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GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

By THE RT. HON. J. M. ROBERTSON

A CAPABLE critic[1] has written of Flaubert that he "came as near to genius as a man can come by the taking of pains"; this after recognising, with critical justice, that he wrote "one fine book and one perfect story," *Madame Bovary* and the *Cœur Simple*; and that his successes of style are often "exquisite" and sometimes "astonishing." In sum, Flaubert is for the critic "a master, but a minor master"; and a minor master is thus by implication one who falls short of genius. The critic, with his obvious concern for critical and psychological truth, will not regret that his pronouncement should in its turn be challenged as he challenges the "cult" of Flaubert. He has implicitly affirmed that there is some absolute standard for literary achievement, by which Flaubert is ranked below the line of "genius" and excluded from the company of "the great writers" who, without specification, comparison, or analysis, are assumed to have done things in the order of "genius," whether with or without painstaking, and to be therefore above impeachment for shortcomings such as he specifies in Flaubert. It is only a

[1] In "*The Times*" *Literary Supplement*, December 15, 1921. The present criticism was written without knowledge that the article was by Mr. Middleton Murry, who has since republished it in a volume of studies.

really capable criticism that is worth deliberate analysis and controversion upon such an issue. But to those to whom criticism is more than a pleasant play of expatiation, the issue may seem worth exploring.

Two problems are involved: one as to the grade or status of Flaubert's works; one as to the proper force of the term "genius"; and those who are much interested in the latter will agree that it is involved deeply. All the recognised problems of genius are raised by the case of Flaubert. It is true that his friend Maxime du Camp, who disclosed to the world that fact of Flaubert's malady of epilepsy, committed himself to the proposition that but for that affliction Flaubert *would* have been a man of genius. But even Du Camp (who by that stroke angered Flaubert's friends and admirers to the point of ignoring the bearing of the memoirist's facts) in other parts of his book did treat Flaubert as the man of genius he is reckoned by most other men. What then are the tests?

It is generally conceded that of all artists in fiction Flaubert is in his attitude the most purely "artistic," the most strictly concerned only to represent, criticising life solely by representing it, eschewing comment, leaving the moral to reveal or suggest itself. Be his medium, his theme, realistic or fantastic, arabesque or historic, ironic or pathetic, he strives to be impersonal, impassive, a copyist of the thing seen or imagined, never a propagandist or polemist, commentator or advocate, though he could be these. For him, we may say, the typical artist is the painter, the reproducer of the thing, person, or action seen or conceived; he would by analogy reduce fiction as far as might be to that ideal. Faguet complains that this is the only general idea put in his correspondence, and that he posits it without justifying or explaining it. Certainly it was his ruling principle as an artist; and it is as an artist that he puts it without expounding it, such exposition being the task of the critic.

At the same time, he is the most laborious of all artists

in fiction. No poet has spent more pains on the word, the line, than he does on the word, the clause, the sentence; his prose is for him as much an end in itself as is the verse for Virgil or for Tennyson. At bottom he is a devotee of two arts, that of style and that of conception or selection in things; they are for him complementary, presentment being in his view attainable only by style: but they are two distinctly held ideals; and we can conceive an artist as much bent as he on one without deep concern for the other; though a number of eminent practitioners have been fastidious writers. Thackeray is satisfied in style with limpidity, as is Hawthorne; and Thackeray writes with obvious ease. Hawthorne's books often seem hardly more "written" than his notebooks, though his results do not strongly suggest facility. But Flaubert by his own avowal, and by intimate and admiring report, agonised for the *mot juste*, the perfect cadence. To George Sand he describes himself once in 1869 as having "written this week nearly six pages, which for me is very fine: this labour [on his notice of his friend Bouilhet] is for me very difficult in every way. The difficulty is to know what not to say." On his novels he works much more slowly. Were it not for the instances of such artists as Virgil and Tennyson, we should say that his is a faculty under a special nervous inhibition. The first page of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* shows no touch of mark: it is simple, concrete, immemorable as to diction; yet it is the outcome of several long and laboured recastings, in which every phrase seems to have been repeatedly recomposed. The reproduced drafts are utterly illegible imbroglios. Why, we ask, this difficulty in saying so little?

Flaubert, if we consent tentatively to consider him as a genius, makes an end at once of the definition of genius as that which does with ease what ordinary faculty attains only with toil. No one could spend more toil than he. Is he then one of the proofs that genius is the capacity for taking pains, only thus achieving what talent misses for sheer lack of

labour? That familiar proposition, implicitly negatived by the critic above cited, forces itself into such an inquiry; and Flaubert's is certainly the case most in point for that thesis. Only when we remember how Goethe toiled over the second part of *Faust*, and how the product of his toil compares with the songs which by his own account he wrote almost unconsciously, are we thrown back on the standing dilemma, the irreducible fact that toil may yield either felicity or failure, and "inspiration" either nullity or perfection.

A triumph of form and colour may be produced by a nervous artist, as John Alexander, at high tension, in an hour; the Gioconda in a term of years. And exactly so with failures. Neither facility nor labour will serve as a defining formula, though there is probably never supreme facility on a high level without labour in advance. Flaubert's concern for philosophy was part of his critical outfit; it was not a matter of "a moment," as Faguet asserts, but a recurring proclivity; and his plans and performance in the fantastic-romantic are part of that other proclivity, so essentially artistic, for the oriental, the bizarre, the strangely picturesque, which turned him first and last to the *Tentation de Saint Antoine*. For some readers, apparently, it is on that side in especial, if not on that side alone, that Flaubert is a genius. For the majority alike of critics and of readers, however, his masterpiece is the realistic *Madame Bovary*, and it is therefore that which best sustains his fame. And here emerges the notable fact that the theme of this book was not originally of his choosing; that his most famous performance was in a direction imposed on him by the counsel of others, against his own strong primary bias to the oriental, the fantastic, the weirdly remote in time, place, mode, and psychic plane. As the facts come out, it is all perfectly intelligible; but it is distinctly disturbing to some notions of the autonomy of genius, no less than to that of genius as consisting in or demonstrated by facility of execution.

The *Tentation*, Flaubert's first important project, was begun,

by one account, as early as 1846, and was declared finished when the time came for him to set out on his journey to the Near East with Maxime du Camp in 1849. During the three years of its composition he had refused to give his bosom friends Du Camp and Bouilhet any details beyond general phrases; now he read it to them during four days, the sittings lasting thirty-two hours. They listened in silence, hopelessly dissatisfied; and at the close, desolated to be unable to respond to his delight in his own work, they soberly gave their verdict, to the effect that he had better put his manuscript in the fire. To his cry of horror they quietly responded with sound criticism, dwelling on the incurable disunity of the work, which was an unending and unprogressive panorama, one thing suggesting another in a wandering sequence which led to nowhere. For they too were artists, with their definite French sense of the need of plan and unity, progress in a plan, an aim, and a conclusion. They would not even spare the work as a *tour de force*, a thing unprecedented, a new *genre*; having taken counsel in the intervals of the reading, they gave their considered verdict that the thing simply would not do. The sitting in judgment lasted through the night; and when at eight in the morning they made for bed, they discovered the disappearing form of Flaubert's mother, who, autocratically devoted to her son, had painfully but patiently listened at the keyhole through the night. She judged the judges to be jealous of her son's genius, and never quite forgave them. He did—at least on that issue.

At first, in consternation, he had pleaded that the faults of the work inhered in his nature; that he could not do otherwise; that it was *beau* all the same. But he took their advice that he should master his propensity to lyrism, which they said had led him not to style but to rhetoric—meaning that style grows out of and lives by verity of theme, and rhetoric out of and by unreality—and that he should take a theme that defied lyrism and compelled to sheer style by its nature. That theme they suggested—the actual story, known

to them all, of the woman who henceforth lives in literature as Emma Bovary. Thus was Flaubert's greatest work the result of a critical veto on the work of his spontaneous predilection, a choice of subject urged upon him by others. Often afterwards did he avow to Du Camp: "I was invaded by the cancer of lyrism: you operated on me—it was high time; but I cried with the pain." And this is the artist whom Faguet declares devoid of the critical sense.

Lyrism was, in fact, as Faguet concurs with Du Camp in saying, fundamental to Flaubert's temperament. It figures in his vehement private pronouncements on all things no less than in his first choice of theme; and the history of his evolution is the record of his constant subjection of the declamatory bias to his more intellectual bias as a selective artist. Thus genius is in him finally, for those who affirm it, a function of two variables, determined by critical influences operating partly from without. For Flaubert is not to be conceived as abnormally original. Even his *Tentation* seems to have been suggested by the *Ahasuerus* of Edgar Quinet; and his intensely held doctrine of the impersonality of art was probably first given him by his comrade Louis de Bouilhet, who affirmed it vehemently and continually. They were in some aspects notably alike, being both shy and self-centred; and the doctrine of the impersonality of art was fitly common to men ill-fitted for general society. But when all this is said, have we either excluded Flaubert from the category of "genius" or made light of his work in itself? The concept of originality, so generally seen to underlie that of genius, is not one of biographical or chronological propositions. Artist A may invent a theme or a plot, and handle it unsuccessfully; while artist B, borrowing it, may handle it greatly. What plot did Shakespeare invent? Originality in the relevant sense is a matter of new seizure, new realisation. If there is to be a battle over the genius of Flaubert, it must turn on a less simple issue: the issue, namely, whether his kind of artistic faculty, so largely a matter of constructive deliberation

of selection of effects, of pageant-like presentation alike of things external and things internal, of action and psychosis, is or is not to rank as "great"; whether such a province of art is to be dismissed as "minor" by the summary subsumption that "*the* great writers" are great in a greater albeit undefined way; whether in fact we are to decide the question of "genius" by simply countering the claim for supreme painstaking with the denial that genius is that way given.

Some of us are fain to negate such a verdict. It is probably out of the lax and varying application of the label of genius that there has arisen the tendency to an absolutism in criticism that outgoes the division of literary output into that which is and that which is not "literature," and makes a division, so to say, between great greatness and small greatness, high and low "supremacy," in terms of an unargued impressionism. The critic, pursuing his little-esteemed function by the necessary way of comparison, notes certain values as rare and fine, that is, admirable because so rare and so fine; but after a time bethinks himself that certain rarities and finenesses are over-esteemed by some people because of a special susceptibility to that kind of impression, and accordingly proceeds to label them minor, factitious, outside of genius. Has he done anything more than to counter one enthusiasm with another, breaking a celebrity's windows because certain worshippers have aggressively illuminated them?

Let us not, after all, carry on the game by setting asseveration against asseveration, but soberly ask whether there is really an objective scale of values in literary art, in genius, comparable to the specification of degrees of fineness in gold or of substance in a chemical mixture. Undoubtedly, to begin with, we all rank imaginative like other writers in classes, distinguishing great from minor poets, novelists, dramatists, as we discriminate between great and minor historians and philosophers. And we do it on certain broad lines, noting greatness of feeling, of theme, of style, of handling, as against

light or light seizure of the graver sides of life, unimpressive diction, facile workmanship—in short, lack of psychic intensity, whether in utterance, in perception, or in thought. Yes; but is that the kind of distinction that is drawn when Flaubert is dismissed as a minor master, a toiler who fell short of genius? Is "master" our label for the minor poet? Do we dismiss Jane Austen as "minor" in her whole art because she shuns the storm of the heights, eludes passion, prefers comedy to tragedy, and even exhibits a commonplace submission to the merest convention where we feel her satiric art might have been turned upon the convention even as she has turned it upon personalities? Is she for us, or is she not, finally a genius? It is hard to see how any verbal usage can deny her the title with the consent of her appreciators.

