all of reaching Heaven.

Francis Thompson is a poet of faithful decadence. He is a repentant Catholic, yet he takes opium. He writes sacred poetry, yet he writes of sensual matters. He loves little children; but is it as Christ commanded? He adores Alice Meynell; but is it as the Virgin? He is a Platonist; but his forms are fleshly. For him nostalgia replaces the regeneration of Vaughan. He fears the future, and longs to be a child for ever, since he does not expect Heaven. Like other writers of the decadent age, he believes in the theory of degeneration, yet he seeks asceticism to confront it. His mysticism, burdened with coinages and compound words, overleaps the legitimate frontiers of language. His style bullies his matter. His emotional tone is monstrous.

Thompson turns to the English tradition, although he receives attention from French critics. His debts to Crashaw and Vaughan, in particular, are extensive; but they are debts he assumes in decadent fashion: by inverting them. His sense of retreat, rather than the voyages into regeneration of the mystic Vaughan who "steals abroad",¹³⁷ shows his isolation and his fear. His exaggerated language is simultaneously an escape from reality and an attempt to imprison it in metaphors and adjectives which smother it to death.

137. Henry Vaughan, The Works, p.397.

Because he bids higher for our attention than his currency is worth, he is little read to-day. But he is not an unimportant poet. Rather his crisis of language and theology is the ultimate attempt to overleap the bounds a secular world was seen as imposing on spiritual experience: it is a stratagem of the spirit, yet one infected by the elegant perversity of a religious poet, who, unlike Hopkins, could not take on reality. Yet in avoiding the world he is still overcome by its beauty like so many decadents. He is faithful to Cowley's "old songs" but his "carver's brain" (vide supra opening quotation) congeals the fertility and agility of the metaphysicals into regression and retreat. Yet he has originality.

Francis Thompson believed that he had been "Given/In dark lieu of Heaven/The impitiable Daemon/Beauty" (Poems, p.40). His loyalty is to the past and its poets which he can never recapture, and to the Heaven which (so he believes) he can never attain. So he is in truth, caught between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born, in his imagination.¹³⁸

Occasionally, he breaks free. The tension collapses, and in its place we find ourselves with a tender, simple, vulnerable, symbolic vision:

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry;- and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross,

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry,- clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

(Poems, p.412)

138. Matthew Arnold, The Poems, ed. Kenneth and Miriam Allott, Longman's Annotated English Poets, 2nd ed. (London, Longman, 1979), p.305.

These moments are few: but when they come, we catch a glimpse of the exceptions there may be to any assessment. That is why Thompson is neither simply the opium dreamer of monstrous adjectives, or the Catholic poet of power. Rather he is a writer caught in the tensions of himself and his age, longing for and using the past, mostly unable to speak simply and directly. But there are occasions when he does, and on these occasions he exceeds the complexity of an analysis by the simplicity of his own statement. Having meant what he did not say, and said what he did not mean, so often, he on occasions speaks his meaning. At all the other times he writes the paradox round which both polarities of his criticism have grown by attempting to deconstruct it.

Here I have tried to balance these views in an analysis which links his debt to the past to his fear of the present. We now turn to Ernest Dowson, always, although not necessarily more justly, regarded as a quintessential decadent, and in some ways the epitome of the age itself.

Chapter X : WAIF OF ROMANCE : THE POETRY OF
 ERNEST CHRISTOPHER DOWSON

Had he been born a couple of hundred years before,
 he might have passed for Robert Herrick celebrating
 the joy of passing beautiful things...

Masao Miyoshi¹

Like Lionel Johnson he was interested in the White
 Rose League, and told me that he had been solemnly
 presented to the authentic descendant and last
 representative of the Stuarts...

Victor Plarr²

Ernest Dowson is the one poet of the Eighteen-Nineties, who
 selects himself as a candidate for study. He is more than an artist;
 he is the motif for the period, who, like Wilde in De Profundis,
 saw himself as standing in symbolic relation to his age.³ This has
 been so ever since Symons's famous essay, which described him as a
 man with "the desire to kill another night as swiftly as possible"
 whose "favourite form of intoxication had been hashisch." The
 picture he paints, of a "fastidious amateur of grief" with a zest
 for the sordid, is one that has helped to define all subsequent
 images of the poet. Through it, he became the archetype for
 an age,⁴ as evidenced in his importance as a symbolic figure for
 such poets as Yeats and Pound.

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1. Masao Miyoshi, The Divided Self (New York, New York University Press, 1969), p.324.
 2. Victor Plarr, Ernest Dowson 1888-1897 (London, Elkin Mathews, 1914), p.22.
 3. Oscar Wilde, Complete Works, ed. Vyvyan Holland (London and Glasgow, Collins, 1966), p.912.
 4. Ernest Dowson, The Poems, ed. Arthur Symons (London, John Lane, 1905), pp.xi, xiv, xxvi.

Yeats too helped by describing Dowson as one who "drunk, desired whatever woman chance brought, clean or dirty", and by retailing anecdotes of Dowson fighting and taking Wilde to a brothel on his release from prison.⁵ And yet for Yeats he is not merely sordid, but a hero, a "fastidious amateur" who "never made a poorer song/ That you might have a heavier purse".⁶ In other words, Dowson is the high and proud soul who disclaims commercial transactions, unless, one presumes, they are concerned with securing prostitutes, for Pound reinforces the legend by telling us that "Dowson found harlots cheaper than hotels".⁷

The characterization given Dowson by Symons, and reinforced by Yeats and Pound, is one that has defied attempts to deny its validity. It does not matter that Dowson himself objected to an early version of Symons's article;⁸ or that, far from being completely non-mercenary, he was paid by Leonard Smithers a regular weekly sum for hackwork, although since this was mostly prose, Yeats's "song" may still be technically accurate.⁹ His friends also attempted to exonerate him.

Edgar Jepson was the first to try do do so, in an article in The Academy called "The Real Ernest Dowson", which explains that far

5. W.B. Yeats, Autobiographies (London, Macmillan, 1955), pp.311, 327.
6. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, 2nd ed. (London, Macmillan, 1950), p.11.
7. Ezra Pound, Selected Poems 1908-1959, (London, Faber & Faber, 1975), p.102.
8. Desmond Flower and Henry Maas (eds.) The Letters of Ernest Dowson, (Rutherford U.S.A., Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1967), p.371.
9. Desmond Flower and Henry Maas (eds.), The Letters of Ernest Dowson, pp.351, 364, 366, 374.

from being a dowdy dipsomaniac, "Dowson was a gentleman"; and his favourite restaurant "had not even a wine licence".¹⁰ John Gawsorth in "The Dowson Legend", attempted to lay the myth of the poet by quoting from his correspondence;¹¹ and Mark Longaker tried to give a balanced assessment in his 1945 biography.¹² More modern interpretations of Dowson, in keeping with the spirit of the age, dwell rather on the complexity of his poetry than on the innocence of his life. In a 1978 essay in English Literature in Transition, Richard Benevenuto agreed that silence and inarticulacy mark Dowson's loss of confidence in language,¹³ just as John Reed in a 1968 article in Journal of English Literary History had argued that Dowson's poetry is one of frustration because it aspires beyond language.¹⁴

Such arguments agree well with Dowson's promise of "A gift of silence" and his offer of "My silence, for your sake";¹⁵ and they illuminate some of the methods of his poetry; but they do not argue about the nature of the man, nor are they designed to.

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10. Edgar Jepson, "The Real Ernest Dowson", The Academy, Vol.LXXIII, 2nd November 1907, pp.94-95 (p.94).
 11. John Gawsorth, The Dowson Legend, Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, Vol.XVII, (London, Oxford University Press, 1939), p.110ff.
 12. Mark Longaker, Ernest Dowson, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945), vii.
 13. Richard Benevenuto "The Function of Language in the Poetry of Ernest Dowson", ELT, Vol.21, no.3, (1978), pp.158-167.
 14. John R. Reed, "Bedlamite and Pierrot, Ernest Dowson's Esthetic of Futility", ELH, vol.35, no.1 (1968), pp.94-113.
 15. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, ed. Desmond Flower, 3rd ed., (London, Cassell, 1967), p.42. All subsequent page references are to this edition.

And yet his centrality to his age is chiefly a biographical one. It is the mark of traditional Eighteen-Nineties criticism that it centres on the man rather than the work,¹⁶ to such an extent indeed that some critics, by reaction, today deny the "Tragic Generation" or the "decadence" to be concepts with any meaning at all.¹⁷ Do they not betray many writers into the kind of trap that Symons laid for Dowson's reputation in his essay?

Part of the business of this thesis is to claim that there were features peculiar to the age, and intense within it, which do set it apart. Though one must be wary of the frustrations of purely biographical criticism, in the case of Dowson it may be useful to suspend some of one's customary prejudices against it. For Symons's account of his life is, and Yeats's and Pound's embellishments of it are, important to the way that succeeding generations should view the period. Both Symons and Yeats were direct contemporaries of Dowson, and both mythologized him because, as argued elsewhere in this thesis, mythology, archetype, and symbol were important to the period and its writers. Plarr's memoirs were followed by a novel by his daughter about Dowson, entitled Cynara,¹⁸ and Gawsorth suggests that Miss Mary Sinclair's Divine Fire (1904) and Mrs. Gertrude Atherton's The Gorgeous Isle (1908) were inspired by Dowson.¹⁹

16. Linda C. Dowling, Aestheticism and Decadence: A Selective Annotated Bibliography, (New York, Garland, 1977), xv.

17. Ibid., x.

18. Marion Plarr, Cynara, (London, Grant Richards, 1933).

19. John Gawsorth, The Dowson Legend, p.106.

Clearly he was a poet who for some reason his contemporaries and successors sought to fictionalise; although it was a fiction sometimes closer to fact than his personal friends always admitted. Even in his defence of Dowson in his 1907 article, Edgar Jepson could go on to write that:

As long as I could keep Dowson to wine or beer he was sober enough. When the acuter craving drove him to whisky and whisky to women, there was little to be done.²⁰

This is some way closer to Symons than Jepson's earlier picture of Dowson as a gentleman. Although Symons seems to exceed the facts in his description of Dowson, comments from Symons about Dowson's "curious love of the sordid", a comment repeated by the poet himself, do little to encourage a parti pris against the myth of the poet in favour of a respectable reality.²¹ Symons's account, does in fact flatter Dowson with more than the odd touch of pathos to relieve his sordidness. For Symons, Dowson had "a look and manner of pathetic charm, a sort of Keats-like face, the face of a demoralised Keats", and the poet is excused by saying that "With body too weak for ordinary existence, he desired all the enchantments of the senses".²²

Dowson's own correspondence, pace that quoted by Gawsorth, does not always inspire confidence in these pathetic outlines of his appearance and personality. In one letter, for example, to his friend

20. Edgar Jepson, "The Real Ernest Dowson", p.95.

21. Ernest Dowson, The Poems, ed. Symons, xv, The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.371.

22. Ernest Dowson, The Poems, ed. Symons, x.

and collaborator Arthur Moore he hints regrets that the age of consent has been raised from thirteen to sixteen. In the same letter he remarks that he is "anxiously looking forward" to the appearance of Zola's La Bête humaine, just announced.²³ One of his earliest articles, "The Cult of the Child", sets the scene for what has to be a lifelong pursuit of little girls, one that infests both his poems and stories; and it was to be the lifelong pursuit of one little girl in particular, Missie, Adelaide Foltinowicz.²⁴

The implications of this may appear to make Symons seem almost complimentary. But this chapter is not concerned with moral or immoral matter; but with the place of Dowson in his age. Dowson is a figure who had to Symons, "so much of the swift, disastrous, and suicidal impetus of genius",²⁵ yet to his revisionist friends was a faint, pleasant gentleman. To Yeats, he had "earned the right" "To troop with those the world's forgot"; a genius who faced the temptations of wine and women, and in them found, remained, and overcame himself. "Wine or women, or some curse" remain, but Yeats can still say that "Dowson and Johnson must I praise".²⁶

Dowson was of course a real man, but early in the making of the literary history of his age he was chosen also as a representative one. In this brief examination of the poet and his work, I intend to show just how much both the real and the mythical Dowson partook

23. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.118.

24. Ibid., pp.433-35, "Artistically, we find the child-actress an enormous boon to the modern stage".

25. Ernest Dowson, The Poems, ed. Symons, xvi.

26. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, 2nd ed. (London, Macmillan, 1950), pp.116-117.

of the Caroline revival of his age. What opportunities did it offer him, both for the revival of a literary tradition in an age where poetic vocabulary and style had been narrowed by Tennyson and Swinburne,²⁷ and for the furtherance of decadent thought in terms of the myths, tokens, symbols and themes of which it partook and which it engendered? Symons himself occasionally recalls Dowson in terms of these archetypes, speaking of his "talking over another vagabond poet, Lord Rochester" as he saw Dowson in the streets.²⁸

The real Dowson, insofar as he can be reached behind the pose and the myth, seems, as we have seen above, to have had rather more in common with Symons's picture of him than his apologists will allow. Even the generous Plarr admits that he was a member of a club called "The Bingers", who used to shout outside Plarr's window to wake him up at night,²⁹ while the poet himself, in a letter to Edgar Jepson, writes that after seven absinthes he has now decided to spend a few days on nothing stronger than "lemonade and strychnine".³⁰ His early letters also, are full of references to alcoholic excess. In these, as in his devotion to "les jolies femmes arabesques" he has enough of the touches of a genteel Rochester to justify Symons's parallel.³¹ Another parallel, this time with Hazlitt, is suggested by his relationship with Adelaide Foltinowicz, and the pathetic way

27. Cf. J.C. Reid, Francis Thompson Man and Poet, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), pp.97-99..

28. Ernest Dowson, The Poems, ed. Symons, xi.

29. Victor Plarr, Ernest Dowson, p.15.

30. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.307

31. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, pp.17, 35, 36, 355.

in which he fawned upon her without result.³² His attitude to this apparently rather ordinary young girl, who died in 1903 of septicaemia following an abortion, caused his friends puzzlement and surprise.³³ His became the story which crystallised his life, as he apparently (with an eye on the legend?) wanted it to - "singulière et terrible" he called it in his last days.³⁴

In this creation of a femme fatale he seems the appropriate archetype for his age, and Symons's statement that, "sober, he was the most gentle...of men...Under the influence of drink, he became almost literally insane"³⁵ fits the dual personality motif of the Eighteen-Nineties era: James and Henry Durie, Jekyll and Hyde, Margaret Trelawny and Queen Tera.³⁶ Just as Hyde conquers Jekyll and James kills Henry Durie, so the "stronger wine" and the "madder music", Dowson's worse self (together with consumption), are held to have killed him in this interpretation (Poems, p.52).

But he is the appropriate archetype in another way also. Marion Plarr, in her fictional appraisal of Dowson in Cynara, shows him attending Horne's seventeenth-century concerts and depicts a conversation between Dowson and Plarr over a programme ostensibly for March 19, 1892.³⁷ It includes "The Primrose", written by

32. Cf. Mark Longaker, Ernest Dowson, p.176.

33. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.378.

34. Ibid., p.380.

35. Ernest Dowson, The Poems, ed. Symons, xv.

36. Cf. Bram Stoker, The Jewel of Seven Stars (London, William Heinemann, 1903); R.L. Stevenson, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories, ed. Jenni Calder (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, (1886)); R.L. Stevenson, The Master of Ballantrae, (London, Cassell & Co., 1901).

37. Marion Plarr, Cynara, pp.89, 90.

Herrick, set by Lawes, and "Gather your [sic] Rosebuds" (the same partnership). Today, George MacBeth's assessment of him is of a poet "appealing for his lulling musical sweetness as a kind of fin-de-siècle Champion."³⁸ Masao Miyoshi's remarks on him at the beginning of this chapter reinforce this interpretation of Dowson as a poet with relations to Caroline antecedents. Victor Plarr was even more specific in identifying his political sentiments:

Like Lionel Johnson he was interested in the White Rose League, and told me that he had been solemnly presented to the authentic descendant and last representative of the Stuarts - not, by the bye, the duke of Buccleugh [sic], but a solemn lady with grey hair down her back, who stood, pathetically enough, in the upper chamber of a small restaurant in Soho, where the restaurateur and his wife acted as her chamberlains. The lady strongly resembled Charles I, he averred.³⁹

This was, in all probability, Mary of Modena, who was proclaimed by posters placed on the walls of St. James's Palace after the death of Queen Victoria.⁴⁰

Dowson's flirtation with Jacobitism does not seem to have taken on any direct political shape however. He was interested in the symbols used by some of the Caroline poets, as we shall see later, as well as in the Stuart cause itself. His reading of Schopenhauer before he went up to Oxford gave him a pessimism which is reinforced in his verse by images alien to Schopenhauer, those of lushness and

38. George MacBeth, The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1969), p.401.
39. Victor Plarr, Ernest Dowson, p.22.
40. Allen Upward, Treason, (London, The Tyndale Press, 1904), p.15.

over-ripeness: the "Dead Sea Apples" of "the Garden of Propertius", one of his favourite Latin poets.⁴¹ This over-ripeness is akin to that of poems like Marvell's "The Garden", where "Ripe Apples drop about my head;/ The Luscious clusters of the Vine /Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine",⁴² or to the desire to possess Nature at her ripest, expressed by Carew:

I'll seize the Rose-buds in their perfum'd bed,
The Violet knots, like curious Mazes spread
O're all the Garden, taste the ripned Cherry
The warm, firm Apple, tipt with corallberry...⁴³

("A Rapture")

This sensuality, implicitly aligned with sexuality in these seventeenth-century poets, Dowson makes explicit:

O red pomegranate of thy perfect mouth!
My lips' life-fruitage, might I taste and die,
Here in thy garden, where the scented south
Wind chastens agony;

Reap death from thy live lips in one long kiss,
And look my last into thine eyes and rest;
What sweets had life to me sweeter than this
Swift dying on thy breast?

Herrick's "Gather ye Rose-buds"⁴⁴ is elsewhere transformed (Poems p.85) into a forlorn injunction to "pluck the pretty, fleeting flowers/ That deck our little path of light" (Poems, p.44); the "petals fall" in Dowson (Poems, p.45), "the roses are flung"

41. Victor Plarr, Ernest Dowson, p.48.

42. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, 2 vols., ed. H.M. Margoliouth, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), vol.I, p.52.

43. Thomas Carew, The Poems, ed. Rhodes Dunlap (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949), p.51.

44. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, ed. L.C. Martin, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956), p.84

and the lilies "lost", (Poems, p.52). Although "girls grow thick as violets" (Poems, p.88), "famine" is "nigh to harvesting" (Poems, p.73). Dowson takes the Cavalier theme of fruition and seizure of the ripe hour beyond the point of enjoyment to that of loss: "roseal flowers of youth" are tossed "in derision" (Poems, p.102), and "the pale roses expire" (Poems, p.117).

In his use of flowers as a symbol for love and human enjoyment, Dowson may be thought to be doing no more than many poets. But if we examine in detail the number of times flowers are mentioned in his work, and the variety of flowers mentioned, we find that few poets reach the point Dowson reaches; where the flower is a symbol which saturates all the possibilities of love and happiness in their various varieties. We could of course choose poets to compare him with of very dissimilar styles and subjects, and thus give a false impression of the frequency with which flowers are mentioned in Dowson's work. But even choosing a poet like Keats, who uses the sensuality of Nature in a particularly intense way, we find that Keats's Poetical Works contain ninety-five mentions of flowers in six hundred pages ("poppy" gets a telling nine mentions).⁴⁵ In the first third of Tennyson's Collected Poems, there are fifty-three mentions of flowers,⁴⁶ (there are in addition thirty-seven in "Maud", the poem of Tennyson's most clearly based on flowers, but these lack the variety Dowson displays). Dowson makes eighty-nine mentions in a very much more slender collection of poems.⁴⁷

45. John Keats, Poetical Works, ed. H.W. Garrod, 2nd ed. (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1958), p.4ff. (Poppies: pp.34, 51, 60, 82, 85, 92, 182, 273, 467).