Now, Flaubert, with his own special limitations, is free of regions where the mistress of correct domestic comedy does not seek to tread. He is little of a humorist; his early taste in fun, as revealed in Du Camp's story of his boyish fooling with the two-headed sheep (or whatever it was), is truly primitive; and his humorous studies of types—Homard, for instance—are more sardonic than genial. As a dramatist he must be pronounced a failure. But *Salammbô*, one of his more disputable successes, is in its own *genre* greatly conceived, even though, as he summed up, the pedestal is too large for the statue. It is in the main a large and powerful seizure of a large theme; there is no lapsing to commonplace or to conventional feeling; there is a prevailing validity of imagination, weakening only in the inadequate handling of the military side, which the artist seems suddenly to have grown tired of or to have hastily subordinated to his plan—not adhered to—of making the return of the Zaïmph by Salammbô's hands the turning-point in the war. This undue forcing of a factor is one of the snares of the artist in fiction, especially in the romance of action. But the general execution on the side of diction and sheer presentment is surely as efficient as it has been commonly held to be, as it is admitted to be even by

Faguet. And how many works of fiction are there in which no such flaw is to be found as is here conceded?

Here, perhaps, the hostile critic will stake his case. The book, he may say, is more a pageant of oriental antiquity than a study of souls; and the art of such presentment is an "inferior" art. "Only if style should be separated from content," declares the hostile critic, "the surface from the perceptions which make it solid, could Flaubert's style be praised without reserve. The distinction, as he knew, cannot be made." But it can, whether Flaubert "knew it" or not: it had been done in the case of his adored Chateaubriand, where he flinched from the dissection; and it had been done by himself many a time. And our hostile critic himself finally affirms that "Flaubert's 'art' is an art which minor writers can understand: in pretending to surrender themselves to it—for a real surrender is too painful—they have the satisfaction of manipulating mystery." With all the naturally uneasy "hedging," the thesis of the inseparability of style from content is here surrendered. There are cultists of style who miss matter; and if they are fitly to be classed as "minor," the putting of the "master" in the same category is a critical perversity. Flaubert is finally disparaged in terms of the default of his ineffective worshippers—as if any artist had ever escaped such.

It is surely very hard critical measure, further, to make an artist suffer critically for his own generosities of appreciation, as our critic seeks to do. At times in his letters Flaubert, ever whole-hearted in his tributes, exclaims over the power of the great masters to achieve effects easily, without artistic effort—*en dehors de l'art même*: "Quoi de plus mal bâti que bien des choses de Rabelais, Cervantes, Molière et Hugo? Mais quel coups de poing subits! Quel puissance dans un seul mot! Nous, il faut entasser l'un sur l'autre un tas de petits cailloux pour faire nos pyramides qui ne vont pas à la centième partie des leurs, lesquels sont d'un seul bloc."

For this free-handed self-disparagement Flaubert is reckoned

at his own humble estimate. The transaction will not stand. The very tribute cited is a " coup de poing subit "—there are scores of them in the correspondence. The residual truth is that the " lyrism " of Flaubert, various as it is, is fundamentally a lyrism of æsthetic or intellectual appreciation, and that to that realm of art he confines himself; whereas he sees in some of the artists of his admiration a lyrism of primary passion which he rapturously acclaims. Is he then at once " classed and done with " as a minor artist, devoid of genius, because he did not do the kinds of thing that Cervantes and Molière and Hugo did, though he did things they could not have done? Are they so secure against criticism on their own planes?

" He was never passionately possessed by a comprehensive theme," says the critic, again " hedging " with a loose term. Are not the *Bovary* and the *Cœur Simple* " comprehensive " in the high sense of presenting personal wholes; and is not *Salammbô* comprehensive as presenting a social and æsthetic microcosm? If to these questions we are to say No, I cannot see how comprehensiveness is to be credited either to *Don Quixote* or to *Le Misanthrope*. And, to push the issue *à outrance*, one would ask whether such criticism is itself " comprehensive " in any sense that can be pressed against the work of Flaubert. It forces us to remember that *Salammbô* is finally much better as art than is Sainte-Beuve's critique as criticism.

But one is fain rather to change the venue, recognising how unpropitious to scientific criticism are the economic conditions in comparison with those of art-production; seeking rather for another and more " comprehensive " way of approach to scientific valuation. Flaubert, so much an artist sworn to a limitary ideal of sheer art, is also, as the hostile critic honestly recognises, a great deal of a man. Few artists of his time reacted more humanly to its life than he does in his private commentary. The hostile critic, quoting from *L'Éducation Sentimentale* the episode of the death of Dussar-

dier, with the final touch, "Et Fréderic, béant, reconnut Senecal," and noting how the stroke has been acclaimed, protests that "in a different book it might have indeed been overwhelming: in the grey monotone of *L'Éducation Sentimentale* it is a splash of discordant red." This of a thing that could well happen in that very environment. Such criticism is as it were wilfully unsympathetic; for the critic can really see the effect, and a thousand good readers have found it memorable and not discordant, either upon Flaubert's or any other theory of congruity. It is just one of the *coups de poing subits* which the critic is prompt to credit to "the great writers" on Flaubert's urging, and which to cancel here is a plain deflection from critical equity. But Flaubert, we say finally, is sworn to a limitary theory of art. He would not operate in all the elements of his feeling; and for that he is belittled. But why did he refrain? I suspect that his epilepsy is the secret. Even upon the primary æsthetic lyrism of his *Tentation de Saint Antoine* he consented to lay an artistic inhibition; in *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, after the highly disciplined indulgence of *Salammbô*, he returned to the selective notation of part of the "grey" real, which is another thing than the mere "realism" that he repugned. He greatly esteemed Zola, but he would never be a Zolaist. Was not his art-ideal primed by his physical malady? And if it was, is the inhibition to be counted to his disparagement as an artist? If the disparagement be persisted in, let us put it to the analogic test of the values of another art. In painting, Degas is far more defiantly limitary than Flaubert in fiction, seeking his colour-effects as such without the slightest concern for "human" connotations. The painter of race-horses and ballet-girls could presumably have painted human action with passional or portraying purport had he cared to do so: is he then, not caring, a lesser artist than the Meissonnier who painted "The Duel"? Few artists will say so.

Here, perhaps, we shall be told that the novelist's art works in human values and the painter in colour-values.

But, waiving the question whether Velasquez's "Surrender of Breda" is a matter of mere colour-values, is it held that portrait-values are as such no higher than colour-values? If not—and many art-critics will say so—there is something overweening, something uncritical, in the code which makes light of Flaubert as against unnamed "great writers" who are subjected to no comparative tests.

It is to comparative tests that in the end we must always come, in criticism. The critic who declares *ex cathedra* that a work of literary art must be either good or bad is falsely simplifying his tasks: as well might he say that of a man. We posit limitations of Flaubert; but so must we do with all artists if we will be truly critical. Who will may make a list of the limitations of Shakespeare: from time to time it has been done. But greatness is to be finally predicated in terms of comparison; and until Flaubert can be shown to have done poorly what other men have done richly, the denial to him of genius is an arbitrary pronouncement irreducible to critical principle. It is surely the height of critical injustice to take for granted that a great outlay of toil is in itself a mark of lack of gift. And if the stress of the toil can plausibly be accounted for as the penalty of a physical malady, the positing of that is not at all an appeal *ad misericordiam*; it is an affirmation of special power in a maimed performer. Between the tests of power and of effect the measure of a writer's status must ultimately be made; and if his literary effect cannot be denied to be fine in its quality and unique in its kind, or to be producible only by rare power, the denial to him of genius must fall as an arbitrary verdict; the denial of his "greatness" as merely an instance of the critical error of blaming a writer for not being someone else. And by such procedure, whatever room may be left for debate on "greatness," the term "genius" is deprived of critical value. Nor does the harm stop there. The *parti pris* temper deflects critical judgment in detail increasingly as it is persisted in against counter-pleas. Against one who points out that

Madame Arnoux was "as steeped in romanticism as Emma Bovary," the critic vociferates that to say this is to say the thing which is not. "Madame Arnoux is the opposite of a romantic both in imagination and morals." This is sheer critical collapse. Romanticism does not, and never did, mean only one kind of imagination and mere laxity in morals. Madame Arnoux is a virtuous romantic; Madame Bovary a non-virtuous; but the former in her final interview with her old lover is a romantic through and through.

But the collapse is most complete when the critic seeks finally to clinch his declassification of Flaubert by a test of "serenity—the literary quality *par excellence*"; "the mark of the great writer . . . the power of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole." This quality is ascribed to (of all people!) Tolstoy, to Hardy, to Ibsen, to Tchekov; and it is defined as "the consciousness of having reached a point at which one is no longer rebellious or indignant at experience. Flaubert" —this is the final judgment—"never reached it."

We have here, once for all, a completely untenable position, involving a vital confusion (1) between mood and mode; (2) between the serenity of art and the serenity of philosophy; as well as (3) a vain assumption that all great literary art is the product of one kind of philosophic mood. The outcome is that we must pronounce Shakespeare to have been philosophically serene alike at all stages of his artistic life, in *Lear* as in the *Winter's Tale*; and Tolstoy to have been no less "serene" in indignant aspersion of humanity and nagging preachments than in a tale or treatise of resignation. Such a verdict against the evidence is mere critical egoism. It mechanically and unreasoningly excludes from the category of great literature all lyric indignation, all pessimism that impeaches the scheme of things; all sombre satire, all unresolved grief, however perfect be their expressions. It ascribes philosophic resignation to writers who only fitfully and precariously possess it; and makes a literary merit of a semi-scientific creed. The true critical test (for which the critic

is groping) is that of the serenity of *art*, which is a deeply different thing from philosophic acceptance of "experiences." To say that Flaubert never reached that would, one hopes, be impossible even for a hostile critic with a perverse thesis. The serenity of art is stamped on Flaubert's best work as plainly as on any man's. After all the red panorama of splendour and strife and agony in *Salammbô* we have the calm dismissing voice as of an oracle speaking through a mouth of bronze: "Ainsi mourut la fille d'Hamilcar pour avoir touché au manteau de Tanit."

There is neither rebellion nor indignation at experience in the rounded whole of *Madame Bovary*, or in the *Tentation*, or in the *Cœur Simple*, or in the *Éducation Sentimentale*, vastly as they differ in their artistic substance. To set against the artistic consummation the fact that the man Flaubert, stricken and suffering, is in his personal relation to life chronically indignant, or sombre, or sardonic; and that he groans and objurgates over human folly—to make this a cancelment of his artistic triumph, and to affect to clinch the judgment by pointing to Tolstoy and Hardy and Ibsen and Tchekov, as if these were even philosophically serene in a way that Flaubert never was, is but to misuse the seat of judgment. That office calls for an abnegation of mere temperamental rebellion at the temperamental flaws of the performers judged, a rectitude above deflection by mood, a code and standard which will bear all logical scrutiny. Unless indeed we are to say that criticism by its nature can never be great, never demonstrably just, never more than an egoistic exercise, an affirmation of one's tastes as against other people's, with at best but a pretence of reasoned justification. But will any critic make such a confession, and still pursue his professed task?

MALLARMÉ'S "HERODIADE"

By ROGER FRY

THE three poems, translations of which follow, form a single whole. Although this fact is not indicated in the completed edition of Mallarmé's poems, it is sufficiently evident from the words " nuit d'Idumée," in the first poem, which is evidently a dedication of the *Herodiade.*

The attempt is here made to translate quite literally and as far as possible without altering the order of words. The aim has been also to get a rhythmic effect which, though inevitably different from the original, will, it is hoped, recall it.

I. THE GIFT OF THE POEM

I bring you the child of an Idumæan night !
Black, with wing bleeding, pale, unfeatured.
Through the glass burnt with aromatics and gold,
Through the panes icy, alas ! and still desolate,
The dawn burst on the lamp angelic,
Palms ! and when it showed this relic,
To the father attempting an enemy smile,
The blue and sterile solitude shivered.
O nursing mother with your girl and the innocence
Of the cold feet of you both, accept a horrible birth,
And, your voice recalling viol and clavecin,
With your faded finger you will press the breast
Whence flows in Sibylline whiteness woman,
For lips for the virgin azure athirst.