46. Alfred Tennyson, The Poems, ed. Christopher Ricks, Longmans Annotated Poets, (London, Longmans, 1969), p.102ff. Cf. also pp1040-1093).

47. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, p.32ff.

Not that this is a phenomenon which necessarily allies him with the seventeenth century in general. Campion makes only sixteen mentions;⁴⁸ Suckling eight,⁴⁹ and Lovelace fourteen.⁵⁰ It is Herrick in particular who sees flowers symbolically as copiously as Dowson: one hundred and fifteen times in his Poetical Works.⁵¹ Moreover, unlike other poets, Herrick shares with Dowson an intense use of three flowers in particular as symbols; roses, lilies and violets. These are used forty-six times by Dowson,⁵² and seventy-one times by Herrick.⁵³ By comparison, Tennyson mentions no flower more than five times⁵⁴ in the first third of his work, except for "Maud" which has twenty-odd mentions of roses, and although Keats makes eighteen mentions of roses,⁵⁵ the weight of Dowson's and Herrick's use of them is more impressive because more directed to one subject in particular.

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48. Thompas Campion, The Works, ed. Walter R. Davis (New York, Doubleday and Co., 1967), p.6ff.
49. Sir John Suckling, The Works: The Non-Dramatic Works, ed. Thomas Clayton, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), p.15ff.
50. Richard Lovelace, Collected Poems, ed. C.H. Wilkinson, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1953) (1930), p.23ff.
51. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, p.5ff.
52. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, p.32ff.
53. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, p.5ff.
54. Alfred Tennyson, The Poems, pp.213, 216, 307, 386, 431 (roses), cf. 1047ff also.
55. John Keats, Poetical Works, p.4ff.

This subject is that of human life, particularly female life. For Herrick in "To the Virgins, to make much of Time", although the "flower that smiles to-day/Tomorrow will be dying", the virgins have a little longer, their "prime".⁵⁶ Cowslips are the covering for the dead virgin in "An Epitaph upon a Virgin".⁵⁷ The "fair daffodils" in "To Daffodills" "haste away" like people do.⁵⁸ In "His age, dedicated to his peculiar friend, M. John Wickes, under the name of Posthumus", Herrick writes:

But vanished man,
Like to a lilly-tost, nere can,
Nere can repullulate, or bring
His dayes to see a second Spring.⁵⁹

As Herrick sees the passing of the "prime" for man and woman as immediate as that of the flowers, so Dowson sees dead or lost flowers as a metaphor for human loss. "They are not long, the days of wine and roses" (Poems, p.32); and Dowson sees them as tending towards "the twilight of the year", which is "sweet" (Poems, p.68). This "year" is the human as well as the natural one. The "strayed, last petal of one last year's rose" (Poems, p.73) is irrecoverable, just as the "dead flower/And the strayed hours" (Poems, p.192), once betokened the loss of love, so now the human "rose" goes down to the grave and loses its life, although Dowson in his more haunting moments seems to tell us that loss continues in death:

56. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, p.84.

57. Ibid., p.170.

58. Ibid., p.125.

59. Ibid., p.133

Where the poor, dead people stray,
 Ghostly, pitiful and gray,
 Plucking, with their spectral hands,
 Scentless blooms of asphodel?

(Poems, p.64)

Even in the hereafter "vanished man" continues to pluck flowers. But Dowson's use of flowers, although related to Herrick's, is more complex. The flowers are not only the metaphors for life itself, the taking of the prime or the lost opportunity; instead they have acquired moral overtones. Dowson's use of flowers is a decadent one in the sense that it is overdeveloped: instead of supporting the theme, flowers dominate it, because they are not only ciphers for the theme of the poem, but determine its direction by their own strength as images, which is deliberately made to exceed that of the rest of the poem. Indeed, Dowson sometimes uses flowers as the only images of a poem:

To my first love
 Loved all above;
 In late spring;
 Pansies, pansies
 Such strange fancies
 Was all I had to bring.

To my last love
 Loved all above
 At evening
 Of autumn
 One chrysanthemum
 Is all I have to bring.

O first, be last
 In a dim past!
 With the dead flowers
 And the strayed hours
 There are no flowers left to bring
 There are no songs left to sing
 Let be at last.

("Fantasie Triste" Poems, p.192)

The flowers completely dominate everything in the poem. It is they who reflect the seasons, time itself, and over both, the creative act of poetry ("Such strange fancies"). When there are no flowers left, there are no songs left either. And there is no time left to live in. Just as the "flung roses" of "Cynara" (Poems, p.52) are a way of trying to forget her by wasting time with lesser women, so here flowers reflect "the strayed hours", the time wasted in living.

"Roses" in Dowson have the overtones of life lived to excess. They are the symbols both of indulgence and mortality. He writes in "Carthusians" that "Our cups are polished skulls round which the roses twine"⁶⁰ (Poems, p.98). Elsewhere "the days of wine and roses" (Poems, p.32) are the days of life lived to excess. The "pale, lost lilies" are those of an achieved innocence (Poems, p.52). In "Amor Umbratilis", Dowson has only flowers "unmeet" for his beloved (i.e. roses and other blooms of corrupt life). He has "no lilies...to fling", and so cannot win the lady, for she is pure, "Serene and cold" (Poems, p.42). She treads the daisies underfoot, instead of plucking "the pretty, fleeting flowers" (Poems, p.44). She does not care for them, and so Dowson, indulgent in roses, cannot make her hear his plea.

Lilies are traditional emblems of purity, and roses to some extent of vice; and Swinburne's famous lines may not have been without influence on Dowson.⁶¹ But he carries the concept of flower as metaphor far beyond his forebears. The conventional

60. Cf. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, pp.32, 37, 52, 80

61. Algenon Charles Swinburne, The Complete Works, eds. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas J. Wise, Bonchurch Edition, 20 vols. (London, William Heineman, 1925), Vol.I, p.286. The lines are of course "The lilies and langours of virtue/For the raptures and roses of vice".

opposition of unattainable lilies and indulgent roses undergoes a further sea-change over and above Dowson's insistent use of the flowers as metaphors and moral determinants in his poetry. In fact, just as the "pale roses expire" (due to their sinfulness) (Poems, p.117), so do lilies. In "A Requiem" "lilies" are "of the world beneath". Neobule, who was "tired", goes "out of life and out of love". Her withdrawal leads to death; and in her death she haunts "the hollow lands". She rejected Dowson's (or the speaker's) flowers, and instead longed for the purity of "Lunar roses pale and blue/Lilies of the world beneath". Her very act of rejecting the world and its love leads her to the flowers of purity but these are also the cold flowers of death (Poems, p.64). It seems in the poem that those who reject the "flung roses" (Poems, p.52) and the laughing or weeping of the world, who are "too tired/Of the dreams and days above!" are sentenced to pluck "Scentless blooms of asphodel" in the underworld. Those who would not pluck the roses of life are forced to gather the flowers of death, the "Lilies of the world beneath" (Poems, p.64).

Thus it is that Dowson takes traditional uses of flowers, and turns them to a peculiarly intense method of defining experience. In this his closest relationship is ~~with~~ Herrick, one of the few other poets who use flowers to the same degree in his work, although largely without the dominant note of moral evaluation which Dowson's uses imply. His flowers which grow in "the Garden of Propertius" are ones which corrupt and judge experience as well as merely unfolding it.

But Dowson also has some similarities with other Cavalier writers besides Herrick. Indeed, he wrote to Victor Plarr in 1890 that Waller

was the poet "I prefer to the other 17th Century poets"⁶², and although there is little enough trace of him in Dowson's work, that speaks a lively interest. Longaker remarks that Dowson's "Rondeau" "was more than an attempt to catch the spirit of the seventeenth-century Cavallier poets".⁶³

Desmond Flower's introduction to his first collected edition of Dowson's poems parallels the Eighteen-Nineties with the Fifteen-Nineties, citing the deaths of Marlowe, Kyd and Nashe as parallels with those of "The tragic generation". But although he does not extend this comparison to the Cavalier poets, he notes that Dowson's sonnets are on the Miltonic model.⁶⁴

We have discussed elsewhere the urge that critics from Flower to Kermode have to compare the Eighteen-Nineties with other eras. Bernard Muddiman in Men of the Nineties, aligns the Eighteen-Nineties with the seventeenth-century writers in terms both of the lyric and of the drama.⁶⁵ Dowson was recognized as being one of the chief lyrists of talent of his age. John Gray, himself keen on the seventeenth century (he edited Fifty Songs by Campion and poems by Suckling)⁶⁶, inscribed a copy of Silverpoints sent to Dowson as "To Kit Dowson the master singer".⁶⁷

62. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.174.
63. Mark Longaker, Ernest Dowson, p.148.
64. Ernest Dowson, Poetical Works, ed. Desmond Flower, (London, Cassell, 1934), xii-xiii, xxvi-xxvii.
65. Bernard Muddiman, Men of the Nineties, (London, Henry Davidson, 1920), pp.15, 32, 103.
66. Sir John Suckling, The Poems, ed. John Gray, (London, Ballantyne Press, 1896); Thomas Campion, Fifty Songs ed. John Gray, (London, Ballantyne Press, 1896).
67. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.271.

Just as, according to Rhys's poem on the Rhymers' Club, "...once Rare Ben and Herrick/Set older Fleet Street mad",⁶⁸ so the lyrists of the club sought to imitate these illustrious predecessors. Dowson's own "Sapientia Lunae" bears more than a passing resemblance, for example, to Richard Lovelace's "A Loose Saraband":

We drink our glass of Roses
Which naught but sweets discloses..⁶⁹

(Lovelace)

For I had pondered on a rune of roses
Which to her votaries the moon discloses

(Poems, p.83)

There is also a relationship between Lovelace's poem and Rhys's toast:

Off with that crowned Venice,
Till all the house doth flame;
We'll quench it straight in Rhenish,
Or what we must not name:

(Lovelace)

As they we drink defiance
Tonight to all but Rhyme,
And most of all to Science
And all such skins of lions
That hide the ass of time.

(Cf. n.68)

Dowson's co-Rhymer has borrowed the measure as Dowson himself has borrowed the words.

"To His Mistress" is also a poem which reminds us of Lovelace, although this time in a more general manner:

68. The Book of the Rhymers' Club (London, Elkin Matthews, 1892), p.1.

69. Richard Lovelace, Collected Poems, p.140.

You ask my love completest,
 As strong next year as now,
 The devil take you, sweetest,
 Ere I make aught such vow.
 Life is a masque that changes,
 A fig for constancy!
 No love at all were better,
 Than love which is not free.

(Poems, p.107)

The "flung roses" of Dowson (Poems, p.52) bear more than a passing relationship to Lovelace's attitude to love and its "tedious twelve hours space",⁷⁰ or indeed, to Suckling's "Three whole days together".⁷¹

Flower notes that Dowson's "La Jeunesse n'a qu'un temps" with its

Here's a glass to memory
 Here's to death and vanity,
 Here's a glass to you and me.

(Poems, p.154)

has a similarity to the seventeenth-century Palinode, in particular Quarles's in "Argalus and Parthenia".⁷²

One of the occasional similarities to Waller occurs in "Gray Nights" "where only poppies grew among the sand", reminding us of the desert location of Waller's Rose in "Go, Lovely Rose".⁷³ The ladies who are "brave in your silks and satins/As ye mince about the Town" in "Soli Cantare Periti Arcades" (Poems, p.74) are reminders of "The elder, brighter age of pomp and pride" to which Dowson, in common with so many of the writers of his times looks back (Poems, p.110). Indeed in his early letters, he brings

70. Richard Lovelace, Collected Poems, p.140.

71. Sir John Suckling, The Works: The Non-Dramatic Works, p.55.

72. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, p.283.

73. Edmund Walker, The Poems, eds. G. Thorn Drury (London, A.W. Bullen, 1901), p.128 ("That hadst thou sprung/In deserts, where no men abide/Thou must have uncommended died").

together past and present art in a way which only his age could have been capable of:

But ah - Sir Thomas Browne. I have had a nodding acquaintance with him for a year or so but have lately ~~become~~ - intimate. Read him, read him - or better still get somebody else who can read him to you. He's the only man anterior to Flaubert who had the 'passion for the right word'. I could die happy if Sarah Bernhardt would declaim 'Hydriotaphia' to me for an hour or two first. 74

This is a perfect expression of Dowson's artistic (and personal?) morbidity. Death, as with his view of the world in terms of flowers, can be the only true consummation. In this context it is appropriate that Browne's meditations on mortality should be read by a woman, and Sarah Bernhardt at that. Dowson had always a weak spot for actresses: he used to worship Minnie Terry from afar. 75

Dowson has been associated not infrequently with the classical poets, particularly Catullus and Propertius. His theme from the former of sed moraris, abit dies is one which, as we have seen, he explores via Herrick; 76 but also interesting is Dowson's mistrust of woods and trees in his poetry, which are symbols of despair and loss to him, as ^{to} the Roman poet:

qualia sub densis romarum concinit umbris
Daulias absumpti fata demens Ityli

(Catallus LXV)

(Just as under the thick shadows of the boughs
The Daulian bird bewails the fate of Itylus lost). 77

74. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.25.

75. Cf. Derek Stanford (ed.), Three Poets of the Rhymers' Club, (Cheadle, Carcanet, 1974), p.13.

76. Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris, The Poems, tr. F.W. Cornish, Loeb series (London, William Heineman, 1956), p.74.

77. Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris, The Poems, p.126.

In "Amor Profanus", the "mysterious dusky grove" - is "A place of shadows utterly/Where never coos the turtle dove". The estranged lovers "wandered, through the darkling glades" (Poems, p.43). In "Yvonne of Brittany" the "apple-orchard" has "grown too dark to stray" (Poems, p.47). The "drear November trees" cast shadows over the death of love in "Autumnal" (Poems, p.68). The "sighing boughs", prefigure "chance and change" in "Cease smiling, Dear! a little while be sad" (Poems, p.85). In "Saint Germain-en-Laye" (interestingly enough, one of James II's and VII's places of exile);⁷⁸ "the sullen trees in sombre lace/Stand bare beneath the sinister, sad skies" (Poems, p.102).

This Roman influence seems also exhibited on the poets of the Cavalier period. "Hark! O hark, you guilty trees/In whose gloomy galleries" writes Richard Lovelace in "Orphans to Woods".⁷⁹ A recent article by Karina Williamson shows that Herrick's "To Groves", Waller's "At Penshurst" and Vaughan's "Upon the Priorie Grove" represent a mid-seventeenth-century trend to see woods as dually haunts of the sacred and the profane. Ms. Williamson also notes that this preoccupation with woods as dually representing peace and sin returns in the nineteenth century and quotes Hopkins:

It is the blight man was born for
It is Margaret you mourn for.⁸⁰

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78. Cf. La Marquise Campana de Cavelli, Les Derniers Stuarts à Saint Germain en Laye, 2 vols, (London, Williams and Norgate, 1871).
79. Richard Lovelace, The Poems, p.38.
80. Karina Williamson, "Wild Woods and Sacred Groves", RES Vol.34, (November, 1983), pp.464-70; Gerard Manley Hopkins, The Poems, ed. W.H. Gardner and N.H. Mackenzie, 4th ed., (London, Oxford University Press, 1967), p.89.

Although the argument is not in any way directly related to the possibility of an Eighteen-Nineties/Cavalier sharing of classical themes, it implicitly supports it.

Besides Dowson's symbolic use of *luna*, his carpediem theme bears more than a tenuous relationship to that of the Cavaliers. Dowson's notion of the escape from self⁸¹, does not seem to be entirely unrelated to Rochester's "lucky minute".⁸² Indeed, it is for this "lucky minute" or rather for a lucky night, that Pierrot sacrifices his soul's quiet in Dowson's play "The Pierrot of the Minute". In it, Pierrot longs to kiss the moon-maiden (who perhaps bears a relation to the "Lunar roses pale and blue/Lilies of the world beneath" in "Neobule"). Once he does so, he cannot get her out of his soul. Yet it is out of the question that she should stay with him:

Love stays a summer night,
Till lights of morning come;
Then takes her winged flight
Back to her starry home.

(Poems, p.224)

The play itself has elements of an inverted "Comus" about it (interestingly enough, the wood provides a sinister atmosphere in "Comus" also).⁸³ The virginal Pierrot ("of love than knowest but the alphabet" says the Moon-maiden (Poems, p.207)), is led on (willingly: this is a decadent play), to the seductive but sterile lips of the Moon-maiden. His virginity of soul is lost as he changes from the innocent of the beginning of the play to the

81. Cf. Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works, pp.32,34,44,73,78,81,107.

82. John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, The Complete Poems, ed. David M. Vieth (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968), p.27.

83. John Milton, Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, The Odyssey Press, 1957), p.91. ("...this ominous Wood/And in thick shelter of black shades imbow'r'd")

creature of the Moon-maiden, who catechizes him on love like any Jacobean demirep (Poems, p.209ff). This particularly seventeenth-century literary device appears to be last used in drama by Farquhar in The Beaux' Stratagem.⁸⁴ Pierrot acquiesces in it, and begins to describe the Moon-maiden in conventional (and very seventeenth-century) terms:

I am but studious, so do not stir;
Thou art my star, I thine astronomer!
Geometry was founded on thy lip.

(Poems, p.208)

Her recommendations about society are corrupting and worldly-wise. She puts her analyses in terms reminiscent of Pope:

Are polished, petulant, malicious, sly,
Or what you will, so reputations die.

(Poems, p.219)

Although she leaves at the end of the play and there is no resolution beyond our presumption that Pierrot is now sentenced to hopeless melancholy for life, the kinds of almost pastiche language and forms which she and Pierrot indulge in during the development of the play, show Dowson's concern with seventeenth-century modes of expression. Weak thing though it is, "The Pierrot of the Minute" reveals some telling details relevant to its creators' artistic concerns.

We have looked in some detail at Ernest Dowson's poetry with a view to establishing the chief concerns of his writing and their relationship with seventeenth-century models. But it would be wrong (as I said earlier in this chapter) entirely to ignore the

84. George Farquhar, The Beaux' Stratagem, ed. Michael Corner, New Mermaids (London, Ernest Benn, 1976), pp.22-24.

biographical aspects of any assessment. It is not, I think, a fact to be escaped, that part of Dowson's primacy as a candidate for comparative examination is due to the symbolic relationship in which he stood to his age. His concern with the Cavaliers was less ideological than that of Johnson, less theological than that of Thompson. He is rather his own lost cause. And yet his work also stands in close contact with the revival in Caroline art occurring throughout his era. He shapes the buckishness and mysticism of the Caroline era, while adding to it the decadent and morbid touch: both these activities end in death. Purity is in the end to Dowson as sure a recipe for mortality as self-indulgence. I have not yet dealt with the short stories in this chapter, mainly because they do not illustrate Caroline themes. But what they do illustrate are the themes of Dowson's personal experience.

In "Souvenirs of an Egoist", his first short story, the successful man has traded his childhood girl for a better violin, and in the end a career.⁸⁵ In "A Statute of Limitations" the hero kills himself rather than betray the image of his beloved, an image of purity.⁸⁶ In "The Dying of Francis Donne" subtitled "A Study", Dowson shows as a man sentenced, as he himself was (by 1893 he had phthisis) to death. It is the last story in Longaker's volume, and serves as a summary for Dowson's message of hopelessness.⁸⁷ His own art was the memento mori of his life: he did not finally repudiate Symons's memoir.⁸⁸ Wilde called him "a tragic reproduction

85. Ernest Dowson, The Stories, ed. Mark Longaker (London, W.H. Allen, 1949), p.30.

86. Ernest Dowson, The Stories, p.91.

87. Ernest Dowson, The Stories, p.137ff; The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.261.

88. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, pp.315, 371.

of all tragic poetry, like a symbol..."⁸⁹ It was his contemporaries who saw him as living out his art in terms of an experience, as he used to say, "singulière et terrible"⁹⁰: the love directed to the child Adelaide, which the adult Miss Foltinowicz rejected.⁹¹

His letters bear out this obsession with departing purity, which he nevertheless seeks to violate, as we have seen when he laments the raising of the age of consent. In a letter of October 1889 to Arthur Moore, he comments that "there is nothing in the universe supportable save the novels of Hy. James, & the society of little girls".⁹² Once he met Adelaide he seemed to have a sense of the appropriate, sending her Lewis Carroll's works.⁹³

His statements about art in general, also bear his obsession with purity and corruption out. In a letter of 8th February 1892 to John Gray he writes that "the artist should be too much absorbed in God, the Flesh and the Devil, to consider the World, quâ World, at all".⁹⁴ His conversion to Catholicism seemed to satisfy the first part of the artist's duty; but the other two, whether in the guise of "les jolie femmes arabesques" or the "petites Amies", were never completely absent.⁹⁵ Indeed he confesses to having had a "curious love of the sordid",⁹⁶ and his pessimism about sinfulness

89. Rupert Hart-Davis (ed.), The Letters of Oscar Wilde, (London, 1962), p.816.

90. The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.380.

91. Ibid., p.265.

92. Ibid., p.108. Cf. p.118 also.

93. Ibid., p.180.

94. Ibid., p.223.

95. Ibid., p.355.

96. Ibid., p.371.

and futility seems to support his participation in, if not enthusiasm for, them. Not that it can be argued that Dowson was a bad man; but his own failings were part of a cult of sin which he adopted as much as undergoing. It is to risk missing the point if we deny the relevance of the myth to the poet and stand up for an objective account of the number of occasions on which he was actually drunk, or in the company of a prostitute. Like so many of the enthusiasms of the Eighteen-Nineties, Dowson's is an image as much as a human being; one of the icons of decadence, a house god of the mauve era. In this respect, the way in which he is interpreted by his posterity is similar to the way in which the Eighteen-Nineties interpreted the Caroline era; as an image of the past which fitted the demands of the present for nostalgia, except that Dowson is not a representative of the golden age, but of the decadent one.

In respect of his art, he adopted the symbols and subjects of the Caroline poets, in particular Herrick. Flowers are for him however, not just a sign of man's decline, but, as Swinburne had put it, a moral symbol. Yet the lilies of virtue and the roses of vice are adapted to express more than the transience of male/female relationships in Dowson; they speak of corruption and death. In this sense he is indeed a fin-de-siècle Campion or Herrick; the images of love are the same, but the emphasis is on death far more heavily than on consummation.⁹⁷ Lilies and roses alike go down to Hades, where even so, the dead seem continually damned to pluck

97. Cf. Robert Herrick, The Poetical Works, p.25, for Herrick's use of roses in this way.

"Scentless blooms of asphodel" or "Lilies of the world beneath"; a kind of inverted Herrickian pastoral (Poems, p.64).

Dowson does not stand in as direct relation to the Caroline period as the other two poets discussed in this thesis; but his close relationship to the attitudes, style and images of various of its writers earn him a place here. It is not for nothing that MacBeth or Miyoshi notice his relationship with Herrick or Campion; for his short lyric with its roses and lilies revives their style and subject, with the end in view death rather than life; just as in his own life the pursuit of purity became intermingled with that of corruption:

Sleep on, dear, now
 The last sleep and the best,
 And on thy brow,
 And on thy quiet breast,
 Violets I throw...

...Yes, to be dead,
 Dead, here with thee to-day, -
 When all is said
 "Twere good by thee to lay
 My weary head.

The very best!
 Ah, child, so tired of play,
 I stand confessed:
 I want to come thy way,
 And share thy rest.

(Poems, pp.95-96).

The ultimate end of the nostalgia for dead purity was the wish to be dead oneself.

Chapter XI : THE LIFE AND WORK OF LIONEL JOHNSON - 1

One of Those Who Fall : His Life and Ideas

In him is no simplicity, but art
 Is all in all, for life and death, to him:
 And whoso looks upon that fair face, sees
 No nature there: only a magic mask.¹

("Upon a Drawing")

One might go on to a dozen names: Cleveland,
 Denham, Flatman, Champion, Lovelace, Carew,
 and all the inspired company. Are you so
 intent upon the latest eccentricity of Paris,
 that you have no ears for these singers?²

("Friends that Fail Not")

Lionel Johnson is hardly a famous poet; we hear of him through anthologies. And yet in his work also we glimpse one of the most important features of the English tradition: the Caroline revival. A knowledge of, and indeed a respect for, the achievements of the French symbolists is found in his critical writing;³ but in it, and yet more in his poetry, is found the dominant note of sympathy with the "lost causes" of British history; the arcana of Jacobite and Celtic legend. In the next chapter I shall go on to discuss in detail the presence and influence of Caroline writers on his work,

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1. Lionel Johnson, The Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher, 2nd ed., [Garland English Text: No.3], (New York, Garland, 1982), p.31. All future references to the poems are to this edition.
 2. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium: Essays and Critical Papers, ed. Thomas Whittemore, (London, Elkin Mathews, 1912), p.214.
 3. Lionel Johnson, "A Note Upon the Practice and Theory of Verse at the Present Time Obtaining in France", Century Guild Hobby Horse VI, (1891), pp.61-66.

and the re-creation of them which he undertakes (his "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross", for example, bears as we shall see, an intertextual and annotative relationship with Marvell's "Horatian Ode"). But first, I turn to the life of the poet, who, as Ian Fletcher claimed in his 1953 edition of Johnson's poems, was "incapable either of recovering the past, or of integrating the present".⁴ It is to be my argument that he does neither because he sets out to do neither; he attempts to create a new present, by integrating into it an idealized past.

I have argued that Dowson's life was a creation of his own and others sui generis; a special kind of biography as fiction, or fiction as biography. Johnson's own life does not play the same defining role in any study of him; but nevertheless his personal concerns reflect those of his work. As early as 5th December 1882, when he was fifteen, we find him at Winchester, discussing the execution of Charles I (although on this occasion he took a contrary position to that which he was later to adopt).⁵ It may indeed reflect the period's interest in the subject that it was chosen as a motion for debate.

Ian Fletcher remarks that "the two medieval sculptured figures of the Virgin Mother in the ancient walls of the College [Winchester] must have seemed aptly emblematic to Johnson".⁶ Professor Fletcher sees them as focal points for Johnson's identity, an identity he was always trying to find in images and groups, especially those

4. Lionel Johnson, The Complete Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher (London, The Unicorn Press, 1953), xi.
5. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, xxiv.
6. Ibid., xxx.

(such as the White Rose League) "that united him to past as to present: to the dead no less than to the living".⁷ As I have mentioned above, the iconic nature of the Caroline era was a suitable focal point for decadent writers who sought out, as Johnson did, images and ritual to identify themselves.

Other eras, with strong images, such as Athens and the world of medieval Catholicism, were also used as fragments to shore against ruins. Barbara Charlesworth says of Lionel Johnson that:

...he worked at the creation of a self through identification with those authors who attracted him. He searched his library for fragments to shore against his ruin.⁸

These fragments were those of Johnson's "inspired company", mentioned at the head of this chapter; the poets largely of the Caroline era, though one might think that calling Cleveland "inspired" was putting it a little strongly. These fragments were also, however, "dreams of more comely ages - the Athens of Plato, the world of the medieval church", as well as "the reign of Charles I", as J.G. Nelson puts it.⁹ Johnson "idealized the great men of the past", and "created for his edification images of order and strength, proof against the assault of whatever made for disorder and imperfection".¹⁰

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7. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, xxx.
 8. Barbara Charlesworth, Dark Passages: The Decadent Consciousness In Victorian Literature (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p.84.
 9. J.G. Nelson, The Early Nineties: A View from the Bodley Head (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1971), p.178.
 10. J.G. Nelson, "The Nature of Aesthetic Experience in the Poetry of the Nineties: Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and John Gray", ELT 17(4) (Winter 1974), pp.223-32 (229).

Why did he need these images? A successful classicist, who debated at Winchester, and who took a First in Greats at New College, had by the end of his life become a recluse,¹¹ who as Yeats was later to put it, "loved his learning better than mankind".¹² It was however, not his learning, but rather his whisky, which had become part of his life while at Oxford, and was gradually increasing its hold. Professor Fletcher opines that 1893 was the crisis-year in Johnson's drinking problem; it was in this year that he wrote "Vinum Daemonum":¹³

Only one sting, and then but joy:
 One pang of fire, and thou art free.
 Then, what thou wilt, thou canst destroy:
 Save only me!

(Poems, p.152)

The metaphors of this poem are perhaps also related to Johnson's religion (he became a convert to Catholicism in 1891)¹⁴, and to his sexuality. (He was a homosexual: this was apparently known to his friends. After his conversion he presumably repressed these tendencies).¹⁵ The poem is certainly curious: it shows alcohol as a climactic excitement, whereas in fact it is nothing of the kind. The alcohol also appears as wine, although Johnson drank whisky (hence the "pang of fire", the initial taste).¹⁶ The use of wine is suggestive of a kind of perverse Eucharist. Later in the

11. Cf. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, xxx, xxxix, lviiff.
12. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, 2nd ed. (London, Macmillan and Co., 1950), p.148.
13. Lionel Johnson, Complete Poems, 1953 ed., xxvii.
14. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, xliii.
15. Three Poets of the Rhymers' Club, ed. Derek Stanford (Cheadle Hulme, Carcanet, 1974), pp.17-18.
16. Cf. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, xxxi, lvii.

poem Johnson writes "ask me not, whence came/This cup I bring" and "Mine are the draughts, that satisfy/This World's desires" (Poems, p.152). The cup is one of sin, not sacrifice.

It satisfies desire and yet it is shown to be profoundly unsatisfying. The restlessness of the imagery: the freedom to "destroy", the "crystal flame" which is "alluring, dancing, revelling" suggests the "tumult of thy lust" which is anything but satisfying. Naturally: Johnson is writing not so much of demonic temptation as of an addiction. The first two lines of the last stanza make this clear:

Thy longing leans across the brink:
Ah, the brave thirst within thine eyes!

(Poems, p.152)

Yet Johnson's attitude to the temptations he identifies as Satanic seems never to have been so antipathetic as agonized poems such as "The Dark Angel" would seem to imply (Poems, p.52). Indeed, Claudio-like, from a very early stage in his career Johnson appears to have encountered "darkness as a bride".¹⁷ in "Mystic and Cavalier", a poem which, as we shall see later, embraces the two themes in his poetry closest to his heart, he wrote "Go from me! I am one of those, who fall" (Poems, p.24). This line, written when Johnson was only twenty-two was indicative of much that was to come. In "Nihilism", written in the preceding year, he makes such concerns explicit:

Among immortal things, not made with hands;
Among immortal things, dead hands have made:
Under the Heavens, upon the Earth, there stands
Man's life, my life: of life I am afraid.

(Poems, p.160)

17. William Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, The Complete Works, ed. Peter Alexander, (London and Glasgow, Collins, 1951), p.97.

Life and the earth are the only two terrestrial and mortal things here. We note that the "immortal things" are either "not made with hands", or made with "dead hands". In other words, divine ("not made with hands") or past human agency have created immortal things. The present earth does not seem to contain them; Johnson is afraid of it for "My life, I cannot taste". He is only appreciative of the immortal, which is why he longs for "the slow approach of perfect death" (Poems, p.161). In mysticism he was to find the "immortal things not made with hands"; the "immortal things, dead hands have made" he found in the images of "Rupert's Cavaliers and Ossian's Celts" - to quote Professor Fletcher.¹⁸ Death in this poem is seen as "perfect"; the gateway to immortal things. It was later, in "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross" that Johnson, as we shall see, was to discuss death as a work of art in itself. Charles's death was part of the "perfect will". We see why "immortal things" are "made" by the dead alone, because "Through death life grew sublime"; "Vanquished in life, his death/ By beauty made amends". The artistic texture of Charles's death makes his life "sublime" instead of "vanquished". Perhaps Johnson made his own life a "ritual" in order partly to achieve the "sweet austerity" of the martyr-king.¹⁹ (Poems, pp.11, 12). And yet the fatalism with which he approaches his idols in poems such as "Mystic and Cavalier" argue that there was a persistent undertone of doom in the stream of Johnson's thought from long before the time when his drinking became a serious problem.

18. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, lxviii.

19. Ibid., liv.

It seems that Johnson felt that beauty, which was part, one presumes, of two sets of "immortal things", was inevitably contaminated by temptation for those who were alive, and not pressed into hagiography or history. In "Bagley Wood" he writes:

Could we but win earth's heart, and give desire release:
Then were we all divine, and then were ours by right
These stars, these nightingales, these scents: then shame
would cease.

(Poems, p.51)

The poem seems once again to be calling for the release of desire, but this time through perfection, not the demon drink. But, more interestingly, it seems to imply that all legitimate pleasures ("by rights" rather than with "shame") are dependent on man's divinity, as is the possibility of satisfying his desire. It is of course impossible to be divine and mortal simultaneously (unless God Incarnate); so all pleasures therefore are contaminated with "shame".

This may seem commonplace enough: a discussion of man's fallen state, the inevitability of sin, dust we are and shall to dust return, etcetera. But Johnson felt this destiny of frustration far more directly than most people seem to do; moreover, it was to lead him to the literary nostalgia so common in his era, and to his idolization of the Cavaliers and their King.

"The Dark Angel" is Johnson's central statement about his confrontation with a world where "things of beauty burn/With flames of evil ecstasy". In the poets' world "no thought, no thing/abides for me undesecrate". The "envious heart" of the Angel will not permit "Delight untortured by desire". Natural corruption contaminates the most innocent pleasures, because desire is not released; that is, it is imprisoned by envy, which is a function of

the egotism of humanity; the "envious heart" wishes to keep all to itself, therefore betraying the "immortal things", the desired objects, by neglecting their selfhood for its own, and thus offending God. The perpetual search for satisfaction, like the "dancing" wine in the cup of the devil, is one tortured by the Dark Angel, to the destruction of the soul (Poems, pp.52, 152, 160).

When sunlight glows upon the flowers,
Or ripples down the dancing sea:
Thou, with thy troop of passionate powers,
Beleaguerest, bewilderest, me.

(Poems, p.52)

The "passionate powers" of the self's "aching lust", led by the Dark Angel, keep up the restlessness of the selfish spirit in search of itself, the drunkard in pleasure, never satisfied. A similar restlessness, but with a satisfactory conclusion, can be seen in Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven", discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

Despite a belief in his personal doom reflected in his statement that "in ten years I shall be penniless and shabby, and borrow half-crowns from friends", Johnson joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1891.²⁰ It was a place of repentance, particularly perhaps for his homosexuality,²¹ but the Church also provided another vehicle for his nostalgia. In "The Church of a Dream" he writes:

20. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, lxviii.

21. Cf. Desmond Flower and Henry Maas (eds.), The Letters of Ernest Dowson, (Rutherford Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1967), p.205.

There still, although the world autumnal be, and pale,
 Still in their golden vesture the old saints prevail;
 Alone with Christ, desolate else, left by mankind...

Only one ancient Priest offers the Sacrifice,
 Murmuring holy Latin immemorial...

(Poems, pp.65, 66)

Here the "world" is "autumnal...and pale". The past is all that remains, the "still", the persistence of the saints. Their "holy Latin immemorial" is a sign of their continued relationship with the past which leads to their neglect in the present, since they alone cling to what is valuable, "ancient" and "holy".

Even the Roman Catholic church, however, seems for Johnson only to grow perfect in death:

Victor in Roman purple, saint and knight,
 In peace he passes to eternal peace:
 Triumph so proud, knew not Rome's ancient might...

(Poems, p.63)

Johnson wrote these lines on the death of Cardinal Manning, a subject also chosen by Francis Thompson. Manning combines the secular and the sacred, the "knight" of "Roman purple" with the "Saint" of the Church; but these functions are only united in death, which becomes a spiritual "Triumph". Johnson here as elsewhere recalls the Roman figure to which he was drawn by his classicism, and aligns it with the purely spiritual virtues of the Church, a view that sits more easily here than in some of his other poems.²² Manning's triumph is one of the spirit: this is achieved in death. To Johnson not unexpectedly, decease was the highpoint of any career.

22. Cf. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, pp.55, 56.

We shall look further at his combination of secular and sacred in the chapter on his work which follows this.

But art as well as religion contained an "inspired company" for Johnson, and in this area his nostalgia idealized the world of the Carolines and their "fair and fatal king" (Poems, p.11). From 1890 to 1895 he lived in Fitzroy Street with Mackmurdo and Home, until he was asked to leave because of his increasing drink problem.²³ Home had been responsible for the 1889 Century Guild Hobby Horse recommendation of a Caroline age of manners and beauty as a response to the naturalism of Zola.²⁴ This did not necessarily influence Johnson, but it is instructive to note that he was living in an atmosphere sympathetic to his own brand of artistic politics.

The commentators have not been slow to recognise this contribution to his art. J.G. Nelson tells us, that, to Johnson, Charles I was "An alienated artist figure", and that "Johnson's Charles rises above the world".²⁵ Arthur Waugh writes that the king was like other "idealists who came through suffering into consolation" for Johnson²⁶. To Johnson the abandoned king, who is "Alone...The fair and fatal king" seems identical with the priest who is "Alone with Christ, desolate else, left by mankind" (Poems, p.11, 65). As if to confirm this, Charles is regarded in the poem as "a canonised saint",²⁷ as the Eighteen-Nineties Jacobites described him. Johnson tells us of the king that "Men hunger for thy grace":

23. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, xxxix, iii-liv.

24. Herbert Home, "A Preface", Century Guild Hobby Horse, Vol.IV, (1889), pp.1-8 (1, 3).

25. J.G. Nelson, ELT, p.230.

26. Arthur Waugh, Tradition and Change Studies in Contemporary Literature, (London, Chapman and Hall, 1919), p.104.

27. Quoted by Col. S. Dewe White, "Revival of Jacobitism", The Westminster Review, vol.146 (4), (1896), pp.417-426 (417).

Charles's death confers not only actual immortality on him, but potential immortality on us through him; salvation by art. For "Vanquished in life, his death/By beauty made amends", just as the priests' desolation, and allegiance to the "immemorial" values and the perfection of their calling, symbolized by the "golden vesture" promise a spiritual "Io Triumphe!". "Mystic and Cavalier" are then the dual themes of so much of Johnson's work; and they are themes which do not run in parallel, but merge.

I shall be looking at Johnson's technique in "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross" in the next chapter. But of more immediate biographical interest is the suggestion made by Barbara Charlesworth that:

Related to Johnson's flight to the literary
past is his constant returning to his own youth...²⁸

Although this thesis is primarily concerned with Francis Thompson's attitudes to childhood compared with those of the seventeenth-century writers with whom he associated himself, Johnson's concern with the same topic is interesting. This love of his own youth does not result in any poems about children by Johnson; rather it becomes another means of return to the literary past. For he had been schooled at a famous school, and felt "consecrate and bounden" to his boyhood at Winchester:

He carried his loyalty so far that he has
studied...because they were Winchester boys,
the great writers among its graduates, Browne
and Otway and Collins, so carefully, indeed,
that you will find much of them in his writing,
the dignity and sonorousness of Browne, the
tenderness of Otway, the melancholy and evening
light of Collins.²⁹

28. Barbara Charlesworth, Dark Passages, p.94.

29. Cornelius Weygandt, Tuesdays at Ten (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1928), p.63.

Indeed, all these artists were suitable for Johnson's image of the artist as an isolated sufferer: the last two because they had gone mad, and so proved their isolation in reality, and Browne because of his coy excessive style, at once hyperbolic and non-committal, and his melancholy preoccupation with death and the hereafter.