In dedicating the *Herodiade* Mallarmé associates and con-

trasts his giving birth to the poem with the motherhood of his friend.

He has been writing the poem through the night, and, as he finishes it, the dawn breaks through the window "icy, alas, and still desolate," but already "burnt with aromatics and gold" by the rising sun. As the dawn lights up the room the lamp by which he has been working becomes effaced and "angelic." The interjection "Palms!" is a cry of triumph at the dawn and also at his having accomplished the painful delivery of the poem, on which he now gazes with mixed pride and horror. The use of "woman" as a simile for milk is typical of Mallarmé. "L'Azur" is frequently used by Mallarmé to typify the instinctive life.

II. HERODIADE

Nurse. Alive? Or is it the shadow of a princess, I see?
For my lips your fingers and their rings, and cease
To walk in an age ignored.
Herodias. Get back.
The blond torrent of my immaculate hair
Bathing my solitary body, freezes it
With horror, and my hairs, with light entwined
Are deathless. Woman, a kiss would kill me
If beauty were not death.
By what lure
Drawn, and what morn forgotten of the prophets
Pours, on the dying distances, its sad futility,
I know not? You have seen me, wintry nurse,
Down into the heavy prison of iron and stone,
Wherein my agèd lions' tawny centuries drag,
Enter and walk, fated and hands unscathed,
Amid the desert perfume of those ancient kings:
But yet more did you see what were my fears? (1)
I stop, dreaming of exile and unleaf,
As by a basin whose jetting water invites.

The pale lilies within me, whilst entranced
At following with their eyes the languid spoils
Falling down through my revery, in silence,
The lions, averting my robe's indolence
Look at my feet which would make calm the sea.
Calm, you, the shuddering of your senile flesh :
Come, and my tresses imitating the ways
Too wild, that make you dread a lion's mane :
Help me, since thus you dare no longer look,
To comb me nonchalantly in the glass.

N. If not gay myrrh in bottles shut,
Of some essence ravish'd from roses' age
Will you not, child, the virtue essay
Funereal ?

H. Leave there the perfumes ! Do you not know
I hate them, nurse, and would you have me feel
Their exaltation drown my languishing head ?
I'd have my hairs, which are not flowers
To spread forgetfulness of human ills,
But gold for ever virgin of aromatics,
In their cruel lights and matt palenesses
Observe the sterile coldness of metal,
Having reflected you, jewels of my natal walls,
Armour and vases, since my lone childhood.

N. Forgive ! Age had effacèd, queen, what you forbade
From my mind grown pale as an old book, or black. . . .

H. Enough ! Hold up the mirror.
O mirror !
A chill water frozen with ennui in your frame,
How often, for how long, unvisited
Of dreams, and seeking my remembrances which are
Like leaves beneath your ice's profoundness
I to myself appeared a far-off shade.
But ah ! some evenings in your severe fount
I've known of my sparse dreams the nakedness !
Nurse, am I beautiful ?

N. A star, in truth.
But this tress falls.
H. Stop in your crime,
Which chills my blood towards its source, and check
That famously impious gesture : ah ! tell me
What sure demon casts this sinister spell,
This kiss, these offered scents, and, shall I say it,
My heart ? this hand more sacrilegious,
For I think you would have touched me, make a day
That will not finish harmless on the tower. . . .
O day, Herodias with dread looks upon !
N. Strange times, indeed, from which heaven protect you !
You wander, solitary shade, and a new ferocity,
And look within, precocious with dread :
But always adorable like an immortal,
O my child, and beautiful, terribly and such
That. . . .
H. But were you not going to touch me ?
N. I should love
To be for whom Destiny guards your secrets.
H. Oh ! Silence !

N. Will he ever come ?
H. Pure stars,
Hear not !
N. How if not amid obscure
Alarms, to dream more implacable still
And as a suppliant (2) the God whom the treasure
Of your grace awaits ! For whom, devoured
By anxiety, keep you the splendour ignored
And the vain mystery of your being ?
H. For myself.
N. Sad flower which grows alone and has no other joy
Than its own image seen in water, listlessly.
H. Go keep your pity as your irony.
N. Only explain. Oh ! no, naive child,

It must grow, less one day, this triumphant disdain.
H. But who would touch me, of the lions untouched ?
Besides, I want naught human, and sculptured, (3)
If you see me with eyes to paradise lost
'Tis when I bring to mind your milk once drunk.
N. Ah ! lamentable victim offered to its fate !
H. (4) Yes, it's for me, for me that I flower deserted !
You know it, gardens of amethyst, hid
Endlessly in cunning abysses and dazzled ;
Ignored gold, keeping your antique light
Under the sombre sleep of a primeval soil ;
You stones, whence my eyes, like pure jewels,
Borrow their melodious brightness, and you too,
Metals which to my youthful tresses give
A fatal splendour and their massive sway !
For you, woman, born in an evil age
As for the mischief of Sibylline caves,
Who talk of a mortal ! Who declare, from the calyx
Of my robes, aromatic of fierce delights
There should issue the white shudder of my nudity,
Prophesy too, that if the warm blue of summer,
Towards which natively woman unveils,
Sees me in my pudeur, a shivering star,
I die !
I love virginity's horror and I would
Live in the terror that my locks inspire.
So, at evening, drawn back in my couch, a reptile,
Inviolate, to feel in my purposeless flesh
The cold scintillations of your pale light
You, who die to yourself, you, who burn with chastity
White night of ice-clots and cruel snow !

And your lonely sister, (5) O my sister eternal,
My dream will mount you-wards : your like already,
Rare limpidity of a heart which dreamed it,
I think myself alone in my monotone country

And, around me, all lives in the idolatry
Of a mirror, reflecting in its sleeping calm
Herodias of the clear diamond look. . . .
Oh! Supreme joy, yes, I know it, I am alone.
N. Madam, are you to die then?
H. No my poor grandam,
Be calm, and withdrawing, pardon this hard heart;
But first, if you will, close the shutters, the azure
Seraphic smiles in the profound panes,
And I detest, I, the beautiful azure!
Waves
Rock gently and, yonder, know you not a land
Where the sinister sky has the hated regard
Of Venus who, evelong, burns in the leafage;
I'll thither.
Light too, it's childish
You'll say, these torches where wax with subtle fire
Weeps 'mid the vain gold some stranger tear,
And. . . .
N. And now?
H. Adieu.
You lie, naked flower
Of my lips!
I await a thing unknown (6)
Or perhaps, ignoring the mystery and your cries,
You utter the ultimate, bruised, sobs
Of a childhood feeling amid its reveries
Separate each from each from its cold polished stones.

The *Herodiade* is the only poem of Mallarmé's in which a dramatic form is used. It is one of the most lucid of all his works and needs scarcely any explanation. The few notes given here will probably seem to many superfluous.

(1) "What were my fears," implying that she was without fear.

(2) "And as a suppliant." The God is to be more implacable

than Herodias, but come to her none the less as a suppliant lover.

(3) "Sculptured . . . with eyes to paradise lost." This is rather obscure. The idea seems to be that for Herodias Paradise can only be conceived as a complete isolation from humanity, consequently the thought of having been suckled by her nurse obscures her vision of Paradise.

(4) This speech down to "massive sway" is a soliloquy. Again, from "I love virginity's horror," Herodias seems to be oblivious of the nurse's presence.

(5) "Your lonely sister"—the moon.

(6) After "Adieu," the nurse evidently goes and the rest is a soliloquy. This last speech is the most obscure passage in the poem—the thing unknown is perhaps a hint at her passion for John the Baptist. She is conscious that all that she has been saying about herself is not the whole truth. She is really awaiting the unknown mystery, but tries to think her new experience is only the regret at the loss of her childhood, which is likened to a broken necklace from which the beads fall one by one, the beads symbolising the days of her childhood.

CANTIQUE DE ST. JEAN

Its supernatural stay
Had kept the sun on high
Now it descends again
Incandescent.

I feel as in my spine
Were spreading darknesses
Together all a-shiver
In unison;

And my head is uprisen
In solit'ry vigil
'Mid the triumphal flights
Of, ah! this scythe,

As a rupture clear
Rather crowds back or cuts
The old discordances
The body brings,

Let *it* with fasting drunk
Follow obstinately
Making a haggard leap
Its pure regard

Up thither where the cold
Eternal not endures
That you should surpass it
Oh! Glaciers all.

But as by baptism
Illumined, to the same
Principle which chose me,
Bows a salute.

The *Cantique de St. Jean* is an example of Mallarmé's method of extreme condensation. This makes the syntax, although perfectly logical, difficult to decipher. Mallarmé relies upon gender to establish relations between words which are so far apart that their connection is unexpected. Thus "elle" of the fifth stanza is seen to refer to tête in the third. And "illuminée" in the seventh stanza also refers to tête, although four stanzas have intervened without direct mention of it.

The general idea is that the *Cantique* is sung by St. John whilst his head is being severed from his body. He sees, as it were, his own head leap upwards to heaven, following the direction in which he was looking, where illumined by this new baptism of blood, it bows before God—"the principle which chose me."

BALZAC

By ERNST ROBERT CURTIUS

"WHO can flatter himself that he will ever be understood? We all die without being found out." This saying, which Balzac once let fall, as though casually, stands as a kind of signpost to all who would penetrate to the heart of his work and discover his soul. Balzac felt within him something that none understood and none recognised. All the fame and the love that fell to his lot could do nothing to alter this. In him was a secret that he would carry with him to the grave. "Modern myths will be still less understood than the ancient myths," he says somewhere, speaking of his work. These words, too, although they do not relate to that deepest part of him, have behind them the same consciousness of the secret.

In his letters we find it again. On the threshold between youth and manhood—1828—he confesses: "I am old in suffering, and, by my happy face, you would never guess my age. It is not that I have had to endure the blows of fate, but that I have always been bowed down beneath a frightful burden. This may seem to you an exaggeration, in order to enlist your interest; but it is not so, for nothing can give you a notion of my life up to my twenty-second year. I am utterly astonished that now I have only to struggle with fate. If you questioned all those around me, you would obtain no light of any kind on the nature of my unhappiness. There are people who die without the doctor's being able to say what illness has carried them off."

Nine years later Balzac writes to Mme. von Hanska: "I

am inexplicable to everybody; none knows the secret of my life, and I will reveal it to none"; and to the same, after a further six years: "Since I have existed, my life has been ruled by my heart, and this is a secret that I carefully conceal. Even to you I have not shown all, you, the much-beloved and the ever-beloved."

The theme of the secret runs through the whole of Balzac's life. To grasp it, you must grasp at the root of his life—in childhood. In the childhood of genius lies its particular secret, for here is its being still wholly gathered up in itself, uninfluenced by the forces of history, still undifferentiated by thought and deed. We know little of the childhood of great men. Little enough has come down to us about Balzac. But even these scanty details give us clues to work upon.

Immediately after his birth (20th May, 1799) Balzac was put out to nurse in the country, and he remained in his foster-mother's care until his fifth year. He then spent some years in his parents' home at Tours. He was a quiet child, and passed as mentally undeveloped. At the age of eight he was again separated from his home, and placed in the educational establishment of the Oratorians in Vendôme (1807). But boarding-school life impaired his health to such an extent that, at the wish of the principal, he was taken away from the college at the age of fourteen. He was in a condition of morbid dullness, probably the result of the immoderate reading in which he indulged in the college library, while he completely neglected his studies, and gained the reputation of a dunce. One of his teachers afterwards related that, for the first two years of his school-life, nothing could be got out of him. Then he began to produce innumerable essays, and acquired thereby the reputation of an author with his schoolfellows. He was characterised with the words: *grande insouciance, taciturnité, pas de méchanceté, originalité complète*. Apparently, on account of his "great indifference" he was often shut up in his cubicle or in the woodshed. Once he spent a whole week there. What went on within his mind while he was so shut up, we can never

know; but we may recall Rimbaud's sombrely suggestive self-revelation: *Dans un grenier, où je fus enfermé à douze ans, j'ai connu le monde, j'ai illustré la comédie humaine.*

Returned once more to his paternal home at Tours, Balzac very soon recovered. Walks and games brought back to him the rosy hues of health. At school again, he did not distinguish himself even then; but this did not prevent him from re-asserting that he would become a celebrated man. If others made fun of him on this score, he laughed with them good-humouredly.

Such are the facts of Balzac's childhood that we may gather from the accounts of others. Its inner history Balzac has told in *La Peau de Chagrin*, in *Louis Lambert*, and—what has hitherto been more or less overlooked—in *Le Lys dans la Vallée*. According to Balzac's description, Louis Lambert is an extremely sensitive child. Quiet, reserved, sickly, misunderstood by his schoolmasters and schoolfellows, apathetic in external appearance, but filled with inner visions and metaphysical speculations (which he sets down in an essay on the nature of the soul), gifted with occult faculties, penetrated with the feeling that a great destiny lies before him—a lad of early-ripened genius, at home in mysterious regions, but suffering much in the world surrounding him: such is Louis Lambert; and Louis Lambert is Balzac. Of course, the parallel does not hold good in all its parts. The fourteen-year-old Balzac composed no *Treatise on the Will*; but that, at that age, he had written much, we do know. And it is not to be altogether rejected that, in his boyish writings, were the first foreshadowings of that *Essai sur les forces humaines* which Balzac had in mind all his life, and which he never completed.

But the spiritual history of Balzac's early childhood is to be found, as it seems to me, in *Le Lys dans la Vallée*. That the autobiography of Félix de Vandenesse in this novel is, in reality, Balzac's own is evident from many coincidences. At five years of age, so we are told, the boy—who was cheated by his parents and brothers and sisters of the tenderness he

yearned for—experienced his first contact with the infinite. He prayed to a star, to " his " star, which, all the year round, he sought for in the evening sky, and which he made the vessel of his longing and his adoration. This blissful secret was shattered for him by a malicious governess, who betrayed the boy, and turned upon him the anger of his mother. The second stage in his religious life falls in the period of his confirmation. " I flung myself into the mysterious depths of prayer, lured by the religious ceremonies, whose magic enraptures young minds. Inspired by a glowing belief, I besought God to renew for me the wonderful miracles of which I read in the martyrology. My ecstasy bloomed for me in indescribable dreams, which peopled my fancy, enriched my capacity for love, and strengthened my powers of thought. I have often ascribed these sublime visions to angels, who were commanded to form my soul for divine purposes : they endowed my eyes with the faculty of perceiving the inner spirit of things ; they prepared my heart for those magic visions which make the poet wretched, if he has the dismal power to compare what he feels with what is, the much willed with the little achieved ; they wrote out in my head a book in which I might read what I had to express ; they laid on my lips the flaming eloquence of ready speech." And farther on : " The dreams of my schooldays were like an Apocalypse, in which my life was figuratively foretold to me : every happy or unhappy event is associated with them by strange visions, by links that are only visible to the eyes of the soul."

Such are Balzac's " intimations of early childhood."

Rapturous visions, not to be exhausted in words, formed the point of departure for that self-knowledge in which, Balzac hinted, was the significance of his life. A mystical star, a gleam of higher worlds, stands over the beginning of Balzac's career. Its silver light breaks continually, like a radiant beam, through the fever and fret of the " human comedy." Balzac must be counted among those spirits in whom dwells the longing for that " which a religious genius has called the astral." Star-

and dream, external and internal, world and ego, had fused into one vision: that is the secret of Balzac's childhood. It holds the secret of his life and his art. "Of the thirty-three years of Jesus's life," Balzac once wrote, "only nine are known: *sa vie silencieuse a préparé sa vie glorieuse.*" In these words may also be found an indication of the secret of Balzac's own childhood.

His art is merely a development of this early dream. His visions "had written out in his head a book in which he might read what he had to express." *Je trouvais en moi des textes à développer*, he says somewhere. The mysticism of Louis Lambert and Seraphita has its roots here. In the preface to these two books, which Balzac did not reprint, he speaks of his relationship to mysticism:

> "Il a fallu s'être passionné dès l'enfance pour ce magnifique système religieux, avoir rêvé l'être aux deux natures, avoir ébauché la statue, bégayé le poème qui devait occuper toute la vie, pour pouvoir en donner aujourd'hui le squelette."

The inner vision, illumination, was the first form in which Balzac experienced the mystery. The second form was the secret of literary creation. Those visions of childhood contained the inexpressible: unutterable rapture, ineffable knowledge, inexplicable symbols. But these symbols must be unriddled, the visions must be fixed in words. The enormous tension of this task dominates all Balzac's youth up to the threshold of adult manhood. He passes many years in a state of fermenting torpor, unable to arrive at any conception of his gift and his vocation. He only knows that some power is within him, but this power is passive, and cannot yet take any form. In a letter written in the year 1822 to Mme Berny, and only just recently published, he refers to Leibnitz's theory that everything that exists, even the inorganic, has consciousness; that even marble has ideas, "though extraordinarily confused"; and he adds: "In my life, I shall be

like marble, passive. He who strikes against me, will curse me; he who is tired and rests on me, will bless me. If I am carved and set to adorn the head of a column, I shall remain there; if I am used to build a stable with, I shall remain there also. Adieu, my rôle begins!" From the unhewn marble the gigantic structure of the Human Comedy was to arise. But the twenty-three-year-old Balzac had no other pledge of his intellectual future than a dull feeling of power and surging inner visions. Will he succeed in giving form to them? That is the tormenting question that for many years never leaves him. Astonishment has often been expressed at the fact that Balzac, between his twentieth and twenty-sixth year, produced a host of bad novels, which he later repudiated. Certainly he desired and had to earn money quickly. But the inner reason is quite other: he was as yet unable to say what was going on in the secret recesses of his soul. He felt suffocated by the inner world, which he sought in vain to express.

"Why have I been brought into the world? When I examine myself, I know why . . . but why then, do I possess enormous capacities without being able to make use of them? My mind is certainly busy with weighty thoughts; I am on the way towards certain discoveries; an unconquerable power carries me forward to a light which has already shone through the darkness of my early intellectual life; but what name shall I give to the power that binds my hands and shuts my mouth?" It is Louis Lambert who so complains. But here again Lambert is only a mask for Balzac. For years Balzac grappled with expression; and even at the summit of his mastery, artistic labour was for him an exhausting struggle.

"Nobody in the world," says Louis Lambert, "knows the horror that my sinister imaginative capacity causes me. Often it lifts me to the skies, only to let me fall from my giddy height to the earth once more. Rushes of power within me, strange and secret testimonies of peculiar lucidity, often tell me that I am capable of much. Then I embrace the world with my

thought: I knead it, shape it, penetrate it, understand it, or think I understand it; but suddenly I wake up alone, and find myself once more in the depths of night, small and piteous; I forget the gleam which I have just seen; I am robbed of every help, and above all without a heart wherein I might seek refuge." So too, exactly, in *La Peau de Chagrin*: "Through all my tortures, I have lived with an impotent energy that consumes itself. . . . Perhaps I have despaired of ever making myself understood, or trembled at the idea of being understood only too well."

The question of Balzac's artistic development has often been discussed. There was no development, no continued growth in ripeness and power. His mind was quite different. He suffered long periods of intense internal strain, during which all creative energies were bound by some spell; and then, suddenly, the spell was broken; the circle was shattered, the constraint melted away, the tongue was loosened. The long-dammed-up powers flood over; productivity sets in with astonishing fruitfulness; the vision becomes word. That is Balzac's creative process: a deliverance, a crystallisation.

Balzac's intellectual and artistic growth consists in a series of organic crises. The creative centre of energy breaks through ever new layers of restraining matter. With each such break-through Balzac wins a new concentric sphere of his power: each is bound up with an inspirational experience. But the breaking through does not always come off. Louis Lambert says: "I feel that I am strong and full of energy, that I might become a force. I feel within me a life of such illuminating power that I could inspire a world, and yet I am shut in as in a stone." Where the inner creative power is unable to burst the surrounding mass of stone, it turns on itself and shatters the mind. Lambert ends in madness. Balzac must have many times been nigh unto this dismal region, often have felt this threat. He escaped; but it is represented in his work by the group of derailed geniuses whose creative passion finishes in folly.

Just as Balzac's fundamental secret is the inner vision of his youth, so is intellectual creation for him merely another form, repeating this first secret. For creation, so far as he is concerned, is, indeed, nothing more than an interpretation, a visible projection, a deciphering, an exteriorisation of the inner vision. He speaks willingly of his own creation as of a secret. " Only work is needed," he says in one of his letters, " and the persistence of a certain something I feel within me : but silence thereon." Genius is, therefore, a mystery for him. " Have men the faculty of comprehending the universe within their minds, or is the mind a talisman, with which they annihilate the laws of time and space ? . . . Science will oscillate for a long time between these two equally inexplicable mysteries. In any case, however, it is certain that inspiration unfolds to the poet innumerable transfigurations that resemble the magic phantasmagoria of our dreams. A dream is probably the natural outlet of this strange power, when it is unemployed."

In the phenomena of genius, Balzac rediscovered the mystery of his early experiences. But both forms of the mystery were only to be apprehended by means of a more profound and more comprehensive idea : if the hieroglyphs of mystery were imprinted on life and on art, then that indicated that fundamentally the world was itself a mystery. For the initiated, the secret must be sought at every point of existence, because it is the root of all existence. The highest man's mind is capable of is : in the whole sphere of nature and of history to recognise this mysterious character of existence, and to preserve this presentiment of the great secret of the world in all investigation into reality and in all discovery. Consciousness of this is inveterate in mankind, and has ever united its finest spirits. In Balzac, too, although often in a darkened and distorted form, we find this consciousness. The origin and final aim of everything is for him a mystery. His philosophy of history proceeds from the secret of Providence : " the meaning of this epoch is hidden from most of its contemporaries : they are cogs in a great machine, whose purpose they do not

know" ; and it culminates in an allusion to the mystery of Europe : *la grande famille continentale, dont tous les efforts tendent à je ne sais quel mystère de civilisation.* Still more clearly is Balzac's consciousness of the world-secret stamped on his view of Nature—it is magical ; and on his religion—it is mystical !

Into the content of this magic and mystery I cannot enter here. Its most general formula, however, is so closely connected with Balzac's creative secret that it must on the whole be reckoned among the prerequisites to complete understanding. It is the old formula : cause and effect ; the formula of Aristotle, of scholasticism, of the Renaissance—and of the philosophy of enlightenment. With Balzac it serves as the expression of all the forms of relationship between God and world, the internal and the external, entity and phenomenon, will and works, mind and form. Everything that is world, phenomenon, works, form, Balzac calls *effet* ; everything that is entity, soul, mind, motive, he calls *cause.*

Cause is thus for him no scholastical term ; but the mystic motive. God is cause, nature effect. "And nature is enchanting ; she belongs to man, to the poet, to the painter, to the lover ; but is not the cause superior to Nature in the eyes of a few choice spirits and for certain gigantic thinkers ? The cause is God. In this region of the cause live men like Newton, Laplace, Kepler, Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Buffon, the true poets and hermits of the second Christian age, as also Saint Teresa of Spain and the sublime ecstatics. Every human feeling has analogies with this situation, wherein the spirit, for the sake of the cause, abandons the effect."

The mysticism of *causa* and *effectus* dominates Balzac's æsthetic : "We have to grasp the spirit, the soul, the physiognomy of things and of existence. Effects ! Effects ! They are merely the chance configurations of life, not life itself. . . . A hand is not only connected with the body ; it also expresses and continues a thought, which must be grasped and rendered. Neither the painter, the poet, nor the

sculptor should separate the effect from the cause. Both are invincibly intertwined! That is where the real struggle comes in! Many painters are here instinctively successful, unaware of this task of Art. But they draw a woman without seeing her. Not in this way can the arcanum of Nature be unlocked."