But Johnson's addiction to the past was not a dependence. For Evans writes that Johnson:

...refines his poetic vocabulary until his lyrics have that same elimination of the unnecessary which is found in Jonson and Marvell.³⁰

Cornelius Weygandt writes that "While Marvell is remembered... Lionel Johnson will be remembered".³¹ This adaptation of his style to the refined from the indulgent shows Johnson learned from, rather than collapsing on, his devotion to the literary past. As a boy he wrote:

I think I shall not die yet - that I shall waste
on into old age and memories of a beautiful life:
for life is meaningless without beauty, and
everything is, or becomes at need beautiful.³²

As a man he removes the adjectives to intensify the purpose

Vanquished in life, his death
By beauty made amends...

30. B. Ifor Evans, English Poetry in the Later Nineteenth Century (London, Methuen & Co., 1933), p.323.

31. Cornelius Weygandt, Tuesdays at Ten, p.73.

32. Earl Russell ed., Some Winchester Letters of Lionel Johnson (London, Allen & Unwin, 1919), p.12.

The "beautiful life" has become "The passing of his breath", the only way to win "defeated ends" (Poems, p.11).

Just as the Church is in spiritual exile, and King Charles is in artistic and political exile from the world, so is Ireland for Johnson: exiled from all three. The true spirit of Ireland and its Catholicism is desolate; "hates/Envies, and desolations" have "...consumed the land of grace/Beauty's abiding place" (Poems, p.93) This summary of Ireland's position links with Johnson's attitude to Charles through Cromwell's position in Irish history (Cf. Poems, p.139), but also through Johnson's attitude to fate.

I have shown that Johnson felt fated; that he enjoyed beauty and yet felt it contaminated; and that with regard to Charles for example, he felt that both "sweet austerity" and "passionate tragedy" could go together, as if Lear could be Thomas à Kempis (Charles's relationship with Jacobean heroes will be touched on in the next chapter) (Poems, p.11). The poet's paradoxical attitude to sin and salvation, his indulgence in one and belief in the other, can perhaps be summed up by two quotations from his essays, admittedly concerned with style as much as matter:

...an artist of the severest kind [Walter Pater]...
Persistence in perfection, a vigilance never relaxed,
an ascetic austerity of carefulness...³³

A constant attention to minute proprieties can hardly
go with any wild rapidity of wit.³⁴

33. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.20.

34. Ibid., p.32 (Also cf. Walter Pater).

Both the "wild rapidity" and the "ascetic austerity of carefulness" could be reconciled by Johnson's concept of fate, a concept which itself is almost paradoxical in a Christian cosmogony and rests easily with Johnson's other attitudes. Charles rides in the world "bare to the stars of doom", which destroy him in "passionate tragedy" so that his death itself, as an artistic act, may be full of "sweet austerity": his own response to fate. But is this fate God's will? Not only is it "The stars and heavenly deeps" which together "Work out a perfect will", but also stars appear frequently elsewhere as the overseers of human fate (Poems, p.12). "For the truth is that if you once think of the meaning of the world and time and the stars, your Eternities and moralities look as small as my Church", Johnson wrote while at Winchester (his Church was then Anglican).³⁵

The "faint Dawnstar" is the "herald of our hope" and "Star of our horoscope"; "we love thee, prophet light!" in "Vita Venturi Saeculi" (Poems, p.228). The death of Julius Caesar is linked to that of Charles I by the common heralding of the stars:

This night, I hear those measured tides of sound,
Surging above that crownless king discrowned,
Dead on that sacred senatorial ground:
Low in the dark hangs, burning from afar,
With pale and solemn fires, the Julian Star.

(Poems, p.46).

In "Romans" Caesar is the "crownless king discrowned" on this occasion, but Charles I is later to be similarly placed: the "saddest of all kings/Crowned, and again discrowned" (Poems, p.11).

35. Some Winchester Letters, p.135.

The "stars of doom" are the discrowning agency for Charles (we may compare Marvell's star-imagery with regard to Cromwell)³⁶, and the "pale and solemn fires" of Caesar's star survey the scene in "Romans" just as Charles's head is "bare to the stars of doom".

Yet Johnson's attitude to the stars and thus to the fate which dooms us to a resolution of the Dark Angel's paradoxes, is ambivalent. The mention of Caesar's Star seems to give credence to pagan notions of apotheosis and Fate, but elsewhere, the stars are addressed as part of a "mighty friendship of mysterious forces/O servants of one Will!" Stars in their courses...". But are these day stars "from God's eyes" the same as "the shepherd star" under which Pan hymns? Johnson writes of Carlyle, possibly reflecting his known sympathy for Cromwell, that the sage's "star was livid as a corpse-light".³⁷ This kind of star-as-personal-fate seems to belong to horoscopes rather than Heaven (Poems, pp. 33, 48, 235).

This view is re-inforced when we find in "Nihilism" that "the slow approach of perfect death" leads to the place where "the skies are grey...without any star" (Poems, p.161). Similarly, "Ireland's dead" are "beyond sun and star" (Poems, p.151) and it seems that once again, only in triumphant death can the exile into a world of fated corruption be transformed into a glorious homecoming:

Ah, how the City of our God is fair!
If, without sea, and starless though it be,
For joy of the majestic beauty there,
Men shall not miss the stars, nor mourn the sea.

(Poems, p.60)

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36. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, ed. H.M. Margoliouth, 2 vols., 3rd ed., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), Vol.1, pp.91-92.
37. Some Winchester Letters, p.59.

But we are in this world for the present, where "when we love we are creators of God, the new creation of starfire and immortal tears!", as Johnson once put it while at school.³⁸ Stars to Johnson are part of the tragic element that leads the life of the artist to desire and disaster, when if we were free, we should retreat into the ideal world of death where beauty is not corrupted. "Mary, Star of the Sea" is a kindly messenger of God's will in Johnson's eye, but generally the effects of stars are specifically excluded from Heaven (Poems, p.60). Rather they form a running commentary on the "lost heritage", the part that Johnson clung to and adored (Poems, p.66). What is past cannot be changed; hence its sacrifices and victories can be described in the language of fate, a language that suited Johnson's own lack of optimism about people and artists facing life:

All the forced drawings of a mortal breath:
Are as the hollow music of a bell,
That times the slow approach of perfect death.

(Poems, p.160)

Yet the artist can leave victory of a sort behind him. "What Virgil sang, doth God forget?" is more than a bold claim, (Poems, p.73) but again it shows Johnson's ability to mix pagan and Christian allegiances in a general loyalty to the sometimes apparently paradoxical worlds of the past and the hereafter.

Johnson's key word for these "immortal things" is "white" (Poems, p.160). He says that the Welsh word for "white" can also mean "holy, reverend, felicitous"³⁹ and indeed it is in Wales in particular and the Celtic west in general that Johnson finds his

38. Some Winchester Letters, p.96.

39. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.40.

"white land" of "musing ghosts" (Poems, p.166). The Celtic lands are white because they are pure, but pure only because their history is, apparently, dead. In "A Cornish Night" Johnson writes of the "cliffs white-heathered", and of the "white flowers found upon a glimmering lea" (Poems, pp.21,22). These are presumably white only because Cornwall is "desolate, Brittany desolate,/And Wales", like the priest and the artist-king, they belong to the past. Johnson, who dwelt on Pater's love for the "lingering, long-drawn music of tone, upon old, faded things",⁴⁰ felt that in these alone was immortal value, whether in the "white hands" or the white king discussed below. In Pater, Johnson found:

...something comparable to the curiosa felicitas of our seventeenth-century poets at their happiest: Herrick, Marvell, Vaughan, in whom there is often that perfect harmony of matter with form...⁴¹

Johnson himself shares with this assessment of Pater the attention to form commented on earlier in the quotations of Nelson and Weygandt linking him with Marvell. The "sweet austerity" of "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross" parallels its subject, which we shall shortly be discussing further in the context of Johnson's relationship with "Marvell, whom I worship to the verge of extravagance", as he wrote to Edmund Gosse.⁴²

40. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.29.

41. Ibid., p.36

42. Raymond Roseliep, "Some Letters of Lionel Johnson" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Notre Dame, 1954), p.180.

Ian Fletcher has written of Johnson that:

Modern taste tends to reject work like Johnson's, responding as it does to predominant effects of colour rather than to effects of form.⁴³

Johnson's "effects of form" are effected in harmony with a matter whose substance is not that of colour but of concept, and the concepts articulated are those of the faded world with its "white" (colourless) values, rather than the distractions of the present age:

So, though the world be full of noise;
And most new books, but foolish toys;
I share with thee thine ancient joys,
 Marvell or Quarles:
So, tired with rambling through the Town,
I taste the rich delights of Browne...

(Poems, p.122)

It was in this mood that he joined the Rhymers who "aimed at the tavern poetry of Ben Jonson and his day",⁴⁴ and in this mood also that he admired Vaughan, with his "quality of whiteness in the mystical Celtic sense".⁴⁵ His love of Charles I was accompanied by "an 'unaccountable partiality' for Charles II",⁴⁶ and as we shall see later, the love of the poetic past was intensified in places with historical associations, in particular with those of Winchester. Johnson wrote to Gosse that:

My aim or dream is, to leave to Winchester something that may not be all unworthy to be read with the splendid work done by our Wykehamist poets, Otway and Collins.⁴⁷

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43. Lionel Johnson, Complete Poems, xl.
44. G.W.L. Telfer, "Lionel Johnson: A Short Biography with an Appreciative Essay on his Criticism and Poetry" (unpublished B.Litt thesis, Oxford, 1958), p.163.
45. Ibid., p.123.
46. "Some Letters of Lionel Johnson", The Criterion, Vol.3 (1925), pp.356-363 (357).

But this flight into the past to escape from his sense of fate by immortalizing past defeats into eternal victories goes beyond a mere exhumation of fragments to shore against his ruins, or Johnson would be a nostalgic versifier only. Likewise it goes beyond his stars of fate, or issues in his verse would be unalterably fixed. Instead, Johnson's prime method of escape is exploration. In the next, more substantial chapter, I intend to deal with where he goes, and why it is in the seventeenth century in particular that he finds his symbolic home, as did so many writers of his age, even to the extent of staging dramas about it.⁴⁸ The flight to the past has the flight from the dilemma of beauty as pleasure, and beauty as temptation, into the safe world of beauty as image and memory.

Other areas of literature were of course of interest to him; in particular, while at Oxford, Johnson was deeply interested in the eighteenth century, and also in Pater.⁴⁹ The latter he sometimes interpreted through a seventeenth-century perspective, as we shall see in the next chapter, where Pater is discussed with reference to Sir Thomas Browne and Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

The eighteenth century seems to have been Johnson's main area of reading at Oxford, as Ian Fletcher notes.⁵⁰ In "Oxford Nights" Johnson pays tribute to Smollett, Richardson, Lamb, Fielding, Sterne, Goldsmith and Addison among others; in "Gray's Inn", whither he moved in 1895, he recalls Lamb and Samuel Johnson. Yet nevertheless this interest does not appear to have moulded his themes as did the Caroline perspective. While Johnson's interest in the eighteenth

48. Desmond Flower and Henry Maas, The Letters of Ernest Dowson, p.196.

49. Cf. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, pp.66, 225.

50. Lionel Johnson, Complete Poems, p.387.

century is in itself a tribute to the literary nostalgia of the age, and as such a rebuff to the thesis that the Eighteen-Nineties were dominated in England by French aestheticism, it is a lesser plank in the bridge over history these writers made. Johnson's "Lovelace, adorable and vile" is Richardson's hero, but Johnson is closer to his Cavalier archetype (Poems, p.67). In the next chapter we will see how Johnson transformed the paradox of "adorable and vile" into a poetry far more than that of a valetudinarian kind: a world of art spanning two eras, glorying in isolation from the Victorian age, full of commitment to the Caroline ideal.

A review article by Johnson on James Clarence Mangan in The Academy contains a passage about the Irish poet which seems to sum up the life of Johnson himself:

It was a life of dreams and misery and madness...
it seems the haunted, enchanted life of one
drifting through his days in a dream of other
days and other worlds, golden and immortal.⁵¹

Like Mangan, Johnson was "homesick for eternity".⁵² Let us now see where his longing led his action in the world of art in which he lived.

51. Lionel Johnson, "Clarence Mangan", The Academy 53 (Feb 5, 1898), pp.142-43 (142).

52. Ibid.

Chapter XII : THE LIFE AND WORK OF LIONEL JOHNSON - 2

A Long Blast Upon the Horn : His Work and Themes

O Sun and Stars! O glory of the rose!
 O eyes of light, voices of music! I
 Have mourned, because all beauty fails, and goes
 Quickly away: and the whole world must die.

Yet, Sun and Stars! Yet, glory of the rose!
 Yet, eyes of light, voices of music! I
 Know, that from mortal to immortal goes
 Beauty: in triumph can the whole world die.

(Pax Christi: 1891)¹

These are the writers, who derive from Cicero and the younger Pliny; who talk of Cincinnatus and of Diocletian in their retreats; who quote Corycius senex and Angulus ille; men of gracious minds and manners, half courtly and half cloistral. Such are Evelyn and Bacon, Cowley and Temple, Marvell and Vaughan, Spenser and Milton; Lord Falkland and his friend at Tew...

("The Art of Thomas Hardy")²

Lionel Johnson mourned the fading of beauty which he thought a temptation, and yet rejoiced in it. But for him the only beauty in which it was safe to rejoice was the beauty hallowed by death: death at the age in which it was admired, death of the artist that created it, death of the men who loved it. Courtliness is an

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1. Lionel Johnson, The Collected Poems, ed. Ian Fletcher [Garland English Texts No.3], (New York, Garland, 1982), p.148. All references in the text are to this edition.
 2. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy, (London, Elkin Mathews, 1894), p.136.

expression of a love of beauty in action: we may compare Yeats's later poem "To a Wealthy Man" concerning the Municipal Gallery, who cites "Urbino's windy hill", Cosimo (de Medici), and others like them as the true givers of "Delight in Art whose end is peace". To be a lover of beauty, one must be rich and independent; separate from "Paudeen's pence" and "Biddy's halfpennies" alike.³ This seems to be Johnson's attitude also: the men he quotes above of gracious minds and manners were all at least gentlemen in the old sense, or strove to be, like Spenser; and their "manners", half courtly and half cloistral, are the antithesis between active and passive art, beauty and scholarship. They study the classics, like Johnson; and it is of course noteworthy how many of them come from the early and mid seventeenth century, time of the "Carolean age of manners and beauty" to quote once more Horne's manifesto from the 1889 Century Guild Hobby Horse.⁴ In this chapter I intend to discuss and examine how Johnson used the idealized past to confront the realities of the present in his verse and prose, and how what seems to have been the paradox of his own life, the love of beauty and the fear of it, was confronted by his ideals. They come under three main headings: the Jacobean and Caroline, the Classical, and the Heroic. All share certain features: idealism, scholarship, decorousness, graciousness (in Johnson's eyes), but also activity in the face of danger, the danger being the world. It is the intention of this chapter to turn first and most importantly, to the Jacobean and Caroline aspect of his allegiances. Probably the best start we could make in this area would be to examine Johnson's prose work.

3. W.B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan, 1950), pp.119, 120.

4. Vide supra Johnson I : 24.

In his Post Liminium: Essays and Critical Papers, collected by Thomas Wittemore in a 1912 Elkin Matthews edition, Johnson showed his concern with the tendencies of literature and society around him.⁵ He writes of how "To-day, English literature has all the extravagance and individualism of the Elizabethan," and sees the eighteenth century as having attempted to put a check on the tendency to riotousness:

In the last century, English writers were for establishing a check against the spirit of lawlessness, or of each man's being "a law unto himself": they did great and good things, but in that they failed.⁷

Although Johnson did not share Mrs. Meynell's antipathy to the eighteenth century, he regarded its efforts as inadequate: efforts to use art as a means of social ordering, as the above passages, particularly the latter, indicate. In his ideal period of course, things were different: "in Stuart times, all authority hung together",⁸ he writes in his essay on Archbishop Laud. Of Walton he writes:

Extremes distressed the good quiet man...the sober decency of Anglicanism, the graceful side of Stuart monarchy, the pleasing dignity and moderate enjoyments of an ordered and measured life, were more to his taste than your ranting fanaticism and indecent innovation.⁹

Ranting fanaticism and indecent innovation were of course the marks of the "crowds" and "rebels" who brawled against Charles I, to whom art "was joy" (Poems, pp.11, 12). They were the marks of

5. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium: Essays and Critical Papers, ed. Thomas Whittemore, (London, Elkin Mathews, 1912).

6. Ibid., p.255.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p.232.

9. Ibid., p.250.

extreme individualism in action. Art was the gracefulness at risk from "the spirit of lawlessness". The hauteur rightfully belonging to art that we find in Johnson's Charles I seems an echo of the hauteur of Stuart times. Indeed in his essay on Patmore Johnson quotes Ben Jonson's resolve (and applies it to Patmore) to "sing high and aloof, Safe from the black wolf's [sic] jaw and the dull ass's hoof",¹⁰ a line later adopted by Yeats, who in his poem on his Rhymers' Club comrades, "The Grey Rock", displays the same attitudes beloved by Johnson:

But never made a poorer song
That you might have a heavier purse,
Nor gave loud service to a cause
That you might have a troop of friends.
You kept the Muses' sterner laws,
And unrepenting faced your ends,
And therefore earned the right - and yet
Dowson and Johnson most I praise -
To troop with those the world's forgot,
And copy their proud steady gaze.¹¹

Johnson loved to "troop with these the world's forgot". He was so buried in the past that he could even think its questions a problem for the present. "Most modern men have probably asked themselves 'Should I have been Roundhead or Cavalier?' And most must have found it a difficult question" he muses in his essay on Archbishop Laud.¹² Whether the average man did or does so is not quite such a difficult question, one would think.

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10. Ben Jonson, The Works, ed. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols., (Oxford, Clarendon Poems, 1947), Vol.VIII, The Poems and the Prose Works, p.174. Johnson's modernized spelling is retained on this occasion; Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.240.
11. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, pp.116, 117.
12. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.232.

For Johnson also "The Strain of Mysticism in the English" is one of the key points in the achievement of artistic ages.¹³ In this essay he mentions the Cambridge Platonists, Leighton and Law, and of Fox and Bunyan as exemplifying this trend among others. In his essay on Vaughan he sees him as a Christian Platonist, and says that "His poetry glitters and glistens with a radiant purity and 'candour'."¹⁴ To-day Johnson sees Pater as an artist in the same mould as the "Elizabethan and Cambridge Platonists", "loving beauty in the world" like Plato who "took 'sweet counsel' with the world of sight", according to Johnson. "'Magica Sympathiae!!' words borne upon the shield of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, are inscribed upon the writings of Mr. Pater" Johnson comments.¹⁵ We are again unsure whether it is Christian or Platonic mysticism that Johnson is alluding to, but in any case, an age like the Caroline, redolent of "radiant purity" is right for a "White King".¹⁶ In "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross" we may notice the solitary mystical nature of the King's power:

Alone he rides, alone,
The fair and fatal king:
Dark night is all his own,
That strange and solemn thing.

"The stars his courtiers are" we are told, and of course the stars also "Work out a perfect will" with the "heavenly deeps" in the poem (Poems, pp.11, 12). Elsewhere in Johnson's poetry they are a reflection of God's will (although how sound this is as a Christian

13. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.255ff.

14. Ibid., pp.255, 273.

15. Ibid., pp.2, 3, 28, 35.

16. Ibid., pp.271, 273.

interpretation, we have already laid open to doubt). Here they are attendant on Charles, alone in his Neoplatonic/Christian centrality. He was the victim, as he now appears to be the agent of "heavenly... will". Autocratic centrality is rightful in art for Johnson, and mysticism is one of its successful agents, especially in Neoplatonic form. Unity, the great political drive of Charles, ecclesiastical drive of Laud, literary drive of Jonson, is a key belief of Lionel Johnson's, as we can see from the above passages. The man of unity must be prepared to live and die alone, and yet to battle for his ideals, hence the words of Yeats quoted above, and hence perhaps, although Johnson does not mention them, these lines of Lovelace:

I could not love thee (Deare) so much,
Lov'd I not Honour more.

and

Stone Walls doe not a Prison make,
Nor Iron bars a Cage;
Mindes innocent and quiet take
That for an Hermitage:
If I have freedome in my Love,
And in my soule am free;
Angels alone that sore above
Injoy such Liberty.¹⁷

Loneliness cannot defeat soul-freedom. The earlier lines are less sincere, more buckish; but it is worth noting that James Durie uses them at the beginning of Stevenson's Master of Ballantrae in order to justify his leaving for the army of the Chevalier at any cost, and the whole book thereafter is a tale of his enduring, albeit

17. Richard Lovelace, The Poems, ed. C.H. Wilkinson, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1930), pp.18, 79.

perverse, single-mindedness.¹⁸ Johnson analysed some of the virtues of his chosen period successfully, even though they may not be the virtues we would choose to-day.