The formula, cause-effect, is repeated by Balzac with innumerable variations. His great artists are all ambitious to comprehend cause and effect. Gambara speaks thus of his music-drama:

> " Je devais trouver un cadre immense où puissent tenir les effets et les causes, car ma musique a pour but d'offrir une peinture de la vie des nations, prise à son point de vue le plus élevé. . . . Jusqu'ici l'homme a plutôt noté les effets que les causes. S'il pénétrait les causes, la musique deviendrait le plus profond de tous les arts."

Wagner, who has so many points of resemblance with Balzac, is here foreshadowed.

The mysticism of causality is found again in the speeches of Balzac's lovers: " *Carino,*" says Massimilla Doni to Emilio Memmi, " *n'es-tu pas au-dessus des expressions amoureuses autant que la cause est supérieure à l'effet?* " It may be seen from this example how Balzac spoilt his style with his formulas. But these formulas must be understood; otherwise he will always be misunderstood. Balzac employs his fundamental formula at all sorts of very different planes. It is only necessary to open any volume of the Human Comedy to find numerous examples.

The formula of cause and effect has with Balzac the significance of a mathematical symbol of relationship that may be placed at will between quantities of every kind. But this mathematics is a mystical mathematics. The scholastical formula is merely the index of Balzac's fundamental attitude towards existence.

For Balzac, the mystery was not only inner vision, creative

process, world-foundation; it was also the form of life. Without mystery, he could not have lived; and he created for himself an atmosphere of mystery when fate neglected to do so. "Mystery," he says in one of his letters, "is one of those pleasures with which delicate natures play. . . . Mystery is the refuge of all those who are placed by publicity in the full light of day." Balzac played with mystery.

We touch there a fundamental trait of his nature, which crops up everywhere in his life and his art: the polarity of passionate intensity and playful relaxation; of mystical exaltation and unrestrained laughter; of spiritual soaring and coarse humour. The sublime and the comic, ecstasy and robust mirth—both find full vent in the Human Comedy, which includes the *Livre mystique* alongside the *Contes drôlatiques*. The ideal and the grotesque and every transition between these two extremes are reflected in his art—over and over again this polarity becomes visible. It is reflected also in his life. It signifies that even within the sphere of mystery his life takes every form: from mystery to mysteriousness; from mysticism to mystification.

All his relationships with women are surrounded with mystery. Romantic mystery veils the beginnings of his love for Mme. von Hanska. It was hidden mysteriously from the world. Throughout the correspondence with the "stranger" may be traced the pleasure with which Balzac cherished as a secret this dearest episode in his life. His attitude towards society is coloured by it. Secrecy accompanied this passion throughout its course. The fruit of it must remain a secret. The marriage—for which, as we have learned only recently, Balzac began to make preparations in 1846—was to be celebrated secretly. A secret, in fine, a gloomy secret, envelops the *dénouement* of this passion.

Then the secret in Balzac's life assumed a tragic form. But alongside the inner fervour, the mystical, the tragic, we find again the grotesque. Even the mystery in Balzac's life assumed grotesque forms. When, at the age of twenty,

he informed his hurt and amazed parents that he renounced the legal career for which he was intended, because he felt a call towards literature, he was allowed a trial year in which to give proofs of his talent. A garret in the Rue Lesdiguières in Paris was rented for him. The friends of the house were informed, however, that young Balzac was staying with relations in the south. But once he was met in the streets of Paris by an acquaintance, who has left an account of the meeting. "He [Balzac] looked as though he had stepped out of a hospital or a melodrama of the Gaiety Theatre. Without giving me time to address a single word to him, he dragged me aside out of the crowd, and said to me in an earnest tone: 'My present existence is a secret for everybody, even my family. But for you I have no secrets; you shall know the place of my hidden existence. Come and see me at noon to-morrow, and everything shall be revealed to you.'" In later years the cause of Balzac's mysteriousness lay mostly in financial liabilities which he could not meet. In order to avoid imprisonment for debt, he was obliged to hide from his creditors. The biographies are full of anecdotes about such situations. In order to be protected against unwelcome visits, he concealed himself under the name of *Veuve Durand*. Even his letters are occasionally so signed in jest. It was something of a feat to obtain the address of the Widow Durand.

But all this was merely the prankish and grotesque by-play of a need and an attitude that were rooted in the depths of Balzac's soul. To guard his secret! That is one imperative of his moral code. He had the greatest admiration for those natures who were able to guard their secret and to take it with them to the grave. "After he was taken, Toussaint l'Ouverture died without saying a word. Napoleon, however, on his rock, chattered like a magpie: he wanted to explain himself. . . . There is never a criminal who, when in danger of letting his head fall with its secrets into the red basket, does not feel the purely social need to tell them to somebody." One of the reasons for the admiration that Balzac cherished

for Fenimore Cooper was that his redskins, even at the stake, did not betray their secrets.

But the author is precisely he who does utter his secrets! That brought a conflict into Balzac's life. "To publish one's thoughts, is that not to prostitute them? If I had been rich and fortunate enough, I would have saved them all for my beloved."

Is it, however, indeed still possible in the modern world to live a secret life? It is a fine saying of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam that: *Il y aura toujours de la solitude pour ceux qui en seront dignes.* Balzac, who so passionately lived his epoch, who enthusiastically celebrated the century with which he grew up, yet complained of one of the consequences of the modern era of industry and travel: the restriction of the sphere of privacy. Modern publicity and modern capitalism no longer permit individuals to make for themselves a quiet nook in life. "This disgusting, unbridled speculation that from year to year lowers the height of the stories of a house, that puts a whole dwelling into the space formerly occupied by a *salon*, that declares war to the knife on the inhabitants, will inevitably have an effect on Parisian habits and manners. It will soon be necessary to live more outside than in a house. That hallowed privacy of life, the freedom of one's own home, where is it now to be found? It begins with an income of fifty thousand francs." This complaint is found repeatedly.

Such pessimistic judgments on the economic evolution are with Balzac to be referred finally to the vital feeling that defends the claims of privacy and intimacy against the control of modern society. Balzac desires a form of life in which secrecy is still possible.

A last form in which the mysterious is found with Balzac is the artistic. Balzac has projected the mysteriousness of his life into his work. The Human Comedy is full of mysterious persons of all kinds and degrees. One has only to recall Raphael de Valentin, Vautrin, Trenkhofer, Albert Savarus. Many other names will suggest themselves.

And as in the life of individuals, so Balzac discovers mystery in society. Secret societies of various kinds are presented in the Human Comedy. Balzac has thereby fixed one of the characteristic traits of the restoration period, during which, indeed, the whole of Europe was covered with secret confederations after the model of the Italian *Carbonari*. In France, it was especially the secret society known as the *Congrégation* that supplied the public with the material for all sorts of frightful and alarming stories. The Comte d'Artois, later Charles X, was closely connected with it. But outside of politics the secret-society game flourished. Charles Nodier thrilled his readers with a *History of the Secret Societies in the Army*. He himself belonged to the *Société des Philadelphes*, founded in 1797, the members of which had to swear faithfulness and silence. It could scarcely have been a danger to the State, since its "mysteries" appear to have been confined essentially to a reverence for the pentagram and to the colour sky-blue.

Harmless, also, was the *Société du Cheval Rouge*, which Balzac with Gautier and several others founded in the firm conviction that its members, by bringing influence to bear on public opinion and the *salons*, would mutually create power and fame for each other. A romantic parallel to this society is to be found in the Human Comedy. It is the Federation of the Thirteen, "a combination of superior men, of cold and sarcastic spirits, who, in the midst of a false and mean society, laughing and cursing, live and have their being." It owes its origin to a literary model: Otway's *Venice Preserved*. Balzac admired in this drama "the sublime combination of Peter and Jaffier . . . the peculiar virtues of the men who stand outside the social order . . . the prerogatives of the exorbitant power that made possible the conquest of these men by fusing every idea into one sole will."

A scurrilous companion to the Federation of the Thirteen is offered by the *Chevaliers de la Desœuvrance* (in *Un Ménage de Garçon*): a club composed of young men who met together

in order to frighten the peaceful inhabitants of a provincial town by playing hoaxes on them—a forerunner of Jules Romains's *Copains*.

A secret society of convicts is the society of the *Grands Fanandels*, an organisation that forms the background of the adventurous career of a Vautrin. Even the old association of the *Compagnons*, whose origin goes right back to the Middle Ages and whose survival in the nineteenth century is established, plays a part in the Human Comedy. It interested Balzac especially, because in it survived the mystical and revolutionary tradition of the freemasonry of the Middle Ages. A secret society that pursued exclusively charitable and spiritual aims is found, finally, in the *Frères de la Consolation* (in *L'Envers de l'Histoire contemporaine*).

All these elements of the Human Comedy have points of support and parallels in Balzac's age. But the interest and obvious sympathy that Balzac showed towards them arise out of his personal predilections. And this is true not only of secret societies, but of the phenomenon of mystery generally. Mystery, indeed, is part of the common stock of the romantic temperament. The possession of a dark secret contributed very largely to the fascination which the figure of Byron exercised over his contemporaries. But much use of this *motif* was also made by the French romanticists. It is merely necessary to recall *René*, or *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, or poems like Lamartine's *Un Nom*, or the *sonnet d'Arvers* with its characteristic opening:

"Mon âme a son secret, ma vie a son mystère . . ."

For all that, except with Byron and Chateaubriand (with whom mystery was the expression of a spiritual conflict), it is for the most part a literary fashion or a sentimental need that here comes into play. It is true that Balzac's cult of mystery was strengthened by these phenomena of his time. But he is not dependent upon them; he merely encountered them, and thereby—perhaps—gained in resonance.

Mystery with Balzac springs from the deepest and most personal of life's strata, and thence permeates all his thought and creation. Mystery primarily and fundamentally is for Balzac the form of life. Mystery is life and life is mystery. And the solution of the mystery of life? Balzac sought for it on many paths. His life, his art, are a *Recherche de l'Absolu*. But the Faust-like hero of the novel of that name, the mystic alchemist Balthazar Claes, never got to the root of the mystery of life. As a martyr of the desire for knowledge he lies down to die. There, in the agony of death, he suddenly starts up, and jerks out an *Eureka!*; he knows, knows now suddenly what he has long sought. But he cannot tell his knowledge; and he sinks back with glazed eyes and passes away. So may Balzac also have first found the solution of the great mystery in death.

Between this uncertainty in life and that certainty in death stretches the gleaming arch of his art.

ON CRITICISM IN GENERAL

Et qu'on me laisse tranquille

By EZRA POUND

The publication of a review is in itself an appeal to the populace, and as the populace has already shown thumbs down and repeatedly for everything of the slightest interest in literature and the fine arts, this appeal appears to me useless, needless, superfluous, tautological. Gli uomini vivono in pochi e gli altri son pecorelli.

All civilisation has proceeded from cities and cenacles. If there are three hundred people worth writing to, they would do better to organise in some stricter fashion. One would like a list of the resolute, of the half-thousand exiles and proscripts who are ready to risk the coup.

The populace benefits in the end; in the end they get the husks of everything, and as their age-long predilection is husks, one should not grumble at this. At present the rule is perhaps in abeyance, it is only medicine and economics that offer them any help, or in which distribution of gain exists greatly, and economic thought is suffering a suppression in Anglo-Saxon countries, which being de facto *has no need of seeking* de jure *existence.*

On me demande l'histoire de l'impressionisme littéraire en Albion le perfide. Eh bien!

Les guerres de Napoléon *having interrupted communication between the islanders and the rest of the world, the light of the eighteenth century was lost, Landor went into exile, the inhabitants of Berwick and Sussex existed in darkness, England as a whole fell back into the tenebrosities of the counter reformation, and has remained there ever since.*

My dear Sullivan,—

Going on from our conversations, I can perhaps summarise as follows:—

The first damage I received from English criticism came via McKail's *History of Latin Literature*. McKail considers

Tacitus as a prose writer. His remarks on Propertius are ludicrous; his excuses are, first that he was dragged in to finish another man's work or to take over another man's job; his second excuse is that others had preceded him. That is to say that since Milton ruined his style by not noticing that English and Latin were and are two different languages, having different organisms, no one in England had made the observation.

In Latin, homo equum videt, videt equum homo, equum homo videt, etc., are all ways of saying the same thing with a different emphasis. In English it makes a difference whether you say "man sees horse" or "horse sees man." And hence various bifurcations.

The trouble, in my case, lay in my being a docile and susceptible young man given to respecting my elders until they proved themselves obviously and irretrievably imbecile. I also swallowed a lot of guff from amiable critics who in 1908–10 said I was a good poet who couldn't write "English," by which term they meant the ridiculous dialect employed by Oxonian publicists in the late nineties.

I have the following honourable debts:—

To Robt. Bridges: One caution against homophones.

To W. B. Yeats (with whom one disagrees on nearly all possible points, save in the belief that a poem should attain some degree of intensity): that he backs one in the belief that one should make NO compromise with the public. He has also a theory of æsthetics to the effect that art begins only when one has ceased to react to the imbecilities of multitude.

Thirdly and chiefly, to F. M. Hueffer. This is more complicated and should include some sort of historic survey of Hueffer's critical writing, as found in the preface to his collected poems, and in stray criticisms of Henry James and other prose writers.

One might summarise it by saying that he believes one should write in a contemporary spoken or at least speakable

language; in some sort of idiom that one can imagine oneself using in actual speech, i.e. in private life.

This might seem a simple matter, but it is not.

You must consider the almost impregnable position of your co-islanders, which is that one should write in some way that will not depreciate the value of the electroplates now possessed by the elder British publishing firms.

The fourth debt may be considered as the example of or hint from Thomas Hardy, who, despite the æsthetic era, has remained interested in his subject, i.e. in distinction to being interested in "treatment."

The gay malevolent Balfourian quibbler can get whatever misunderstandings he likes out of such a statement as the foregoing. Scotch the rat by saying that the right treatment occurs when one *is* sufficiently absorbed in the subject, and not otherwhen, if that leaves less room for useless wrangling.

Right treatment might also occur if one were indifferent to one's subject, i.e. so indifferent to it that one were absolutely indifferent to everything else.

I don't mean, by the above, that I accept all Hueffer's critical theories. But, at a time when the rest of them had nothing but rules of thumb, like Bridges on homophones, or Bridges's desire for archaisms, or Yeats's system of metric, Hueffer at any rate was looking for some possible and lucid basis of criticism, some gauge applicable to literature as a whole.

His criteria let in "too many people"; they let in any jackanapes who could "stand aside," who could refrain from interjecting his finger or personality between the reader and the story. I admit that this is a clever feat, and the nastier or more pusillanimous the personality of the writer the more sagacious he is to choose "Impressionism." Several "poor things" have got by on these premises. We want a few barbs under the gate somewhere if our literary paddock is not to be filled with the bores and time-wasters.

We do want some sort of paradiso, some sort of place

where we can meet, preferably, superiors, or, in any case, mental equals.

If it weren't for this we might accept Hueffer's so plausible "impressionist" criteria. But being annoyed by the number of undesirables whom he considers "good writers," we look for the flaw in his theory.

You know perfectly well that I consider criticism merely a preliminary excitement, a statement of things a writer has to clear up in his own head sometime or other, probably antecedent to writing; of no value unless it come to fruit in the created work later.

I think Hueffer goes wrong because he bases his criticism on the eye, and almost solely on the eye. Nearly everything he says applies to things *seen*. It is the exact rendering of the visible image, the cabbage field *seen*, France *seen* from the cliffs.

Man is an animal, and as Winzer says, "no better than woman or any other animal"; he is affected by interstitial pressures, from seven sets of glands, and from the sensations of taste, sight, hearing, touch, etc., etc.

All of which leave a residuum, dangerous to Mr. Hueffer's theories, and doubly dangerous to everyone else, because this residuum can be talked about in vague terms.

Since Guido and Dante tried to talk precisely about certain matters, few other have attempted the difficult task. However, there is the quality that Yeats calls "intensity"; there is a more dissociable agglomerate of things that can be called the musical properties of verse, quantity, stress, syncopation, etc., etc., etc., etc., et cetera.

I don't propose to write you a treatise, as you aren't particularly interested in poetry, and as anything I have found out about the subject during the past twenty years is of interest only to fellow-craftsmen, of whom there are three (there are possibly three ?) who take an interest in the matter. Besides, I have written of the matter before, and you can look up my published writings (N.Y. edition).

P.S.

If by any chance you care to go through these following extracts, you are perfectly welcome to do so. They are from the draft of a manuscript designed in folly for some imaginary student of literature who had a limited time at his disposal, and who was somewhat bewildered by the appalling dullness of things advertised as "classic" in publishers' circulars, and who was too intelligent to take the professorial pomp at its self-assessed value. In conviction that this student was a pale figment of my own imagination, the De Vulgari Eloquio has remained inchoate.

To "condense" the story of literature, or to understand a condensation, one must clearly dissociate four or five kinds of authors:

A. The "predecessors," inventors, discoverers of fragments which are later used in masterwork; Arnaut Daniel and the better Troubadours, the hypothetical ballad writers who went before Homer, etc.

B. The "great," the "masters."

C. The diluters, those who follow either small discoverers or great writers and who produce something less, something more flabby, in the wake of the real.

D. (and this class contains the great bulk of all writing). The men who do more or less good work in the more or less good style of a period. Of these, the delightful anthologies, the song books, the matters of taste, for you prefer Wyatt to Donne, Donne to Herrick, Drummond of Hawthornden to Brown who wrote "Led by the blind and halit by a bairn," or vice versa, in response to a purely personal sympathy. And these people, Virgil, Petrarch, etc., add but a slight personal flavour, a slight variant, to their own pages, without affecting the main form of the story.

E. One might add a fifth class: the starters of crazes, the Ossians, and Gongoras, whose wave of fashion flows over writing for a few decades or even centuries, and then subsides, leaving the solid things where they were.

It is only with A and B that I here concern myself. If a man have these two in his memory he can fairly well "place" or estimate any example of the latter classes; he won't, that is, be utterly "at sea," he won't take "cogul per columba," he will know "mouches en lait," he won't be sold a pup by some dealer in false antiquities.

The main line of literature is as follows. In Poetry:

The Greeks: Homer, Sappho, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides.

Roman sophistication, that is to say unless it comes from lost Alexandrines (Philetas, Callimachus): Catullus, Ovid, Propertius, and possibly Horace, who could be taken as basis for a whole machinery of criticism (he learned all a man could about writing, and to explain why he is mediocre you would have to explain all the explainable things).

The Anglo-Saxon *Seafarer*, and a few lines from *The Wanderer*.

Mediæval narratives, *Beowulf*, the Norse Sagas, the *Poema del Cid*.

The Troubadours (branching one way into Minnesingers, the other into Guido Cavalcanti).

Dante.

Villon.

From here on for several centuries poetry may be considered as *fioritura*, as an efflorescence, an effervescence almost.

Chaucer had in some measure preceded the richness of the classic revival, but beginning with the Italians after Dante, coming through the Latin writers of the Renaissance, the wave of French and English that followed the three hundred forgotten Latinists, Tasso, Ariosto, etc., the Italians always

a few laps ahead of the rest of Europe, straight down to Spenser, etc.

In Marlowe and Shakespeare you have an embroidery of language, a talk *about* the matter, not presentation; you have grace, richness of language, etc., as much as you like, but you have nothing that isn't replaceable by something else, no ornament that would not have done just as well in some other connection, or that for which some other figure of rhetoric or of fancy couldn't have served, or which couldn't have been distilled from literary antecedents.

After the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare the process continued.

Aside from this were the ballads, which told a straight tale.

Rochester and Dorset perhaps introduced a new note, or reintroduced an old one; at any rate they may be considered as a start toward the bite which we find in Heine, there blended with the Minnesinger-to-Goethe tradition of the lyric.

Now, during all this period poetry was considered, and probably was, an art superior to the art of prose-writing. Poetry led, and when one wants the quintessence of any of these periods one turns to the poets.

Among the books one wants to keep from the past, or at any rate to reread, the bulk of poetry almost equals the bulk of prose.

Prose, I take it, "came to again" (after the slump of the Middle Ages) in the work of Macchiavelli and the Spanish theologians.

You have but to look at the diplomatic correspondence of Henry VIII to see that English was not fit for much in his time. I mean absolutely that the prose language was not in shape to convey a clear idea, the medium wasn't there.

Various sorts of prose had existed, in fact nearly all the sorts of prose we know had existed in classic times. Herodotus wrote history that was literature, Thucydides was a journalist. (It is a modern folly to imagine that vulgarity and cheapness

are something peculiarly modern, smart, up to date, and therefore exciting and superior; they have always existed, and are of no interest in themselves, neither do they retain any interest, "not because it is interesting, but because it has just happened."

There had been bombast, oratory, legal speech, balanced sentences, Ciceronian impressiveness, conversationality, presumably in Pliny; legal prose had crept into verse; Petronius had written a satiric novel and Longus a delicate one.

Prose of the Renaissance leave us still readable Rabelais, Brantôme, Montaigne.

You had Pico and the Platonists, you had had mediæval mystics and scholastics, any amount of stuff that would do a man's style more harm than good.

The culture of the Elizabethan era in England was founded on perhaps five or six volumes of translation. An age does not need great numbers of books, but *does* need a few, to remind it that some things have been, and that local prejudice has not always been the same.

Spain burst into the Picaresque novel, the *Celestina* of Diego Puede Ser.

The eighteenth-century Pope, Voltaire (out of Bayle), and the Spanish theologians set about restraining the ebullience of their predecessors; prose came to the fore.

Fielding, Landor.

Fielding's ramble, Voltaire's edge.

The next phase gave the line Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, to set against Browning and Gautier.

Stendhal made his remark about "La poésie avec ses comparaisons obligées," and the best minds turned to prose.

One ought perhaps to throw in parenthetic mention of *Ossian*, revival of Elizabethan romanticism, *Manon* and *Adolphe*.

Having got to Flaubert, one might outline prose from thence onward in a table: genealogy of the period.

FLAUBERT Ibsen Nietzsche
(Butler)
Goncourts, Maupassant, Turgenev, Galdos
Dostoievsky, Tolstoi, Strindberg, Lewis
Henry James, Proust (Hudson, Doughty, C. Graham, Hueffer, Bennett)
Joyce.

Fenollosa on the Chinese Ideograph.

The local history of the novel in England runs, as everyone knows: Scott, Jane Austen, Brontës, Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Thos. Hardy.

Modern poetry, mounting if you like from Rochester and Dorset to Heine (Leopardi and Beddoes looking backward).

Gautier.

Corbière, Rimbaud, Laforgue.

* * * * *

The great break in literary history, or in development of the art of literature, came with the fall of inflected language. That is to say, the "laws" or conveniences of writing in Greek and Latin depended on each noun having a little tail, tag, or grunt to indicate its function in the sentence, as actor, object, indirect recipient, agent; the adjectives had labels binding them to their own nouns, and the verbs full terminal indications of time and mode, homo equum videt, videt homo equum, equum videt homo, all being equally clear, whereas in English it makes a difference whether we write "man sees horse" or "horse sees man."

Certain arrangements of words were expeditious in Greek and Latin; when the inflections were lost, the tricks of the trade went with them.

With the revival of classic knowledge during the Renaissance an intemperate admiration of the ancients started an intemperate imitation of, and obedience to, the late Roman grammarians and Greek critics; botches resulting.

What is good for Tacitus, writing in Latin, is not neces-

sarily good for you or for me writing in English or French. The only way one can learn is by observing the changes necessary if one is to have a corresponding quality in changed conditions.