But Johnson himself was aware of elements in the age he loved that he did not admire, often elements very close to the ones in which he professed to find "radiant purity". In his early essay on The Fools of Shakespeare he writes of the subsequent age of Shakespeare's:

It is the age of Hobbes and Herbert, Donne and Crashaw, Norris, Ferrar, and More; of men whose names and dates may fearlessly be mingled, on the strength of their common bond. That bond is an extravagance of mental habit: a wandering, whether to Christian Talmudism, Catholic Quietism, Anglican Platonism, or Erastian experience, outside and beyond the strict limits of what is generally wholesome.¹⁹

But was this what "The age demanded"?²⁰ Johnson thought that "were Sir Thopas on earth again...He would find the degeneracy of his Elizabethan fellows trailing through the mysterious age of the Stuarts...now Burton anatomizes melancholy".²¹ This is "the pedigree of modern melancholy", and Johnson thought that he could see in the "age of the Stuarts" the time when "wit turned to far-fetching and humour to conceit".²² This was the time when "the age...is warped from the Elizabethan vigour", a time when the Civil War approached, and "the strange years in which the strained brains of England gave way to madness".²³ Is this the same period that Johnson is describing

18. Robert Louis Stevenson, The Master of Ballantrae, (London, Cassell and Company, 1901), p.7.
19. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.79.
20. Ezra Pound, Collected Shorter Poems, (London, Faber and Faber, 1952), p.206.
21. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.78.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p.79.

when he writes that "in Stuart times, all authority hung together"?²⁴
 Yes it is, for this is also the age, as he had written of Izaak Walton,
 when "Extremes distressed the good quiet man".²⁵

Arguably, Johnson's best two poems, certainly his two best-known, are "The Dark Angel" and "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross". The first is the record of his personal tragedy, caught between delight and fear of beauty, that rid "the world of penitence", and his love and terror of God (Poems, p.52). The second is his record of a public tragedy, a tragedy of an age that sacrificed the man of art to the mob, the "ranting fanaticism" he writes of when he writes of Walton. Charles is simultaneously the heroic king, the fated artist, and the Neoplatonic symbol of the One, the "white radiance of Eternity" broken on earth by the "dome of many-coloured glass" until it is restored by the "perfect will" of the stars, courtiers to the One in the Neoplatonic aspect of the poem, agents of fate in the reading of the poem as a document of the sacrifice of an artist, an ascetic:²⁶

His soul was of the saints;
 And art to him was joy.

(Poems, p.12)

Just as the life he lived was a source both of pleasure and self-despair for Johnson, and he resorted often to the flight to "his own youth" and to the past,²⁷ so the life of Charles I, the

24. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.232.

25. Ibid., p.250.

26. P. B. Shelley, The Complete Poetical Works, (Clarendon Press ed.) ed. Thomas Hutchinson, (London, Oxford University Press, 1943, (1905)), p.443.

27. Barbara Charlesworth, Dark Passages: The Decadent Consciousness In Victorian Literature, (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p.94.

"alienated artist figure" according to J.G. Nelson, is a grander type of the tragedy of these "left by mankind"²⁸ (Poems, p.65). Johnson, because he is a solitary relatively unimportant man, feels totally isolated: he is a Cavalier, but "one of those, who fall" (Poems, p.24). Charles he identifies, rightly of course, as a symbol of an age split down the middle in its allegiances. On one side there are the "men of gracious minds and manners... Evelyn and Bacon, Cowley and Temple, Marvell and Vaughan..." and on the other the crowds, the rebels. Writers like Donne and Crashaw uneasily write in "an extravagance of mental habit". "Strange years... strained brains".²⁹ Donne was of course dead years before the Civil War, but as we can see from the passages quoted above, Johnson saw the "pedigree of modern melancholy" as deriving right from the end of the age of Elizabeth.

The "tragic house of Stuart" then, is one with which Johnson feels a close kinship.³⁰ He felt that under Charles II things had improved but even thereafter "the wit of Farquhar and Congreve, Etherege, and Rochester... is rotten wit".³¹ Johnson does not seem to like the distinctively Restoration elements in the literature of the Restoration Court. Rather he turns to the writers who are "phantom gentlemen in the 'haunted thicket' of old years", those who "have a singular fine charm" as he writes in an essay on Octavius Pulleyn in The Speaker on May 7 1898. Pulleyn, he mentions "has a decent fair knack at imitation of, the great Mr. Cowley", who of

28. J.G. Nelson, "The Nature of Aesthetic Experience in the Poetry of the Nineties: Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and John Gray", ELT vol.17, no.4 (Winter 1974), pp.223-32, (p.230).

29. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.79.

30. Ibid., p.200.

31. Ibid., p.80.

course is one of Johnson's half courtly and half cloistral types, despite the fact that he too might be charged by many critics with "extravagance of mental habit". Pulleyn stands "toward the close of the seventeenth century, curious and winning century", and as such is one of the "Friends that Fail Not", the "gentlemen [who] had their being and...names in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and assuredly the odd or sonorous names attract us, as all things individual and apart attract" (my italics).³² "Friends that Fail Not" appeared in The Anti-Jacobin for 3 October 1891 and was reprinted in The Academy for 8 December 1900. In the essay, Johnson, while commenting that many of the writers he likes (mainly seventeenth-century) are popular with the audience he is writing for already, suggests a greatly expanded list:

Or look at lyric Poetry...Herrick and Herbert..
But what of Vaughan...Of Crashaw...Of Cotton...
Habington...Donne's "Anniversaries"...Marvell's
perfect work?³³

He then wrote:

One might go on to a dozen names: Cleveland,
Denham, Flatman, Campion, Wither, Lovelace,
Carew, and all the inspired company.³⁴

He denies that "no one now reads" the Masques of Jonson or Religio Medici and goes on to write:

32. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, pp.204, 206, 209.

33. Ibid., p.214.

34. Ibid.

No doubt the men of self-sustaining genius read something sometimes in the department of letters. They must have looked into the correspondence of Pope, of Gray, of Cowper, of Lamb. But how many hours have they spent over the letters of Sir Henry Wotton, of Sir John Suckling, of Farquhar?³⁵

The list Johnson proposes is in total a long one, although one may doubt whether all the company are quite so inspired as he declares. Yet he clearly demonstrates a wide knowledge at least of the names of the people he recommends, and shows once more his sympathy for the writers of the age (if we except Farquhar) of the Caroline Court. We have already seen, however, that Johnson sees some seventeenth-century writers as ideally "half-courtly" and "half cloistral" while others are to him "outside and beyond the strict limits of what is generally wholesome" in their mental habits. In the essay quoted above he recommends both categories: Marvell in particular from the former, and Crashaw, Donne and by implication Farquhar (a man of "rotten wit") in the latter.³⁶ Is there any reason for this?

None is explicit in his work. Quite clearly implicit as a reason is the fact that, in his ego-centred rather than culture-centred work both the "Vinum Daemonum" and the "Church of a Dream" attract him, the "two defeats" and "two despairs" (Poems, pp.53, 65, 152). In the seventeenth century, he is likewise attracted by both the extravagant and the austere, although it is the latter that has his formal sympathy. "Octavius", he says in his essay on Pulleyn,

35. Lionel Johnson, Post Limum, p.214.

36. Ibid., p.80.

"shall quote me his Horace", and this is the key to his love for the "men of gracious minds and manners", that they love the classics.³⁷

"But go, search the bookstalls" Johnson writes in "Friends that Fail Not", "between 1500 and 1700 the translations from the classics are to be counted by hundreds".³⁸ Of his own work Thomas Whittemore, applying one of Johnson's comments to the poet himself, wrote that it had "an almost Latin clearness and weight".³⁹ In his own essays Johnson was frequently aware of classical influence as an enduring power in the literature which he believed upheld art. Of Pater he writes of the "ardour of the intellect kindled at the fire of Plato" whom he says, "took 'sweet counsel' with the world of sight", a statement which, made about the great idealist, shows Johnson's own sympathy for the "sweet counsel" of visible beauty while ostensibly pledged to the ideal world of ascetism.⁴⁰

In The Art of Thomas Hardy he comments on the elements of "Quintilian or Ben Jonson, Cicero or Dryden" in the writers' work.⁴¹ "The gentlemen of the Stuart times, cultured, refined, polite" are those who were drawn to the classics.⁴² In connection with Hardy Johnson mentions Propertius and Horace, and quotes Tibullus on Hardy's work:

Love is gone into the country, and is
learning the country speech.⁴³

37. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.206.

38. Ibid., p.215.

39. Ibid., viii.

40. Ibid., pp.2, 3.

41. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy, p.79.

42. Lionel Johnson, Reviews and Critical Papers, ed. Robert Shafer (London, Elkin Mathews, 1921), p.88.

43. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy, p.161.

Elsewhere Johnson tries to fuse his own beliefs with the classical tradition he sees as important if not imperative in the English art of the past which he owes allegiance to. In "Propheta Gentium" he writes of "Prophet Virgil!" and says that

Thy song soaring met
David's, Isaiah's: how should God forget,
O thou His prophet thee?

(Poems, p.172)

The medieval tradition that Virgil's prophecy of the coming of a child in Eclogues was a prophecy of the coming of Christ, is used here by Johnson to bolster his sometimes uneasy belief in the unity of classical and Christian experience. As he himself wrote of Pater, there are "Breakings-out of pagan passion" in his work, although they are not systematic enough to represent a real attempt at synthesis.⁴⁴

Johnson is always a little uneasy about the relationships between the classics and his Christianity: in his poem on Lucretius he asks:

Art learning Christ through sweet and bitter pain,
Lucretius?

(Poems, p.58)

Yet he credits the classical authors with perceptions of truth akin to salvation:

Who dreams with Plato and, transcending dreams,
Mounts to the perfect City of true God:
Who hails its marvellous and haunting gleams,
Treading the steady air, as Plato trod...

(Poems, p.81)

44. Lionel Johnson, Post Limum, p.32.

Admittedly Plato is an idealist and Lucretius a materialist. But Johnson sees in the Roman Church of his day a kind of continuum of ancient tradition, though not obviously the spiritual tradition of paganism:

Victor in Roman purple, saint and knight,
In peace he passes to eternal peace:
Triumph so proud, knew not Rome's ancient might...

(Poems, p.63)

The "holy Latin immemorial" of the priests is now sanctified, but was originally not so; and yet the classics have a special place because they are the forerunners of "the Holy Place" that Rome became (Poems, pp.63, 66).

Sometimes Johnson can disagree with the classics even when they offer advice of a kind similar to Christianity:

Man is a shadow's dream!
Opulent Pindar saith:
Yet man may win a gleam
Of glory, before death.

(Poems, p.87)

The "gleam/Of glory" is that of "High Chivalry/Fair Courtesy" that are the traditional values of the classical world and of the world that looks back on the Classics for its inspiration. As Johnson writes in "Winchester":

...Apollo had
His temple bright
Of song and light,
Here, when the world was Roman.

And also,

And wert thou Camelot? wert thou
That shrine of all things knightly?

Winchester is also the home of his Celtic idealism:

Surely the magic of the Celt,
White City! doth not fail thee:

All his interests are kindled and exemplified here:

Still is that spirit felt:
That ancient grace
Still haunts this face:

(Poems, p.184)

Winchester is of course both "courtly and cloistral" like the men Johnson admires; men who also lived the Classics, which themselves are the forerunners of Christian faith and tradition and provide some of its witnesses:

the centurion
Said: This dead man was God's own Son...

...The Roman, from beneath the cloud
This day the Son of God is dead!
Yet heed men, what the Roman said?

(Poems, pp.75, 76)

They do not. Like Julian the Apostate, they rather think themselves "Lords of the laws, that bind the Pleiades" than subject to the "unconquered star". Although "Night teems with prophecy" "Thine England" is not yet returned to "Leo! Ruler of Rome,/King of the Holy Place". (Poems, pp.63, 103, 106)

Both Aquinas and Juvenal are relevant still. Johnson's seeking out of the towns that bred both classical author and Christian saint in the above poems remind us of his allegiance to Winchester. The place, as it were, is a storehouse of its own memories, a permanent reminder of the tradition and value of the past which still stands. This concern with place I think may remind us of Yeats, who shows it in his poetry from "Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation" right through to "Purgatory".⁴⁵ For Johnson too, a place is where history makes her alliances: "The Church of a Dream", Winchester, Aquino, Assisi, "Plato in London", "Bagley Wood", Charing Cross, Oxford, Gray's Inn":
(Poems, pp.6, 11, 50, 55, 56, 65, 115, 212)

Here be the Gardens loved by Lamb,
Here lodged my mighty namesake Sam,
And here the venal Verulam:
Brisk Pepys, dear gossip, had his talks,
Oglings, and airs, in Gray's Inn Walks;

History's alliances are made in places between the traditions Johnson venerates: Christian and Classical, Roman and Catholic, old and new, desire and peace, as he writes in "Bagley Wood":

Could we but win earth's heart, and give desire release:
Then were we all divine, and then were ours by right
These stars, these nightingales, these scents: then shame
would cease.

(Poems, p.51)

The authors he loves provide the echoes of these places. Charles is the king at Charing Cross, and Cicero's words recall the murder of Caesar:

45. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, pp.106, 225, 263, 273, 275;
W.B. Yeats, The Collected Plays, 2nd ed., (London, Macmillan 1952), p.679ff.

This night, I hear those measured tides of sound,
 Surging above that crownless king discrowned,
 Dead on that sacred senatorial ground...

(Poems, p.46)

In "Plato in London" the "image of our long desire" yearns towards Plato's thoughts "In as august a sphere: /Perchance, far higher". (Poems, p.7). Johnson reveres the Classical and Christian past, its writing and its places, and in his work revered it as in his life. Ezra Pound wrote:

And, indeed, Johnson wrote Latin, as beautifully as Flaminius, so far did his reverence lead him.

He goes on to say of Johnson:

He really knew the tradition, the narrow tradition, that is, of English, Latin, and Greek. This intelligent acquaintance with the past differentiates him from the traditionalists of his time, and of ours.

He would, for instance, have welcomed good vers libre: he would have known how the Greeks had used it.

And again:

...his belief that poetry was not "a rendering of one's own time in the terms of one's own time", but using of the lineal term in the purest sense of that lineage...⁴⁶

Pound certainly thought that Johnson possessed a deep-felt reverence for tradition.

We have discussed Johnson's attitude to the Classics and to Christianity, at least in relationship to them, but now I want to go on to discuss a third part of his allegiance to tradition, the

46. Lionel Johnson, The Poetical Works, ed. Ezra Pound, (London, Elkin Mathews, 1915), .vii, viii, xv, xvi.

heroic. Partly we have already explored that in his writing about Charles, or indeed Plato or Cicero, but it needs broadening out into the wider perspective of his work. Although Johnson loved much classical and Anglo-Classical tradition, one aspect of it forms a particularly important part of his work: "On yonder hill, have Roundheads mustered" as he writes in "Winchester" (Poems, p.184), and like Dowson, he was "interested in the White Rose League".⁴⁷

I wish to look at Johnson under and in the light of the poets of that era on which he frequently wrote and whose ideals he loved, whether they were Jacobite, Classical or heroic.

In particular also, I want to look at his work in the light of the first major seventeenth century poet who wrote in a determinedly classical manner, Ben Jonson. Lionel Johnson wrote:

Flaubert and Baudelaire and Gautier, Hennequin and M. Zola and M. Mallarmé, with all their colleagues or exponents, may sometimes be set aside, and suffer us to hear Quintilian or Ben Jonson, Cicero or Dryden.⁴⁸

This chapter and indeed this thesis is an attempt to put this sentence into action. Metaphysical poetry was becoming popular at the end of the nineteenth century once more,⁴⁹ and Dowson follows the Cavaliers but why Ben Jonson?

Partly the answer lies in his classicism, an association made clear above by Johnson. Partly too, Johnson was not the only

47. Victor Plarr, Ernest Dowson, 1888-1897, (London, Elkin Mathews, 1914), p.22.

48. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy, p.79.

49. Cf. Joseph E. Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1959), p.113ff.

poet to find Ben Jonson important; he was a profound influence on the work of a much more important poet, W.B. Yeats, particularly in the 1900-1914 period. Yeats's belief in "A sterner conscience and a friendlier home," the virtues of discipline and tradition and their place in breeding the generosity of the aristocratic house and family, were throwbacks to the political attitudes of Ben Jonson and Marvell.⁵⁰ Marvell saw Fairfax's house as a retreat, as the general himself had retreated by the resignation of his commission, into the safe world of order:

But all things are composed here
Like Nature, orderly and near...

In the dimensions of the house Marvell finds signs of "that more sober Age and Mind", the past in which is order. For Yeats, the great houses of the Anglo-Irish are where "passion and precision have been one";⁵¹ for Marvell, the private world of Fairfax can in "more decent Order tame" the "rude heap" of the outside world.⁵² Both poets are concerned with refuges from the threats of external disorder.

Yeats's comment on Major Robert Gregory, that he consumed "The entire combustible world in one small room" is a distant echo of Ben Jonson's metaphor for the early deaths of Cary and Morison:⁵³

50. Cf. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p.143.

51. Ibid., p.106.

52. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, ed. H.M. Margoliouth, 2 vols., 3rd ed., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), Vol.I, pp.63, 86.

53. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p.151.

Who, e're the first downe bloomed on the chin, ⁵⁴
 Had sow'd these fruits, and got the harvest in.

Just as W.B. Yeats wrote that "my glory was I had such friends", ⁵⁵ so Lionel Johnson indulged in the cult of friendship, even if in his latter years, he had become such a recluse that most of his friends had gone. "If Plato be our guest,/ Should things befall": a most unlikely possibility, one might think (Poems, p.6). But his ideas of friendship were high:

Magnificence and grace,
 Excellent courtesy:
 A brightness of the face,
 Airs of high memory:

He agrees to own "my friend, a king" (Poems, p.10), although of another friend he hopes that God will turn him to "the only rest" despite his "classic" "whitenesses of soul", for presumably he is not a Catholic; he is Walter Pater (Poems, pp.53, 54, 292). To his Christian friends he writes "I thank Eternal God, that you are mine" (Poems, p.80), although he hates those who have betrayed him: he calls "The Destroyer of a Soul" "a cold, corrupting, fate" (Poems, p.74). What we see in Johnson's poetry of friendship is an admiration for the kind of friend he can worship as emblemizing his (usually past) ideals: kingship, courtesy, saintliness and classicism. He can, however, bitterly reproach any who fail to live up to these ideals.

54. Ben Jonson, The Poems and The Prose Works, p.247.

55. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p.370.