To write like Tacitus, if it were possible at all, would mean to write in too tight a tangle of words.

In like manner various contagions have raged.

No comparative judgment of poetry is possible unless one realise the nature of the best recorded results. That is to say, in Greek, melopœia, the musical property of the work.

For phanopœia, the Chinese, that is, the power to cast images upon the reader's imagination.

A third sort of poetry, logopœia, or a play in the shading of the words themselves, probably culminates in Laforgue, where it may almost be said to begin, unless one credit my reading of Propertius.

Note that from my skeleton or summary I have omitted many celebrated names ; I don't in the least claim, or aim at, inclusiveness. I claim that the omission of any name here will leave an unfillable lacuna, and that anyone knowing the authors mentioned, even knowing thirty or forty pages of each (in some cases less), won't be sold a pup.

Some of these authors can be had and understood only in the original. Not everyone has time to learn original languages.

Good word-for-word cribs for all the classic Latin and Greek exist in French.

Latin translations of Greek authors are a useful, complete indication.

In English the translator has often (as Eliot says of Gilbert Murray) erected between the reader and author a barrier more impassable than the Greek language.

The following translations are, however, legible, and would have a literary existence of their own even if no originals existed.

Translations of Homer, by Chapman (stuffed up with

verbiage, but sumptuously adorned, and interesting for a few pages at a time).

Pope, eighteenth-century settee made from primitive statue, not the least the monolith, but a good settee, illustrating the taste of an epoch.

Hugues Salel, translation into late mediæval, prepleaide French, conserving some of the straightforwardness of the original.

Choruses of Euripides, by H. D. (note that there is vast gap in Greek translation).

Ovid. *Metamorphoses* by Golding, *Amores*, by Marlowe, Virgil, by Gavin Douglas, into braw Scots, of A.D. 1512. About as difficult as the original, but having merits of its own.

Horace. Whole history of English taste in verse can be followed in the myriads of translations of this author, without much satisfaction to the reader.

Propertius (if my own *Homage* can be counted).

Seafarer, by E. P.

"Li Po," and a few other Chinese poems, in my *Cathay*, based on notes collected for and by Ernest Fenollosa.

Omar Khayyám, by Fitzgerald,

Aucassin and Nicolette, by A. Lang,

Norse Sagas, by Wm. Morris,

Villon, by Synge, Rossetti, and Swinburne.

Translations of the *Divina Commedia* and of Guido and the Troubadours are very unsatisfactory (Rossetti has done well with parts of the *Vita Nuova*).

MacPherson's *Ossian* remains a literary curiosity.

(The question of songs with music will be considered later.)

Prose translations ranking as masterpieces of English:

Florio's Montaigne, North's Plutarch.

Confucius is to be found in Pauther's French.

Budge's translation of *The Book of the Dead* is highly distressing to the opposite school of Egyptologists.

The English *Mahâbhârata* is valuable not for its style, but for the interest of subject-matter, not elsewhere available.

The reader may refer to my longer essays, if he wishes to satisfy himself that this list remains after very considerable search and weeding.

To RECAPITULATE :

We find poetry in Homer (edited by Peisistratus) as good as it has ever been since, but we do not find " everything in him " ; we find onomatopœia,

" Para thina poluphloisboio thalasses,"

we find magnificent verbal sound, verse that can be read with full voice, and also chanted, we find a magnificent plot, two magnificent plots (the Trojan War all slung on Tyndarus's anxiety), we find keen sense of humanity, aliveness, the smoking-room story, beauty, grin, actual cadence of voices, you can hear the old men under the wall. Very little ornament. Ruggedness, no effect of furniture polish (the ruggedness is retained in Salel). Where there is long-windedness, it is often in the representation of character speaking.

In Sappho extreme musicality (found later in Bion's *Death of Adonis*).

The Greek dramatists decline, rather, from Homer, even Æschylus, magnificent, but rhetorical in spots, none of them have stage-craft, though they offer the prototypes of the stage situations. Plot had already existed in Homer.

Theocritus's second Idyll still holds.

Romans imitated the Greeks. Horace is a tessellation of bits, fitted into each other.

Catullus offers neatness, hardness, and Ovid a mythopœic sense, superior to that in any Greek whose work survives.

Sophistication of Ovid and Propertius is of the urbs of civilisation, of conditions that had not existed in Athens.

Herodotus is the base of the best prose.

Rhetoric developed, or not, is not interesting save for forensic speakers, mob orators, etc. ; it should be considered as something separate from literature.

The bite of Greek epigram is not quite the same thing as Propertius's irony.

No Greek was so interested in the magic instant as was Ovid.

In the rest of Latin, nothing "comes as revelation" to anyone who has read Greek.

I don't believe any amount of Greek could ruin the enjoyment of Catullus, Propertius, Ovid.

Other Latins would fade, save Petronius.

Then comes the break; the fall of civilisation.

Landor suggests that Ovid's Gaelic verse written in Pontus may have been the earlier draft of an Anglo-Saxon metre.

Seafarer, ruggedness, quantity gone, as inflection had gone, new mechanism of poetry needed.

Rhyme, in Provence, culminating in A. Daniel, used to mark rhythm (the Latin word for the two things is the same; *vide* De Vulgari Eloquio).

Rhyme music developed: perhaps thirty Provençal poems are of interest, and a few dozen Minnesinger songs, noteworthy or greater bluntness.

Peire Cardinal extended the contents of verse.

Introspection and diagnosis in Guido and Dante, poignancy, real inside to poems.

Narrative "prose" hardly counted as poetry, and had no art save that of narration.

Cid, Sagas, not clutted with ornament, and the incident of Grettir and the bear, has its value.

Dante, *Paradiso*, metaphysics, onomatopœia, sound to emotion, characters, Villon, presentation.

The rest *fioritura*, Chaucer characters, descriptivity.

Elizabethan era, in England out of Chaucer, plus *fioritura*, *bel dire*, taste for abundant or choice ornamentations.

Marlowe, Shakespeare; spread of ornament, eighteenth-century attempt to neaten and to tidy.

Interest goes over to prose; later poets appear as cameos, and gems set in mass of prose.

Landor, greatest as prose author.

Gautier and Browning hold our interest, but are less important than prose authors of their period.

Prose, via *robustezza* and abundance, licked into shape.

Philosophy, influenced. Plato becomes an appeal to emotion; Aristotle offers definition, scholastics after him, and bias of Occident is given to *ergoteurs*.

Revolt starts in Stendhal (predecessors, simple narration: *Manon*, *Adolphe*), revolt against abstract cutting statement, and lofty language of poesy. Stendhal's " appareil d'ornements appellé poétique."

THE SHRINE

By LUIGI PIRANDELLO

I

HE lay down beside his wife, who was turned toward the small bed where the two children were sleeping. Softly he murmured his accustomed prayers, and crossed his hands under the back of his neck. Then he closed his eyes, and, unconscious of what he was doing, began to whistle, as he always did, when a doubt or a thought was gnawing at him inside.

—Fififi . . . fififi . . . fififi . . .—

It wasn't exactly whistling, it was a sort of muffled piping, for which he puckered up the outermost edges of his lips; and it was always the same cadence.

His wife stirred and wakened.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing. Go to sleep. Good-night."

He pulled up the covers, turned his back to her, and lay on his side also, so as to get to sleep. Sleep!

—Fififi . . . fififi . . . fififi . . .—

He felt his wife's fist on his spine.

"Stop that! You'll wake the children!"

"That's so. Keep quiet. I'm going to sleep."

He tried conscientiously to drive from his mind the troublesome thought that made itself as persistently audible within him as a chirping cricket. Just as soon as he thought he had chased it out—

—Fififi . . . fififi . . . fififi . . .—

for Fenimore Cooper was that his redskins, even at the stake, did not betray their secrets.

But the author is precisely he who does utter his secrets! That brought a conflict into Balzac's life. "To publish one's thoughts, is that not to prostitute them? If I had been rich and fortunate enough, I would have saved them all for my beloved."

Is it, however, indeed still possible in the modern world to live a secret life? It is a fine saying of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam that: *Il y aura toujours de la solitude pour ceux qui en seront dignes.* Balzac, who so passionately lived his epoch, who enthusiastically celebrated the century with which he grew up, yet complained of one of the consequences of the modern era of industry and travel: the restriction of the sphere of privacy. Modern publicity and modern capitalism no longer permit individuals to make for themselves a quiet nook in life. "This disgusting, unbridled speculation that from year to year lowers the height of the stories of a house, that puts a whole dwelling into the space formerly occupied by a *salon*, that declares war to the knife on the inhabitants, will inevitably have an effect on Parisian habits and manners. It will soon be necessary to live more outside than in a house. That hallowed privacy of life, the freedom of one's own home, where is it now to be found? It begins with an income of fifty thousand francs." This complaint is found repeatedly.

Such pessimistic judgments on the economic evolution are with Balzac to be referred finally to the vital feeling that defends the claims of privacy and intimacy against the control of modern society. Balzac desires a form of life in which secrecy is still possible.

A last form in which the mysterious is found with Balzac is the artistic. Balzac has projected the mysteriousness of his life into his work. The Human Comedy is full of mysterious persons of all kinds and degrees. One has only to recall Raphael de Valentin, Vautrin, Trenkhofer, Albert Savarus. Many other names will suggest themselves.

This time he didn't wait to feel his wife's fist again, but jumped out of bed, exasperated.

"What are you doing? Where are you going?" she asked.

"I'm putting on some clothes. I can't sleep. I'm going to sit out in front. It's air I want!"

"Well, of all things! And might I ask what's the matter with you?"

"That vermin," Spatolino sputtered, trying all the while to speak in a low tone, "that cheat, that enemy of God. . . ."

"Who do you mean?"

"Ciancarella."

"The notary?"

"No one else. He sent me word that he wants to see me to-morrow at the villa."

"Well?"

"Well, what can a man like that want of me, will you tell me? Swine that he is, except for the holy baptism he got by mistake! Swine, that's a small thing to call him! Give me some air!"

He opened the door, and, grasping a chair, set it out in the silent, sleeping alley, and sat down, his shoulders braced against the wall of his shanty.

An oil-lamp near him droned languidly, its yellow light reflected in the stagnant water, if water it was, of an old well-head, whose mortar and pebble work were crumbling and falling into untidy heaps all around it.

From within the hovels in the shadow came a mouldy stable smell, and from time to time, in the silence, the stamping of some animal tormented by flies.

A cat, slinking along the wall, stopped, paw-uplifted, and stared cautiously.

Spatolino looked up into the streak of sky, where the stars were burning; as he gazed up at them he tugged the straggly hairs of his scant red beard towards his mouth.

He was small of stature, and, although he had handled

clay and lime since boyhood, there was something suggestive of gentle breeding about him.

Suddenly his eyes that had been so clear as he turned them toward the sky, filled with tears. He moved uneasily on his chair, and wiping off the crawling tear-drops with the back of his hand, he murmured in the silence :

" *Cristo mio*, help me ! "

II

Since the clerical faction had been defeated in the district, and the new party, that of the excommunicated, had won all the seats in the commune, Spatolino felt that he was living in the camp of the enemy.

All his fellow workmen had followed the new bosses like so many sheep ; and now, fast bound, every one of them, in their union, they ran the affairs of the district in their own godless way.

With the very few workmen who had kept faith with Holy Church, Spatolino had founded the " Catholic Society of Mutual Succour for the Unworthy Sons of the Grieving Madonna."

But the odds were all against him. The taunts of his enemies—and also of his friends—together with his spasms of rage at his powerlessness had dimmed Spatolino's vision.

He had obstinately persisted, as president of his society, in getting up processions, and illuminations, and pilgrimages, for every recurrence of the religious feast days, first and most piously observed by the Communal Council ; now howls and outbursts of blasphemous laughter from his adversaries were his reward for all the hard work he did for San Michele the Archangel, and San Francisco di Paola, and for Good Friday, and Corpus Christi, in short all the principal feasts of the church calendar.