Yeats's poetry of friendship is similarly orientated towards nostalgic values partly because his friends live (generally speaking) in big houses and can be romanticised as can anything able to divorce itself by wealth, age or distance, from the work-a-day world. What is interesting is that Ben Jonson uses the same kinds of ideals to describe his evaluation of friendship and its duties (admittedly he comes across as a more discriminating commentator on personal relationships than Yeats or Johnson). His values are enshrined in two poems: "To William Camden" and "Inviting a Friend to Supper". The former displays the public virtues of men to be admired; the latter the private behaviour that is the mark of discriminating generosity. Camden displays the "grave" the "high", the "holy", "skill", "faith", "authoritie", "modestie", "sight in searching the most antique springs".⁵⁶ "Inviting a Friend to Supper" proclaims the virtues of hospitality, and how the good host should behave: interestingly both "my poore house, and I" desire the guests' company, thus hinting at the "house" as an organic entity in a way Yeats was later to use. This implication is later followed up, when we see that "we will have no Pooly' or Parrot by; /Nor shall our cups make any guiltie men":⁵⁷ the hospitality is a shield against the outside world of what Yeats was to call "The weasel's twist, the weasel's tooth".⁵⁸

Lionel Johnson also saw his ideal "places" as shields from "This restless glare" of the modern world. The world he felt was "Full of noise" and the private pleasures of literature were "High

56. Ben Jonson, The Poems and The Prose Works, p.31.

57. Ibid., pp.64, 65.

58. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p.236.

above all our noise and glare: /The image of our long desire."
 (Poems, pp.7, 52, 122). To Ben Jonson, "pride, and impudence"
 are the judgements of the world, and he calls upon himself to "sing
 high and aloofe. /Safe from the wolves black jaw, and the dull
 Asses hoofe". In "An Epistle Answering to one that asked to be
 Sealed of the Tribe of Ben" he writes of the gifts of heaven as
 including friendship: "if I have any friendships sent", he writes,
 he wishes them to be "Not built with Canvasse, paper, and false
 lights,/As are the Glorious Scenes, at the great sights": those are
 the things that glitter in the eyes of the world. Rather he
 believes that to be "high in eyes of men" requires to have:

thy vertues wrought
 As all thy honors were by them first sought.⁵⁹

"To Thomas, Earl of Suffolk"

So Lionel Johnson writes in "A Friend" that "Like young Shakespearian
 kings,/He won the adoring throng". Popularity comes, but by virtue:
 the friend has a "golden look", "A brightness of the face", a "charmed
 soul" (Poems, p.9). Ben Jonson's final verdict on friendship is
 more heavily ethical than Lionel's, to "thinke nothing great, but
 what is good, /And from that thought strive to be understood", but
 like him he rejects the corruption of the world (at least insofar
 as it abuses his plays), and says that "Men and tymes" are changed
 with "Clownish pride".⁶⁰ He seeks a refuge in friendship, hospitality
 the house-poem, satire, and...the classics. J.G. Nelson writes that

59. Ben Jonson, The Poems and The Prose Works, pp.49, 175, 220;
 also Ben Jonson, Herford & Simpson, (Oxford, Clarendon Press,
 1938), Vol.VI, p.492.

60. Ben Jonson, The Poems and the Prose Works, pp.168, 419, 420.

"[Lionel] Johnson created for his edification images of order and strength, proof against the assaults of whatever made for disorder and imperfection". So Ben Jonson seeks to turn to "fresh strains" "thine owne Horace, or Anacreons Lyre". He calls on himself to "Warme...by Pindares fire", and true to his promises to himself, is always turning to the classics for inspiration.⁶¹ (Of his collected poetry in the Oxford Edition, 107 of the 290 poems contain phrases from classical authors or are based on well-known classical poems).⁶² Ben Jonson values tradition and looks back to the "Golden Age" as opposed to this "Age of Gold", with its material corruption.⁶³ Gravity, skill, authority and a respect for the antique are the public virtues necessary to Camden, as to all such, like Arruntius in Sejanus who seek to act with the restraint and integrity of the classical age.⁶⁴

To Lionel Johnson "The Classics" make one "Fain to know golden things, fain to grow wise". The good man will have classical virtues:

His thought, scarce other lore need solemnize,
Whom Virgil calms, whom Sophocles controls:

(Poems, p.81)

The ideal friend has "a golden look", and of course to Johnson ideal writers are those who "derive from Cicero and the younger Pliny", men "half courtly and half cloistral". Both writers value the classical

61. Ben Jonson, Vol.VI, p.493.
62. Ben Jonson, Poems, ed. Ian Donaldson, (London, Oxford University Press, 1975), p.7ff.
63. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, p.36; William A. McClung, The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry, (Berkeley, University of California Press,1977), p.183.
64. Cf. Ben Jonson, The Works, ed. Herford and Simpson, Vol.IV, p.359ff.

virtues; they are of course not used in the same way, for Ben Jonson does not fly the world as Lionel Johnson does, he simply rejects it, and remembering The Alchemist or Bartholmew Fair we may legitimately doubt the sincerity of the rejection.⁶⁵ Ben Jonson, by far the greater writer, is also the more complex.

Lionel Johnson is entirely cloistral. His fears were in their way as immediate as Ben Jonson's, although they were unreal and hysterically fantastic. Where Ben Jonson talks of having "no Pooly' or Parrot by",⁶⁶ Lionel Johnson feared persecution by the police (for no reason, except perhaps distantly because of his Fenianism - or his homosexuality).⁶⁷ He was in every way exaggerated in his cults of friendship and aristocratic and classical ideals. But yet he bears a similarity to Ben Jonson, and not only in the field of classical beliefs and topographical ideals set over and against the world; also we find in them both the strain of hyperbolic allegiance to Charles I.

Of course this was a necessary evil at the least for Ben Jonson, who very much needed the improvement to his pension in his declining years. But the terms in which he writes of the king bear a resemblance to the manner in which Lionel Johnson was to see him a quarter of a millenium later. Ben Jonson writes of Charles as in tune with order and with fate: he is the king who "turnes our joyfull yeare about". Ben Jonson addresses the Queen in the manner of the Virgin: "Haile Mary, full of honours" he writes of her. "No Harpe" can "hit the starres" in writing of Charles's sweet raigne".

65. Ben Jonson, The Alchemist, ed. Douglas Brown, New Mermaids, (London, Ernest Benn, 1966), p.122ff; Ben Jonson, Bartholmew Fair, ed. G.R. Hubbard, (London, Ernest Benn, 1977), pp.89-91.
66. Ben Jonson, The Poems and The Prose Works, p.65.
67. George Santayana, quoted by Ian Fletcher in Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, lvi.

And Charles' Waine, is of course, the Great Bear. Ben Jonson hopes that "Charles his chariot" will be lifted above it by the praise of the poet: that is that the repute of his deeds will be lifted above the stars, and therefore out of the reach of fate. On the king's birthday "benignest Stars...rise,/And sweet Conjunctions grace the skies": fate smiles on the king. Following classical belief in the stars as souls, Jonson characterizes the noblemen and women of Charles' reign as "bright Asterisme". Lucy, Countess of Bedford (whom Jonson also intends to give control over fate) is meant to be "brighter" than "the day-starre". She is "the brightnesse of our Spheare". Most people run their course "by common Stars"; of Lady Jane Pawlet Ben Jonson writes: "And let there be a starry Robe/Of Constellations 'bout her horld". The Virgin Mary is "the Morning-star"; Shakespeare is "thou Starre of poets". Lord la Warr has "Ambition to become a Starre". Writing to a friend to persuade him to the wars, Ben Jonson says "Who falls for love of God, shall rise a Starre". The good courtiers are the stars; for elsewhere he laments the national degeneracy of the nobility's growing indifference to military service, modelling himself on Horace. "Courtlinges" are not grown to be stars through cowardice, for "onely virtue must /Blason nobillitye".⁶⁸

King Charles as we have already seen, is praised above the stars; it is fitting therefore, that the stars should be his courtiers. Of course Ben Jonson is not very sure that Charles will actually be able to control fate as this implies. "How happy were the Subject, if he knew,/Most pious King, but his owne good in you!", he writes rather uneasily. "What can the Poet wish his King may doe,/But,

68. Ben Jonson, The Poems and The Prose Works, pp.52, 60,168,194, 234, 236, 238, 246, 267, 276, 392, 413, 438; Ben Jonson, Vol.VI, p.494.

that he cure the Peoples Evill too" he writes in "An Epigram to K. Charles, for a 100 pounds he sent me in my sicknesse. 1629" referring to the Parliamentary discontent of the time. "Would they would understand" he writes of the people in 1633, "How much they are belov'd of God, in thee." Jonson has continual marginal comments on the main thrust of his hyperbolic praise that suggests that all is not well with Charles.⁶⁹

It was not well with him, of course. Cromwell's star was "active" and "Urged" against "the antient Rights".⁷⁰ When Lionel Johnson comes to write of the king, he is to be seen as both a victorious and a forlorn figure. The stars are his courtiers, but now he is underneath them, not above them: the king who loved art is become the statue, the idealist who came through suffering, "the alienated artist-figure" is now only the image of his own desire: a work of art telling of the defeat of the art-lover's own life; a martyrdom for form enshrined in sculpture; just as the unsuccessful life becomes the successful art in "The Statue and the Bust".⁷¹ The stars of doom have determined what Ben Jonson, who died in 1637, did not see; but since "his soul was of the saints",/And art to him was joy" King Charles has passed beyond the stars in another sense, to the heavenly deeps which with the stars "Work out a perfect will". (Poems, p.12).

Dead, he triumphs, as, living, he could not. In the warfare for art he has truly become a star for Lionel Johnson. Lucy Hutchenson,

69. Ben Jonson, The Poems and The Prose Works, pp.235, 236, 268.

70. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.92.

71. Robert Browning, The Poetical Works, (London, Oxford University Press, 1940 (1905)), p.355.

widow of one of the men who signed his death-warrant, called the King "a most excellent judge, and a greate lover of paintings, carvings, gravings, and many other ingenuities..."⁷² "Art to him was joy". Charles, as we have seen, was Johnson's hero artist, and indeed the artistic potential of his martyrdom was realised shortly after his death. It was Marvell who wrote of "the Royal Actor" who "might adorn" the "Tragick Scaffold": a harking back to Jacobean drama, but also suggesting the aesthetic gracefulness of Charles in death, who adorns the scaffold, and "bow'd his comely Head/Down as upon a Bed". He was not to indulge in the often endless recriminations of Jacobean tragic killers run to ground: the death-speeches of a Beatrice-Joanna, a Flamineo, or an Othello, or a Bussy D'Ambois. Instead he does not call the "Gods with vulgar spight/To vindicate his helpless Right". Marvell's "Horatian Ode," with its many complex and ironic interlayers of political comment here seems to suggest that he, Charles, is not necessarily a "Royal Actor" at all, for he leaves aside his lines of self-justification, his apologies for kingship. Instead he dies truly tragically: his ancient "Right" which it is his part to claim, he forbears mentioning. Instead he dies as a martyr to propriety; adornment and comeliness are the terms Marvell uses about his death. The "Scene" is "memorable", but Charles does not act in a way that is "common" or "mean", nothing that is, which would show he was merely an actor, a mean occupation, and not a king. The irony is here that the ostensible tone of the

72. Richard Ollard, The Image of the King, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p.31.

poem is in Cromwell's cause, but for Cromwell's cause to be just, Charles would have to be only a man, not a king by divine right. If he was only an ordinary man who was king, then he would have only acted out his kingship on the scaffold; instead he behaves like the king he claimed to be; not acting a king's part, but being kingly. Yet Marvell's irony remains: we are not sure that Charles is not just playing the part of being kingly, even if he is not just playing the part of being a king. The "armed Bands" who "clap their bloody hands", do, however, emphasise the responsibility of the audience as scriptwriters in any part that Charles is doomed to play.⁷³

We see that as early as Marvell's poem, Charles is seen as a martyr to an image of himself as the "comely Head" of his kingdom, whether that image is a false one or not. He is, after all, "the Royal Actor born", suggesting that his whole life is devoted to the "memorable Scene",⁷⁴ and that its culmination is in tragedy: 30 January 1649 is merely Charles Rex Act V, and we can think back to Act I as some Parliamentarians complaining about ship-money, just as, perhaps Vindice complains of the luxury of the Duke's Court in The Revenger's Tragedy.⁷⁵

Quite clearly I think, Johnson takes up this image of Charles as well, an image which allows him to be a tragic hero. We have seen how Johnson shared with Ben Jonson an image of friendship, somewhat idealised in the former poet's case, based on the classical virtues,

73. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, pp.92-93.

74. Ibid., p.93.

75. Cyril Tournear, The Revengers' Tragedy, ed. Lawrence J. Ross, Regents Renaissance Drama Series, (London, Edward Arnold, 1967), p.3ff.

an image which leads in to the topographical poem, a modern rendering of Virgil's Georgics.⁷⁶ Charles is above the stars to Ben Jonson, or ought to be, "Charles his chariot" should be above "his Waine".⁷⁷ For Lionel Johnson the "stars" are "his courtiers". Charles is a hero because he died for an image of himself, for an idea of kingship. Marvell's poem is echoed, albeit mildly. The king is "Comely" to Lionel Johnson as to Marvell and "calm" also: the latter word surely a gloss on his restraint in Marvell's depiction of his behaviour on the scaffold. Johnson is of course less ambivalent than Marvell: the king's Whitehall is "his own", a possessive that betrays Johnson's political attitude. The fact that the king is "fair and fatal" reflects Marvell's statement that he adorns the "scaffold" (fair) and that it is "Tragick" (fatal). The stars are "full of fate" to Johnson (Poems, pp.11, 12), and of course, Marvell's "Ode" relies heavily on the idea of fate, although his splendid ambiguity is once again shown by telling us that "Justice" complains against "Fate" in vain.⁷⁸ Justice is an attribute of the Christian God, Fate of pagan religions. The fact that Fate is victorious over Charles bespeaks reservation about Cromwell, a reservation more than popular among royalist sources at the time and thereafter, and one brought out by M.R. James, in his story "The Uncommon Prayer-Book": that Cromwell was evil, or rather Evil.⁷⁹

76. James Turner, The Politics of Landscape, (Oxford, 1979), p.185.
 77. Ben Jonson, Vol.VI, p.494.
 78. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.92.
 79. M.R. James, The Ghost Stories, 2nd ed., (London, Edward Arnold, 1974), p.490ff.

We have already discussed Johnson's attitude to stars: they are both bringers of a pagan Fate and in a mysterious way also agents of God's will. It is interesting that Marvell has a similar vein of argument. Cromwell urges "his active Star", he is "like the three fork'd Lightning" which of course is Zeus's rather than God's, usual weapon; he is made victorious by "angry Heaven's flame", presumably Necessity, which "Tis Madness to resist or blame". Yet are "the antient Rights" as Charles sees them, in which case Cromwell has breached what God ordains, and it is his "industrious Valour" that has ruined "the great Work of Time", not necessity or divine intervention? Is it "Arts" that gained the power, or Heaven's will? Is Cromwell's fate his own intention, the praise of pagan powers (the erect sword at the end of the poem will be held by the handle, thus forming an inverted Cross), or God's design?⁸⁰

So Johnson asks, "Which are more full of fate: /The stars; or those sad eyes?" (Poems, p.11). Again we cannot be sure if Charles has wrought his own destiny or whether the stars have done it for him: is he the "Royal Actor" or the tragic king"? Perhaps whether he plays a part or not is irrelevant, for as Yeats writes of Parnell:

...nor did we play a part
Upon a painted stage when we devoured his heart.

("Parnell's Funeral")

A star was reputed to have fallen at Parnell's funeral as Yeats tells us.⁸¹ None was seen at Charles's: and yet the playing

80. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, pp.91-94.

81. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p.319.

of parts is equally irrelevant in the "passionate tragedy". Lionel Johnson tells us that Charles yearned for that, echoing Marvell's depiction of the scene as tragic, and yet, to Johnson as to Marvell, Charles renounces the "Royal Actor" and his tragic part of passion ("vulgar spight" of vindication mentioned by Marvell) in favour of "stern...sweet austerity", the restraint of his silent comeliness. The part scripted for him was that of the tragic hero, like Satan in Paradise Lost; instead, he dies like Christ, leaving Marvell uneasy, and Johnson convinced of Charles' sainthood.⁸² Johnson sees him as finally rejecting the "passionate tragedy", which is his to play, in other words he does not let art become life, although he dies for art. He is the "Royal Actor", but he dies genuinely, in defiance of the script; he dies for art without letting it become life. Johnson is working out Marvell's open-ended judgement on the genuineness of Charles's death; he believes that it is the renunciation of the tragedy he yearned for in order to enjoy the "austerity" of sainthood. "His death/By beauty made amends", but the beauty is Keats's beauty, Truth: this is why the King's "life grew sublime" "Through death". He died in the script of a play that was real for an art that was reality: the art of kingship (Poems, p.11). He was a king. Johnson loved to have "owned my friend, a king": for him the term meant something, was a reality (Poems, p.10). In his death Charles did not call upon "the Gods", as Christ did not call upon the legions of Angels he told his captors that he possessed in Gethsemane;⁸³ instead Charles died in a "sweet austerity", showing

82. Cf. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, pp.92-93.

83. Cf. Ibid., p.93; St. Matthew ch.26.

that he did not value the trappings of kingship (power), but rather the reality, the "Right" he will die for even when it is "helpless". The "Right" thus becomes independent of all worldly considerations: it is an idea of kingship that Charles proves to be reality. He shows art to be truth by his death as a martyr, and so he appeals to Lionel Johnson, who knew the appeal of the "passionate"; and yet the superiority of the austere. The "stars of doom" have triumphed briefly for Johnson, but now

When all the cries are still:
The stars and heavenly deeps
Work out a perfect will.

In the end Charles has won by "The passing of his breath":

Our wearier spirit faints,
Vexed in the world's employ:
His soul was of the saints;
And art to him was joy.

This is Johnson's verdict on the king: one who through self-control found self, and ceased to be the actor at the height of the play. "Art to him was joy", and he died for it, art as truth and not as fiction, although the "wearier spirit" of the attenuated Eighteen-Nineties cannot overcome their "passionate tragedy", as we learn from Johnson in "Dark Angel" (Poems, pp.11, 12, 52).

Johnson is, I believe, working to a conclusion the dilemma of rôle and reality which surrounds Charles, in "An Horatian Ode". "By the statue of King Charles at Charing Cross" explains why Charles is Charles the Martyr, not merely for political reasons, but for the reasons which made Marvell uneasy two hundred and fifty years before: the humility, the majesty, the kingliness, of his end. Throughout Johnson's poem there are slight verbal similarities to

Marvell as have been pointed out above, but the overall structure is more important: and it is modelled on that of Marvell. Johnson takes the implicit dilemma, and solves it on Jacobite lines; he works out the seventeenth-century attitudes to fit with Eighteen-Nineties concerns, and arrives at a valuation for art which sets it with "sweet austerity", the restraint of the king to whom "art... was joy". He endeavours to value this restraint throughout his poetry, though not as he must have hoped, throughout his life.

Johnson's poem on Cromwell also owes a great deal to Marvell's "Ode", but in a different and perhaps more obvious way. Here Cromwell is "The great September star", a characterization modelled on Marvell's "active star". September 3rd was, of course, the day when Cromwell won Worcester and Dunbar, both on the same day, and on the same day he died.⁸⁴ Johnson is probably referring to this: in any case, Cromwell's star "Shines through the menacing night", unlike the "night wind" which blows "Gently" in "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross" (Poems, pp.11, 139).

We might expect more antipathy from the Jacobite Johnson than from Marvell to the great dictator, but after the initial stanza referring to the significance of September for Cromwell, we find a markedly Marvell-like ambivalence in the poem. Cromwell's "sceptre-sword" has done its work: and this word recalls Marvell's description of Cromwell's sword as both the "force" of "fright" and the symbol of the "Arts" he gained power with, at the end of "An Horatian Ode". We must, however, remember Marvell's ambivalence as to the role of the erect sword as an inverted cross mentioned above (of course,

84. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, pp.133, 334..

if held by the point, the sword would form a cross, but since such an attitude would be one of surrender (the sword held hilt-first to the enemy), and Cromwell is "the Wars and Fortunes son", we may read Marvell in an indictment of Cromwell here, indeed in an apparent near agreement with the Royalist love of the "September star"⁸⁵ (Poems p.139).

Johnson however, is capable of a continuing marked ambivalence. Death is the "crowning mercy" in the third stanza, although whether it is a relief from oppression for those under him, is left unsaid. As a stanza it echoes Marvell's statement that Cromwell is "restless" and "fiery", and also bears a resemblance to Marvell's comment at the end of "A Poem upon the Death of O.C.":

We find already what those omens mean,
 Earth ne'er more glad, nor Heaven more serene.
 Cease now our griefs, calme peace succeeds a war,
 Rainbows to storms, Richard to Oliver.
 Tempt not his clemency to try his pow'r,
 He threats no deluge, yet foretells a showre.⁸⁶

The last line is a neat bathetic comment on Richard Cromwell;
 the whole resembles Johnson's stanza:

O crowning mercy, Death!
 Peace to the stormy heart,
 Peace to the passionate breath,
 And awful eyes: their part
 Is done, for thou their victor art!

(Poems, p.139)

85. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.94.

86. Ibid., p.137

The storm has passed for Johnson as for Marvell. For Johnson as for Marvell also, "England knows / Freedom and fear" because of Cromwell, a paradox reminding us of Marvell's "How fit he is to sway / That can so well obey". Cromwell brings order to England, but also fear: he is "the forced Pow'r" who cannot altogether be trusted "in the Republick's hand". Here Johnson is modelling himself closely on Marvell.⁸⁷

Like Marvell too, he questions Cromwell's Christianity; "is it peace with him?" he asks, and calls on "Drogheda's dead" to "answer". Here Johnson shows his Catholic sympathies for what after all was mostly a religious massacre, and also lets us see how Cromwell and Ireland are bound up for him as subjects of interest. In Johnson's case, it is not very far from Charles to the Fenians. After asking "Drogheda's dead", Johnson turns to a more familiar victim of Cromwell's activities:

Answer, O fatal King!
Whose sad, prophetic eyes
Foresaw his glory bring
Thy death! He also lies
Dead: hath he peace, O King of sighs?

Charles seems to have here accelerated beyond sainthood into the capacity of a prophet, but perhaps Johnson is only imagining the king looking back on his fate with the hindsight of one "tried in fires of woe!" Charles does not answer, and Johnson passes on, asking whether Cromwell "who in darkness wrought", is maintaining "The quarrel of the Lord" or is subject instead to "the pure word of doom". Cromwell's having "in darkness wrought" again echoes

87. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.94.

Marvell's concern at the end of "An Horatian Ode" about the sword's real capacity "to fright / The Spirits of the Shady Night". Johnson too, mentions Cromwell's sword and its "lightnings", a clear reference back to Marvell's "three-fork'd Lightning", to which Cromwell is compared (Poems, pp.11, 140).⁸⁸

The ninth and tenth stanzas of Johnson's poem put in a straightforward form the ambivalence of Cromwell's role as Marvell saw it. They are the direct descendants of "An Horatian Ode":

Prince of the iron rod
 And war's imperious mail
 Did he indeed for God
 Fight ever, and prevail,
 Bidding the Lord of Hosts All Hail?

Or was it ardent lust
 Of majesty and might,
 That stung and fired and thrust
 His soul into the fight:
 Mystic desire and fierce delight!

Tracing the antecedents to this divided attitude in Marvell's poem, we find that Marvell too, is apprehensive of Cromwell's "adventurous War", and as we have seen, is uncertain whether the "active Star" of his success, is Cromwell's own doing or "The force of angry Heavens flame". The "fierce delight" Johnson speaks of is what Marvell called Cromwell's lack of ability to "cease/In the inglorious Arts of Peace". The "mystic desire", is Cromwell's restlessness, the restlessness of the "greater Spirits". As we have seen, Marvell has his doubts on which side Cromwell's "spirits" will line up in any final trial of good and evil. Johnson here is bringing the ironic contrasts and comments in "An Horatian Ode"

88. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.91, 94.

into the light. As this role is paradoxical for Marvell: he is both Brutus, the slayer of Caesar (King Charles) and Augustus the restorer of the "happy Fate" of England (hence the Augustan ode), so Cromwell is the "conquered conqueror" in Johnson's poem, both "tragic" and "triumphant", and should be greeted with "pardoning praise" as he comes on "wings of storm", although the fact that Cromwell is associated with storm even after death for Johnson suggests that in the end a Christian heaven will not be his: the question "is it peace with him?" remains. Yet just as Marvell uses pagan and Christian imagery throughout his poem, Johnson balances the after-life of "Drogheda's dead" between the role of "ghosts, beside the dim/Waters", and that of "martyred souls!" Cromwell is the "September Star", a pagan presence: his killing at Drogheda is seen in pagan terms. But by the end of the poem he must abide a Christian question, as to whether he was truly Christian:

Is Come, good servant! his reward?

The same question animates Marvell - Cromwell's role as divine purpose, or pagan hero (Poems, pp.139, 140).⁸⁹

I do not suggest that the "marvelling awe" of the last line of Johnson's poem is a pun, but I do think that he modelled the basic structure of his celebrations of Charles and questionings of Cromwell on the seventeenth-century poet; and also that his greater explicitness in the end does not merely reflect the fact that he was a weaker poet, but that these questions, living issues for Marvell, were to Johnson avenues of self-exploration. Charles

89. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.91-93.

is the Martyr to art; Cromwell the hero who seems more heroic, but is in fact less so, for he lacks "sweet austerity", the restraint in life necessary to conquer the demands of passion. Johnson knew in his heart that "shame" would not "cease", as he hoped in "Bagley Wood", except under the hand of "a perfect will" worked out by Heaven. Charles is the martyred exemplar of one whose "soul was of the saints", and yet for that very reason, could perfect his love of art into reality, the art of kingship into kingliness. Haughty perfection, if we can accept that paradox, was the lifestyle of Lionel Johnson, and he chose the dead king as his hero and martyr in this style, validating the style because for the King it had been reality; a right derived from above (Poems, pp.12, 51, 140).

Robert Herrick had written of Charles as the bringer of "an Augustan peace",⁹⁰ for before the Civil War there had been peace in England,⁹¹ and Peter Hunsted thought of the Caroline period: "O those were Golden dayes!" Marvell's incipient royalism may be indicated by his frequent returns to the idealization of the Caroline landscape.⁹² In "The Statue...at Charing Cross", of course, Marvell had provided the foundation in subject-matter, though not in treatment, for Lionel Johnson's poem:

No, to comfort the hearts of the poor Cavaleer
The late King on Horsback is here to be shown...⁹³

90. Louis L. Martz, "Marvell and Herrick: The Masks of Mannerism", in Approaches to Marvell, ed. C.A. Patrides, The Stork Tercentenary Lectures, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp.194-216 (213).
91. Cf. C.V. Wedgwood, Poetry and Politics Under the Stuarts, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960), p.34.
92. Cf. James Turner, The Politics of Landscape, pp.39, 70, 92.
93. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.200.

Charles, was of course, Johnson's comfort, though not by means of his statue alone. In Marvell he saw the fundamental matter necessary to root his attitudes and his development as a poet who tries to explore the paradoxes Marvell leaves inherent in his poems of political commentary.

At this stage I would like to suggest a few reasons why Marvell was the poet Johnson chose, and why indeed he was one of the group of poets from which the poets I am appraising drew sustenance. Louis Martz writes of Marvell's preservation of "The arts of the mannerist court of Charles" and says that "The Gallery" is "almost...a definition of mannerist art". It is a poem of course where the poet's soul is, he says, "made up of his lady's various attitudes and postures". Attitude and posture are prime characteristics of mannerist poets. Martz writes that "mannerist painters" translate "Christian culture into a realm where the values of art predominate...His sacred ladies [Parmigianino's] display a strange, absorbing elegance...They stand or sit or kneel in the most artful postures of exaggerated worldly grace". Martz "would like to explore" the possibility that Herrick and Marvell, along with Carew and Lovelace, form a school of English mannerist poets". Mannerism, he says in poetry, is "joy in incongruity" an avoidance of "classical regularity" yet nevertheless a seeking of a "diversity of parts" that nevertheless somehow "flow together". Later in his essay he writes of Marvell's "aversion from mature passion" with reference to a "Picture of little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers" and to "Young Love". He goes on to say:

In the Caroline court Mannerism became almost a way of life, and also a way of death, if we may believe Marvell's account of Charles's execution, which he describes in a way that can only be called a tribute to mannerist principles enacted on a bloody stage...

He then goes on to quote Marvell's lines on Charles's death, and later sees Herrick as writing of Charles as the bringer of "the joys of an Augustan peace" in his role as "brave Prince of Cavaliers". Herrick's attitude to Charles is far from being as ambivalent as Marvell's.⁹⁴

What application do I seek to make for all these comments? Firstly, the closeness of mannerism as here defined to Johnson's own beliefs about life and art: "Life should be a ritual" he said.⁹⁵ Charles's death fulfils that role perfectly, as we have been discussing, which allows Charles to be Johnson's hero: "a way of life...a way of death" as Martz puts it. The "various attitudes and postures" of which Martz writes are the keynotes, not only to the supremely ambivalent Marvell, with his chameleon judgement, but also to Lionel Johnson, who gave his life over to the classics, to Charles, to the Catholic Church, to his youth, to place, to Sir Thomas Browne, to friendship, to ritual, each image of himself a place of retreat from the world and a source of strength for his fight with it. Does not Lionel Johnson also, like Pater in The Renaissance, translate "Christian culture into a realm where the values of art predominate"?⁹⁶ "Art...Is...life and death, to him" he writes in a poem; and Charles's "soul was of the saints" in "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross". The next line states that "art to him was joy". The two are expressly intensified in Johnson's work (Poems, pp.12, 31). The "exaggerated worldly grace" Martz mentions seems akin to the "men of gracious minds and manners, half courtly and half cloistral" of

94. Louis L. Martz, in Approaches to Marvell, pp.194, 197, 203, 205, 210, 211, 213.

95. Cf. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, li.

96. Louis L. Martz, p.203.

whom Johnson thinks so much: their cloistral grace is grace, their courtly grace is worldly. It is the old paradox of art and worship working in Johnson as it works in the "strange, absorbing elegance" of the "mannerist painters" who translate "Christian culture into a realm where the values of art predominate". Marvell's "aversion from mature passion" should not, Martz says, make Marvell's "a candidate for the current British controversy over paedophilia", but it is interesting that the comparison can be made here at all between the seventeenth-century poet and the subject-matter that absorbed so many of the late Victorians. "The mannerist artist", Martz writes "tends to encamp his mind at a distance, so that passion may be muted, discreet, inferred, but seldom directly glimpsed". This is a deposition that suits Pater's dreamy Hellenic heroes, and also Johnson's tendency to the cult of friendship, as a substitution for homosexuality,⁹⁷ to "own my friend a king"; although he could make mistakes, as when he introduced Alfred Douglas to Wilde.⁹⁸

Martz also discusses the "fusion inevitable in any discussion of mannerist art" between the spellings "masque" and "mask". This is not a direct comment on Johnson's art, though it is obliquely relevant to his cult of sustaining "images of order and strength, proof against the assaults of whatever made for disorder and imperfection". It is of course, highly relevant to Marvell, and also to the early art of Yeats. The mask, if not the masque, was a link between the two periods, precisely because political, social and religious crises brought on a crisis in identity itself. The Horatian technique of Marvell, taken further than Horace ever took it, is the mannerist

97. Louis L. Martz, pp.203, 210.

98. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, xxxvi.

equivalent of the late Victorian mask and doppelganger invasion of literary themes.⁹⁹

It is hard to say for sure that the "dark expressions" of the "Caroline divines" "associated with the policies and tastes of Archbishop William Laud, the Cavaliers, and the royal court...., as J.M. Steadman puts it, have their counterpart in the exaggerations and excess of the Nineties as a whole,¹⁰⁰ but Johnson certainly drew on the mannerist crisis of appearance and reality in his exploration of the death of Charles, and the real role of the "Royal Actor". It was a time when the "worlds coherence" was wronged,¹⁰¹ not merely by the death of Elizabeth Drury or the march of the new astronomy, but by the ruining of "the great Work of Time", and the destruction of the "antient Rights".¹⁰² Marvell and Johnson share a concern for times like these times, and Johnson finds his adoration of Charles through the terms of the argument defined by Marvell. A.J. Smith thinks that Marvell's pastoralism was "what might in another age be mere Arcadian day-dream becomes in the 1650s the entertainment of a possible recourse, a search for a real moral innocence and refreshment beyond the pain and guilt of history".¹⁰³ Two hundred and thirty years later, Yeats was to begin his march towards modernism by declaring that "The woods of Arcady are dead".¹⁰⁴

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99. Cf. Robert L. Stevenson, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; The Master of Ballantrae; Weir of Hermiston; Bran Stoker, Dracula, The Jewel of Seven Stars, The Lair of the White Worm; W.B. Yeats, John Sherman; William Sharp and Fiona MacLeod.
100. J.M. Steadman, The Hill and the Labyrinth, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984), p.36.
101. John Donne, The Epithalamions Anniversaries and Epicedes, ed. W. Milgate, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978), p.28.
102. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.92.
103. A.J. Smith, "Marvell's metaphysical wit", in Approaches to Marvell, pp.56-86 (p.70).
104. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p.7.

For Smith, Marvell is less brave than this: he seeks pastoralism as nostalgia, organised nostalgia though it may be. Johnson also is concerned with "pain and guilt", although largely his own, and not the kingdom's: his classicism and Jacobitism are his "recourse". The ivy of temptation assaults him as about Appleton House the ivy:

with familiar trails,
Me licks, and clasps, and curles, and haies.

Smith writes of Marvell's "self-struggle between the wish to remain in the garden, and the need to return to the world".¹⁰⁵ The garden and the house are a lesser world but they are "in more decent Order tame".¹⁰⁶ Marvell knew that this enclosed world is lesser, but he compliments it, as Johnson compliments the safe recourse of Winchester:

But two years, and still my feet
Found thy very stones more sweet,
Than the richest fields elsewhere:
Two years, and thy sacred air
Still poured balm upon me, when
Nearer drew the world of men;
When the passions, one by one,
All sprang upward to the sun:
Two years have I lived, still thine;
Lost, thy presence! gone, that shrine,
Where six years, what years! were mine.
Music is the thought of thee;
Fragrance, all thy memory.
Those thy rugged Chambers old,
In their gloom and rudeness, hold
Dear remembrances of gold.

But the golden years have gone, and all that remains is the "world's true pain" which Winchester's "sterner strain" prepared for. We must all leave our retreats, but both poets feel their attractions (Poems, p.4).

105. A.J. Smith, p.78.

106. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, pp.81, 86.

Johnson's own comment on Cromwell's bloody conquest in Ireland, was drawn, after all, from an old Winchester boy, Sir Thomas Browne:

No tramlings now, nor drums,
Are his, who wrought your martyrdoms.

(Poems, p.140)

"Under the drums and tramlings of three Conquests" Browne had written in Hydriotaphia.¹⁰⁷ Marvell's image of "The Falckner" was drawn from nearer the life:¹⁰⁸ because of distance from his ideal ages, Johnson writes of the seventeenth century through the seventeenth century, of Cromwell through Marvell and Browne. His lack of a current context emphasises his retreat from the world into the past whereas Marvell's involvement in active politics undermines his love for the retired world of the garden, and its image of "theatrum mundi" in a small space.¹⁰⁹ Yet of course, it would be wrong to ignore the ambivalent perspective in the garden image itself: "whether we are actor or spectator...the garden surrounds us and involves us somehow in its *dramas*", J.D. Hunt writes,¹¹⁰ and of course in "The Garden" itself, Marvell shows the dangers that lurk even in retreat:

Stumbling on Melons, as I pass,
Insnar'd with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass.¹¹¹

"*Μηλον*" is, of course, Greek for "apple", and we are neatly reminded of the Fall.¹¹²

107. Sir Thomas Browne, The Works, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, New ed., 4 vols., (London, Faber and Faber, 1964), Vol.I, p.164.
108. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.94
109. John Dixon Hunt, "'Loose nature' and the 'garden square': The gardenist background for Marvell's poetry", in Approaches to Marvell, pp.331-351 (p.343).
110. Ibid., p.344.
111. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol.I, p.52.
112. I am indebted for this reference to Mr. Richard Gaskin, Research Fellow at Edmund Hall.

Johnson, as we have said, is in greater retreat than Marvell because he attempts to exclude, the current "world...of noise" from his assessments and perspectives (Poems, p.122). This was not because it shared less of his interests in the Caroline period. Indeed, many of the 'Nineties periodicals are rife with discussion and speculation concerning the period between 1640 and 1660. The tercentenary of Cromwell's birth occurred in 1899, and in The Athenaeum for 3 June of that year, an unsigned article outlines the plans that there are for a "Cromwell Tercentenary Library for Naseby", "primarily intended to commemorate Oliver Cromwell".¹¹³ That there was a great fuss throughout the Empire, or at least parts of it, at this time, is shown by a disgruntled letter of 24 February 1900 in The Athenaeum, with its clear reference to the Boer War. The writer says:

I do not the least object to your reviewer's amiable strictures [on his book], which are in accordance with the prevailing spirit of the Cromwell tercentenary - now, alas! woefully celebrated in South Africa by a new generation of saints. As I am the solitary Cavalier who has disturbed Oliver's glorification, I trust you will kindly insert this letter, notwithstanding its length.¹¹⁴

It is no surprise that the Presbyterian doggedness of the Civil War period should be drawn as a parallel to the intensely tribal soldiers of the Dutch Reformed Church so far away. What the letter does show (the book was about Hugh Peters, the Civil War Chaplain) is a spirit of active interest in the issues of that past

113. Unsigned article, "Cromwell Tercentenary Library for Naseby", The Athenaeum, no.3736, (3 June 1899), p.689.

114. George Colomb, letter, The Athenaeum, no.3774, (24th February 1900), p.239.

age: self-characterisation as Cavalier coming without apparent embarrassment to the author of this letter.

Samuel Gardiner writes in his History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate 1649-1660 that;

It is mainly...this combination of interests [maritime and commercial] which has raised Cromwell to the position of the national hero of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁵

The previous year (1896) he had given a series of lectures at Oxford entitled "Cromwell's Place in History".¹¹⁶ It was no wonder that comments like this made Johnson, "a solitary Cavalier", more in tune with the reviewer who suggested "the idea of canonizing Mary Stuart" rather than with the judgment of Gardiner.¹¹⁷ When Johnson wrote for the periodicals, it was with a far more flowery dedication to the opposite side in the Civil War:

In this play [Browning's Strafford] the romantic spirit is given, by that strange blending of beauty and graciousness, with fatality and defeat, which marks the Stuart 'line and the true Cavalier'. Charles and Strafford, Falkland and Laud, are certainly 'stars of night' not suns; certainly 'supreme' - not commonplace; certainly 'forsaken' not fortunate.¹¹⁸

"Stars of night" is a comment by Johnson that reminds us again of all the imagery we have been discussing; and once again in this review we get a sense of the forlorn isolated loveliness he worshipped. Stafford's isolation and betrayal of course foreshadow Charles's own.

115. Quoted in unsigned review, Samuel Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, Literature Vol.I, no.2 (30th October, 1897), pp.38-39 (p.38).

116. Ibid., p.39.

117. Unsigned review, David Hay Fleming, Mary Queen of Scots: From Her Birth to her Flight into England, Literature, Vol.I, no.6, (27th November, 1897), pp.164-65 (p.164).

118. Lionel Johnson, "A Brief Notice of Strafford as recently performed at the new Theatre in Oxford", The Hobby Horse, Vol.I, (1890), pp.74-77 (p 75).

Johnson writes in isolation from the concerns of his own age, and when he touches on them, it is only to comment on some star "eternal in the heavens" of Poetry.¹¹⁹ Interestingly enough, however, he is always on the lookout for matter or style that will reflect his own preoccupations. In his assessment of "The Poems of Mr Bridges", in The Hobby Horse, he writes:

The posture of Mr Bridges' mind, displayed in these poems, is rather that of those earlier poets, Elizabethans and Jacobeans, to whom the world looked half a court of grave observances, and half a cloister of delights: and their service in either kind, a service of solemnity and of elegance together.

And again

...that dainty and cheerful spirit of pleasure, which makes the sacred verse of Marvell or of Herrick, of Ben Jonson, or of Crashaw, sound like the stream of rich music at a feast, where all is gracious and entirely to be relished. It is an excellent view of life, which looks upon the world as a chamber of God, where what is secular is eternal, what is spiritual is ideal: and all good, fine things are the ornaments and garniture of an eternal spirit immanent there.

The "grave observances" and the "cloister of delights" recall once more for us the underlying paradox of Johnson's personality and his poetic beliefs. In Bridges he finds (or chooses to find) "solemnity, elegance, graciousness", and a "view of life...where what is secular is eternal, what is spiritual is 'ideal'"; a view of life, in other words, that echoes his values of art.¹²⁰ The secular is eternal by virtue of the "fires of woe", the purgation

119. Lionel Johnson, "The Poems of Mr. Bridges: A Brief and General Consideration", The Hobby Horse, Vol.VI, (1890). pp.148-60 (p.148).
120. Lionel Johnson, "The Poems of Mr. Bridges: A Brief and General Consideration", p.153.

of the aesthetic by the reality by which acting becomes life, as in death of Charles I (Poems, p.12). The spiritual is "ideal": the spiritual is the context in which Johnson sees the wars and triumphs of art and the flesh. It is the overview, the means by which "shame would cease", the "perfect will" of the "heavenly deeps", the "dim ways" of "Drogheda's dead" (Poems, pp.12, 140). In other words Johnson believes in "an excellent view of life" where the life lived is lived as art in preparation for a death of sacrifice, purgation and reality; a death that re-emphasises the value of art and sees "the world as a chamber of God". To have one's soul close to the saints, art must be joy. The "spiritual is ideal" because it is the closely-perceived context in which this life is lived, the context of "The Church of a Dream" which overshadows the world of Art and Death¹²¹ (Poems, p. 65). The ideal is distant, unrealised: it is the "Mystic", as life is the "Cavalier". Johnson goes on to say that "all good, fine things are the ornaments and garniture of an eternal spirit immanent there [in life]".¹²² This is to comment on the case I have already made above: that the "ornaments and garniture" (art and beauty in life) are laid on the "immanent" "eternal spirit"; in other words the spirit that comes out in the purgative, sacrificial moments that make life and art reality:

Through death, life grew sublime

The best preparation for this sacrifice to the reality of
"ornaments and garniture" is to live the life of the forlorn cause,

121. Lionel Johnson, "The Poems of Mr. Bridges: A Brief and General Consideration", p.153.

122. Ibid.

the being "Vanquished" that allows death to make "amends" "By Beauty" (Poems, p.11). A "triumphant" life is not truly artistic, because it is a realised life (Poems, p.140). What is artistic is not realised, however: it is a life which is imitation, as all art is imitation: it is to be the "Royal Actor", or Emerald Uthwart, or Marius.¹²³ To be Cromwell is to choose the life fulfilled here, not the forlorn beauty that has to wait till the "ideal" life to be fulfilled.

The intellect of man is forced to choose
Perfection of the life, or of the work,
And if it take the second must refuse
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.¹²⁴

Yeats wrote in "The Choice" about this, a related problem. Johnson does not quite mean this; rather he means that perfection of the life is in the work, and that "the day's vanity" of worldly power must go.

The same Arts that did gain¹²⁵
A Pow'r must it maintain.

But these Arts are not Art. Johnson does not see the strictures of his poem on King Charles applying to the King only. In "Plato in London", he writes of the "spiritual" as "ideal": "The image of our long desire" he calls the "high things" of art and Plato's truth. (Poems, p.7). In "Mystic and Cavalier" he is "one of those, who fall", and looks forward only to "Priests of a fearful sacrament", the perspective of the spiritual world, his hour of trial (Poems,

123. Walter Pater, The Works, 8 vols., (London, Macmillan and Co., 1901), Vols. II & III; Vol. VIII, p.197ff.

124. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p.278.

125. Andrew Marvell, The Poems and Letters, Vol. I, p.94.

pp.24, 25). He knows that "were we all divine" is a futile plea in "Bagley Wood" (Poems, p.31), and that the use of art as a means to lust is wrong; yet it goes on:

When music sounds, then changest thou
Its silvery to a sultry fire:
Nor will thine envious heart allow
Delight untortured by desire.

(Poems, p.52)

"...All the things of beauty burn / With flames of evil ecstasy". This is the problem that man suffers, the temptation that makes it difficult to live for the world of art: the "fair design" of nature is poisoned. This is why the yearning for "passionate tragedy" must be restrained by "sweet austerity". Only living godlily can blunt the temptations of beauty to the soul, temptations that undermine the life of art with "shame" that will not "cease" (Poems, pp.11, 51-53). As Johnson wrote of Pater:

Stern is the faith of art, right stern, and he
Loved her severity.

Pater was "Scholarship's constant saint", the hero of art, which is the only true heroism (Poems, p.226). Johnson goes on to write of Bridges:

Mr Bridges...expression of them [his own thoughts] is in harmony with the matured wisdom of many ages, meditating the common, human things...

He goes on to say that

Arnold, we find, is not the only poet of our day, who without a specious resemblance can use the ancient symbols and imageries, for the stately expression of a sorrow...

This is exactly true. In this essay on Bridges, Johnson is showing what he values. The dichotomy of religion and beauty in his life led to his shutting himself away with the art he came to identify as life, living a cause so that death might be a penitence through beauty for sin. He did not live up to this himself, but in his life he wrote of the problems of beauty and its temptation, resolving them by an ascetic approach in form and matter to nostalgic or forlorn causes, "for the stately expression of a sorrow", as he says of Arnold and Bridges.¹²⁶ He used the "ancient symbols and imageries"; the "matured wisdom of many ages" for the "common, human things". He confused beauty and religion because he saw them as so closely akin: art as joy, soul of the saints¹²⁷ (Poems, p.12). As he writes in his essay on Bridges, the eternal secular and ideal spiritual, are to him features of Marvell, Herrick, Ben Jonson or Crashaw. He drew on these poets "for the stately expression of a sorrow" because they lived in an age of uncertainty, an age of opposites.¹²⁸ The two enemies, Laud and the Covenant, Cromwell and Charles, were not soldiers in the battle of evil and art, God and the Devil, not exactly; but art was an evil to the preachers, as were the ornate and dark terms of the Carolines.¹²⁹ Whether this is true in the intricacies of history matters less than whether the 'Nineties thought it was. J.G. Dow in an article in Macmillan's Magazine entitled "Poets and Puritans", wrote in 1890:

126. Lionel Johnson, "The Poems of Mr. Bridges", pp.151, 155.

127. Ibid.

128. Ibid.

129. Cf. J.M. Steadman, The Hill and the Labyrinth, p.36ff.

When the Puritans came to usurp seriousness for themselves...those who deemed that this world was worth living in, as well as dying in, revolted from such a travesty, and were impelled to lay an exaggerated emphasis on the other side of life.

This emphasis of revolt finds expression in the view of life held by the Cavalier poets. With these life was in the main a matter of love among the roses.¹³⁰

This was not quite Johnson's attitude. And yet Johnson saw the Cavaliers as a positive, an exuberance of art and joy:

At least, it was a life of swords,
Our life! nor lived in vain:
We fought the fight with mighty lords,
Nor dastards have we slain.

(Poems, p.143)

Christ is at the head of His "White Horsemen" in "Te Martyrum Candidatus". They are the "fair chivalry", the "Knights of God!/
They, for their Lord and their Lover who sacrificed/All, save the sweetness of treading where He first trod!" (Poems, p.167).

The Cavalier images return. White lands are the Celtic ones to Johnson, homes of lost causes; white horses are ridden by Christ's soldiers, who are defeated on earth, are martyrs, but ascend to heaven and win the victory there as Charles does. Johnson was involved in the White Rose League, and the white rose is the Jacobite badge.¹³¹ The Cavaliers are fighters and forlorn: they "love among the roses", in the sense that their earthly victories are transient, and that they are not "triumphant", like Cromwell (Poems, p.140). Johnson blends these images together, and works out some of

130. J.G. Dow, "Poets and Puritans", Macmillan's Magazine, Vol.LXI, (1890), pp.457-59 (pp.458, 459). Cf. Dowson's attitude to roses as emblems of corruption.

131. Cf. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, xli.

the suggestions implicit, or uses the images of, the poets of the seventeenth century to whom he turns. For the Nineties is also an insecure era, and its nostalgia is well served by the lost loveliness of the Jacobite and the Celt, symbolised in those who died under Cromwell at Drogheda. The battle of the eternal and the transient is solved by the values of art that are severe and restrained, the lost cause of art being transmuted "By beauty" into a penitential sacrifice (Poems, p.11). Hence the beauty of the Mass, a reminder of Christ's death, is an artistic reminder also:

There still, although the world autumnal be, and pale,
Still in their golden vesture the old saints prevail;
Alone with Christ, desolate else, left by mankind

(Poems, p.65)

I have relied a great deal in this argument on Johnson's "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross". This is, I think, correct. It is his greatest poem, if great can be an appropriate word in a poet so entirely cloistral. "The Dark Angel" is too personal in the end; it deals with the inner Johnson, not with the ideals he strove to compass in order to deliver himself from the paradox of faith and desire. Yeats recalls that Johnson was always inventing stories about having met great men like Gladstone and Newman, and indeed he needed heroes. His poem on Walter Pater may be his last, and by it Johnson identifies Pater with Caroline values: he is "Scholarship's constant saint", he has allegiance to the "faith of art" and he "Loved her severity". He is a "Hierarch of the spirit" (Poems, p.226). I have already explored what the faith of art meant to Johnson, the life it dictated and the death it desired: he saw Charles as exemplifying it. The statue is a frozen work of art

illustrating the attitude of the "Royal Actor" who turned art into reality after all; and went "white" to "the saints". Johnson hungers for his "grace", suggesting that canonization has in fact been conferred on the king, his martyrdom the final act of super-erogation (Poems, pp.12, 222). Sir Philip Warwick had written in the seventeenth century, that:

When I think of dying, it is one of my comforts,
that when I part from the dunghill of this world,
I shall meet...King Charles and all those
faithful spirits that had virtue enough to be
true to him, the Church and the laws, unto the last.¹³²

"Unto the last" was Johnson's hope also; and in Charles he could find a focal point for Church and Law and King. This was a society sympathetic to Catholicism, to Art and to Kingliness. To have "owned my friend, a king" was the highest praise Johnson could give in the present-day world (Poems, p.10). His hopes are for "A dazeling luster.../Then with it crowne our Charles his head" as Carew had once put it.¹³³ The Gaels strove still, driven down by Cromwell, and Johnson hopes that he will "sleep, soon hand in hand/With them to wake"; to become a part of the past he worships is his final ambition (Poems, p.166). Katie Tynan remembers his love for the past in her Memories.¹³⁴ Winchester is the "White City", "wert thou Camelot?" Johnson asks "That shrine of all things knightly?" Winchester is the place of "High chivalry/Fair Courtesy"; the place of his youth, of the Celt, of the Roman "Apollo had/His temple bright.../Here..." he writes. It is the

132. Quoted by Earl Miner, The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971), p.63; also by Margaret Barnard Pickel, Charles I as Patron of Poetry and Drama, (London, 1936), p.19.

133. Thomas Carew, The Poems, ed. Rhodes Dunlap, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949), p.89.

134. Katherine Tynan, Memories, (London, Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1924), pp.113-129.

home of "the magic of the Celt", where "On yonder hill, have Roundheads mustered". It is the place of Browne and Otway, of "ancient grace". It is the heart of his poetry of places that harks back to the seventeenth century (Poems, p.184).

In his essays on Bridges, Patmore and Pater, Johnson interprets them through the eye of his nostalgia. Of Pater he wrote: "'Magica Sympathiae'! words borne upon the shield of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, are inscribed upon the writings of Mr Pater". He says that Pater has "something comparable to the curiosa felicitas" that Johnson finds in Herrick, Marvell and Vaughan.¹³⁵ Vaughan of course was Welsh, and in Wales, Johnson finds another source for his images of beauty forlorn: "Star of the West, Pale to the World..." (Poems, p.79).

Sunlight was meant to fail to Johnson, who left the world behind to build in private his images of order before he changed to "drifting dust", an image that Ian Fletcher compares with Crashaw¹³⁶ (Poems, p.53). He had read the French poets; indeed in 1891 he wrote an article on "the Practice and Theory of Verse at the present time obtaining in France", but he wrote of the movement they inspired in England as fundamentally outside himself:

In English, decadence and the literature thereof, mean this: the period at which passion, or romance, or tragedy, or sorrow or any other form of activity or of emotion, must be refined upon...Hence come one great virtue and one great vice: the virtue of much and careful meditation upon life, its emotions and its incidents: the vice of over-subtlety and of affectation when thought thinks upon itself, and when emotions become entangled with the consciousness of them.

135. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium, p.36.

136. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, p.292.

Johnson did not see fit to meditate upon life, or to refine upon refinement, although he confesses that the French poets are "not uninteresting, I think to some of us English islanders":¹³⁷ rather he rejects life to concentrate on an art that is the root of life itself, according to his belief; no mere refinement, but a beauty that can make "amends", for defeat (Poems, p.11). Of Sir John Suckling he writes:

I, from without the ranks
Give him all hail and thanks.

(Poems, p.196)

Johnson regards himself as "without the ranks", admiring his betters in the world of artistic life he can but aspire to. He feared that he had lacked the "severity" that true love of art should give. Instead he had yielded to the "aching lust" of drink; he felt himself trapped in "One vehemence of useless tears" (Poems, pp.52-53). W.B. Yeats, however, was in the end to deliver the verdict on him that he had not dared to hope would be his:

You kept the Muses' sterner laws,
And unrepenting faced your ends,
And therefore earned the right - and yet
Dowson and Johnson most I praise -
To troop with those the world's forgot,
And copy their proud steady gaze.

"The measureless consummation" may have come Johnson's way after all; and the "long blast upon the horn" for him was an attempt to obey the "sterner laws" of the Muses.¹³⁸ He blew upon the horn of Marvell,

137. Lionel Johnson, "A Note Upon the Practice and Theory of Verse at the Present Time Obtaining in France", Century Guild Hobby Horse, VI, (1891), pp.61-66 (p.66).

138. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, pp.117, 149.

of Jonson, of Browne, of the Cavaliers. He blew on the rich cornucopias of the seventeenth century till he approached the measureless consummation of reality in his art that had transformed Charles from statue to saint, from actor to martyr. Art took life for Johnson beyond the limits of reality in realising reality.

Johnson's aim was the return of "The golden years" in his verse;¹³ but accusations can be levelled at this love of nostalgia. In his preface to the 1953 edition of the poems, Ian Fletcher asks:

What justification exists for editing a poet...
a period...incapable either of recovering the
past, or of integrating the present?¹⁴⁰

Is this an accurate assessment? Fletcher does not see Johnson drawing his sustenance from the poets I have mentioned, but the same question can be asked about them as about the Classical poets. Johnson did not just retreat into "the interior life";¹⁴¹ he was not merely a "Jacobite of charades",¹⁴² nor is his poetry merely "tenuous sentiment" as Ian Fletcher indeed elsewhere praises him for his predominant interest in matters of form.¹⁴³ He is not merely the adolescent and young man who knew and loved the West Country and North Wales, not just a hieratic, yet tense and drunken man who thought the police were after him.¹⁴⁴ One of his last letters to Lewis Hind, almost provides a fitting epitaph. He wrote to him on 22 September 1902:

You...wrote to me...in the last century...¹⁴⁵

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139. P.B. Shelley, The Complete Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London, Oxford University Press, 1943, (1905)), p.477.
 140. Lionel Johnson, The Complete Poems, xi.
 141. Lionel Johnson, Complete Poems, xiii.
 142. J.G. Nelson, The Early Nineties: A View from the Bodley Head, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1971), p.214
 143. Lionel Johnson, Complete Poems, xiii, xxxv-xl
 144. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, lvi.
 145. Ibid., lviii.

Quite accurate, of course, if we take into account Johnson's hermit-like existence that marked the period immediately preceding the end of his life. But more than that: it is a statement of the way Johnson's mind was always tending towards, as Fletcher says:

honouring and partial imitation of one's predecessors.¹⁴⁶

Johnson's classical objectivity, he says "has none of the rich concrete quality of Gautier".¹⁴⁷ Naturally it did not, because he valued the mystical and numinous: the ideal of beauty and art which is a counterbalance to the artistic and classical restraint of his form. Like Archbishop Laud, he believed in the value of beauty.

As Maryann McGuire writes in Milton's Puritan Masque:

Laud's faith in the power of beauty was the religious analogue to Charles's reliance on icons as a means of governing.¹⁴⁸

The image of the hero-king and of the Church of beauty and eternity is ultimately a Cavalier one, just as the hero-king and Church joyed in art, and the martyrs and king alike ride white horses, as in Revelation 19:

I saw heaven standing open and there before me
was a white horse, whose rider is called
Faithful and True.¹⁴⁹

His name turns out to be the "Word of God". George Herbert had written:

146. Lionel Johnson, Complete Poems, xxxv.

147. Ibid., xxxvi.

148. Maryann McGuire, Milton's Puritan Masque (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1981), p.108.

149. Revelation 19:11. New International version.

Lord, how can man preach thy eternall word?

...But when thou dost anneal in glasse thy storie
 Making thy life to shine within
 Thy holy Preachers, then the light and glorie
 More rev'rend grows, & more doth win:
 Which else shows watrish, bleak, & thin.
 Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
 When they combine and mingle, bring
 A strong regard and aw: but speech alone
 Doth vanish like a flaring thing, 150
 And in the eare, not conscience ring.

Herbert rejects the Puritan love of "speech alone", and preaches the ethics of Laud: "the light and glorie" of beauty annealed "in glasse". The Word of God rides a white horse, and Johnson's faith was bound up in the martyrs of Christ and the martyrs of beauty, white roses, white horses, and white lands all reflecting the godliness of those who are defeated on earth, victorious in heaven. In such a way Charles could be a martyr to both beauty and religion.

Lionel Johnson was an aesthete, a decadent in his life and in his rapacity for beauty at any cost, a rapacity he regretted:

I know thee, O mine own desire!
 I know not mine own self so well.

(Poems, p.137)

His regret for the temptation inherent in beauty took the Laudian shape of identifying certain kinds of beauty with holiness. Charles is the type of martyr for this beauty, and in discussing his martyrdom Johnson drew on the ambivalent identity Marvell had so well provided for him. The king's two bodies, timeless and temporal, were his subjects: Charles as man who loved beauty, and

150. George Herbert, The Works, ed. F.E. Hutchinson, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1941), pp.67-68.

as the saint in the gathering to which his soul had gone. As a letter in the London Standard on February 1, 1896, put it:

No prayers are needed for a canonised saint.
Rather should we implore the Martyr's
intercession at the Throne of Grace.¹⁵¹

The letter was styled "King Charles the Martyr's Anniversary".

Lionel Johnson kept it in beauty and poetry and religion. The youth of "Cromwellian stock" died on 4 October 1902.¹⁵² He had as Yeats puts it, "kept" his "faith" to "troop with those the world's forgot":¹⁵³ Browne, Marvell, Jonson and the seventeenth century involved themselves intricately in his ideology of art. What he wrote of Sir Thomas Browne in "Winchester" might be true of himself:

Thy Browne, who saw the ages pass
In funeral procession;
Whose eyes explored Death's vast procession
Was it thy holy grass,
And Chantry dim,
First called on him
To make his soul's Confession?

Here first, perchance, thoughts filled his breast,
memorial, monumental:
The ancient mysteries oriental;
Faiths of the whiter West:
Dark pagan nights;
Fair Christian rites,
The Dirge and Masses Trental.

(Poems, p.182)

151. Quoted by Col. S. Dewé White, "Revival of Jacobitism",
The Westminster Review, vol.146, no.4 (1896), pp.417-426 (p.417)

152. Lionel Johnson, Collected Poems, lviii.

153. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, pp.117, 119.

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