And thus his slender capital, by means of which he had been able to take work on contract, had of late grown so emaciated

that he saw the moment coming when he, who was once a master bricklayer, would be nothing more than a wretched journeyman.

His wife too had by this time lost all respect and consideration for him, providing for her own needs and those of her children, by washing, and cooking out, taking whatever work she could get.

Just as though he liked being idle! But if the union of those sons of dogs took all the work away from him! . . . What did his wife want him to do anyway? Give up his faith, deny God, have his name set down with those on the union register? Cut off his right hand, rather!

But having no work to do burned him out; each succeeding day his pride and sensitiveness grew more touchy, poisoning him against everything.

Ciancarella, the notary, had never taken sides in the religio-political disputes of the Commune. But it was notorious that he was an enemy of God; in fact he made a profession of this fact, having given up the exercise of his other profession as notary. Once he had gone so far as to set the dogs on to a worthy priest, don Lagaipa, who had gone to Ciancarella to intercede for some of the notary's poor relations who were starving, while he, in the splendid villa he had built for himself on the boundary line of the township, was living like a prince, on the wealth he had accumulated God knows how, and that he had increased by long years of usury.

All night long (fortunately it was summer) Spatolino stayed in the deserted alley, sometimes sitting in his chair, sometimes walking up and down, pondering (fififi . . . fififi . . . fififi . . .) that mysterious summons of Ciancarella's.

Then, knowing that the latter usually got up early, and hearing his wife already stirring in the house, he thought it the moment to take himself off. He left the chair in the alley. It was an old one, and no one would be likely to take it.

Ciancarella's villa was heavily walled like a fortress, with an entrance gate on the highway that ran across the province.

The old fellow, who looked like a toad, dressed up, was suffering from an enormous cyst at the back of his neck, which made him bend his close-shaven head to one side. He lived alone, with only one servant; but a great many of the peasants out in the fields were under his orders, and carried arms; and with him there were always two mastiffs, the very sight of which was enough to frighten anyone.

Spatolino rang the bell. Suddenly the two beasts dashed furiously at the bars of the gate, and would not cease their horrible noise even when the servant came to tell Spatolino he need not be afraid. But Spatolino would not enter. The master himself, who was having his coffee in the little ivy-covered summer-house at one side of the villa, in the middle of the flower-garden, had to whistle the dogs off.

"Ah, Spatolino, bravo!" said Ciancarella. "Sit down there."

He pointed to one of the iron benches that were placed in a circle around the summer-house.

The Spatolino remained standing, with his gravel and lime-spattered cap in his hands.

"You are an 'Unworthy Son,' aren't you?"

"Yes, sir, and proud of it. Of the 'Grieving Madonna.' What can I do for you, sir?"

"That is what I want," said Ciancarella; but instead of going on, he raised his cup to his lips and took three swallows of coffee.

"A shrine." (Another swallow.)

"What's that?"

"I want you to build a shrine." (Again a swallow of coffee.)

"A shrine, did you say, sir?"

"Yes. On the highway. In front of the gate. (Here another swallow, the last. He put down the cup, and, without drying his lips, stood up from the table. A drop of coffee scuttled down from the corner of his mouth to the bristly hairs of his beard that for several days had received no atten-

my fine fellow, those priests have bewildered your brain. They go around saying that I don't believe in God, do they? Do you know why? Because I don't feed them. Well . . . hold on, a minute! They'll have something to fill their bellies with when they come to bless the shrine! It'll be a fine feast, Spatolino, my boy! Why do you look at me like that? You don't believe it? Or do you want to know how it came into my head? In a dream, son, in a dream. I dreamed the other night. . . . Now of course the priests will say that God has touched my heart. Let them talk. What's that to me? So, you understand what you're to do, eh? Speak, move, man! Have you lost your tongue?"

"Yes, sir," confessed Spatolino, spreading out his arms.

Ciancarella this time took his head in both hands, and laughed in a long gasping whimper.

"Come," he said finally. "You know my terms. I don't want any bother. I know you know your business, and that you're honest. Do it as though you were working for yourself. Buy the stuff, get whatever you want, only don't annoy me. When the work is done, we'll settle the bill. You understand exactly how I want that shrine to look?"

"Yes, sir."

"When will you get to work?"

"To-morrow."

"And when will the job be done?"

Spatolino stood a minute considering.

"Well," he said, "if it's to be so big, it will take at least . . . a month."

"All right. Let's go see the place where it's to be."

The ground on the other side of the highway belonged, all of it, to Ciancarella, who had bought it so as to have no trouble with neighbours opposite. He let the shepherds take their sheep there to pasture just as though he didn't own it. It wasn't necessary therefore to ask anyone's permission in order to put up the shrine. Having pointed out the exact spot, directly in front of the gate, the old man went back to

tion.) " A shrine, as I say, not too small, because it is to have a statue in it, a big one, Christ tied to the pillar. On the side walls I want to have two fine big paintings. Here Calvary. There an Entombment. In short, like a comfortable little cabin, on a pediment a yard high, with a little iron chancel in front of it, and a cross above. You see what I want ? "

Spatolino, his eyes shut, nodded several times. Then he looked at Ciancarella, and, drawing a deep breath, he said :

" But you're joking, sir ? "

" Joking ? Why ? "

" I thought you were joking. Forgive me, sir. A shrine, it is to be, sir, to the *Ecce Homo* ? "

Ciancarella tried to raise his shaven head a little. He held it with one hand and laughed in his own peculiar way, a curious laugh, as though he were whimpering on account of that ugly growth that held him by the neck.

" Well, what's the matter ? You think I'm not good enough, is that it ? "

" Oh no, sir, excuse me, sir ! " Spatolino, irritated, and becoming excited, made haste to deny. " But why should you, sir, without any reason, commit a sacrilege ? You must excuse me if I talk frankly, sir. Who is it you want to fool, sir ? God ? No. You can't fool God. God sees everything. He isn't going to let you fool him, sir. Men, perhaps ? But they can see through you too, and they know, sir, that you. . . ."

" What do they know, idiot ? " shouted the old man. " And what do you know about God, you miserable earthworm ? What the priests have told you, eh ? But God, I tell you. . . . Bah, bah, bah, here am I trying to talk sense into you. . . . Have you had your breakfast ? "

" No, sir."

" An ugly vice, my dear fellow. I suppose I ought to give you some now, eh ? "

" No, sir. I don't take anything."

" Oh ! " exclaimed Ciancarella, with a yawn, " those priests,

the villa, and Spatolino remained alone—fififi . . . fififi . . . fififi . . .—This time it was interminable. Then he set off. Trudging along, he arrived, almost without knowing where he was going, in front of Dom Lagaipa's door. He remembered, after he had already knocked, that the priest, who was the confessor, had been sick in bed for several days ; he shouldn't have disturbed him by calling so early ; but the matter was serious ; he went in.

IV

Dom Lagaipa was up, and in his shirt-sleeves, stood in the middle of the room polishing his rifle while his servant and niece bustled in great confusion about him, trying to obey his numerous orders.

His large fleshy nose, that looked like a sponge, it was so full of holes left by small-pox, seemed, since he had been sick, to have increased in size. Looking this way and that, diverging as though terrified by that nose, his bright black eyes seemed to want to escape from the yellow flabby face that held them prisoners.

" They're ruining me, Spatolino, ruining me! Just this morning that infidel bastard of a boy was here, to tell me that my country place has become common property now, belongs to everybody! The socialists, you see? They're stealing my grapes, still green—and my figs, everything! ' Mine is yours,' that's the idea, ' yours is mine.' I'm going to send this gun after them, let it catch them by the legs. ' Aim at their legs,' I told him. The lead-cure, you might call it. Rosina, you little goose, I asked you for a little more vinegar, and a clean handkerchief. Well, what is it, son ? "

Spatolino didn't know exactly how to begin. Scarcely had he let Ciancarella's name out of his mouth than there was a hailstorm of vile names. When he mentioned the order for the building of a shrine, he saw Dom Lagaipa stop frozen in his tracks.

" A shrine, you said ? "

" Yes, sir. To *Ecce Homo.* I came to ask your reverence if I should make it, sir."

" You ask me that, you son of a donkey! What did you say to him? "

Spatolino repeated all that he had told Ciancarella, and even, excited by the priest's exclamations of approval, added some things that he had not said.

" Fine, fine! And what did he say, that old snout of a cross-eyed dog? "

" He had a dream, he says."

" The old liar! Don't you believe it! What a lie! If God had really spoken to him in a dream he would have told him to give a bit of help to those poor Lattugas, whom he won't recognise as his relatives because they are devout and faithful to us, and all the while he's giving money to the Montoros, those black atheists and socialists, do you see? He'll leave his money to them too, I'm telling you. Well, enough of this. What do you want from me? Make the shrine for him. If you don't make it for him someone else will. And just the same it will be a good thing for us that sinners like him should try to make it up with God. Old fraud that he is, old pug-snout! "

Spatolino went home and spent the rest of the day designing shrines. Towards evening he started out to get his materials together, hired a couple of labourers and engaged a mason's apprentice. And the following day he set to work.

V

Everyone going along the dusty highway, whether on foot, on horseback, or in a cart, stopped to ask Spatolino what he was making.

" A shrine."

" Who gave you the order? "

Pointing to the sky, Spatolino replied, " The *Ecco Homo.*"

No one could get another word out of him all the while

that he was at work. And when they heard his answer people laughed, or shrugged.

"The *Ecce Homo* ordered it to be put up?" someone asked him, looking across the road at the villa gate.

It never came into anyone's head that the notary might have ordered the shrine. Everybody, ignorant of the fact that the ground opposite his villa belonged to Ciancarella, and knowing that Spatolino was a little daft on religion, thought that the bricklayer was building the shrine at the request of the bishop or for the Society of Unworthy Sons, just to spite the old usurer. And they laughed at the joke.

Meanwhile, as if God were really indignant about the matter, every possible difficulty dogged Spatolino in his work. In the first place, he had to dig four whole days before he found the right soil for the foundation. Then he had long arguments at the quarry before he could get the marble; more arguments to get the lime; more arguments still with the mortar mixer; finally, when he set about building the arch, the centre-bit fell, and only by the greatest miracle did the apprentice escape having it come down on him.

And then, the final catastrophe. On the very day when Spatolino was to show him the new shrine that was just finished, Ciancarella had an apoplectic stroke, a real one, and within three hours he was dead as a door-nail.

After that no one could get it out of Spatolino's head that this sudden death of the notary's was the judgment of an indignant God. But, at first, anyway, he did not believe that this divine judgment was to be poured out on him also. Wasn't it quite against his will that he had put up that accursed construction?

But he did believe it when, on going to the Montoros, the notary's heirs, to get his pay for the work, he was told that no one of them knew anything about it, nor did they care to recognise a debt for which there was no atom of proof.

"What!" exclaimed Spatolino. "And who was it then told me to make the shrine?"

" The *Ecce Homo.*"

" You think that came out of my own head ? "

" Oh, it's this way," they replied, to get rid of him: " we'd feel that we were lacking in respect to our uncle's memory if we paid such a bill, supposing even for a moment that he had really given you an order so contrary to his usual way of thinking and feeling. We can do nothing, my good fellow ! You can't bring any claims against us. Keep the shrine if you like, and if that doesn't suit you, go to court."

And at once—why not ?—Spatolino did go to court. Could he possibly lose ? Could the judges for a minute believe that he had got the idea of building that shrine out of his own head ? There was the servant to act as witness, Ciancarella's servant, who had come to summon him to the villa ; and there was Dom Lagaipa, with whom he had taken counsel that very day ; and there was his wife, to whom he had told everything, and the labourers who had worked with him all that time. How could he lose the suit ?

But he lost it just the same. He lost it because Ciancarella's servant, now hired by the Montoros, testified that at his master's orders he had gone to get Spatolino to come to the villa, yes he had ; but certainly not because his master had got it into his head to build that shrine there, but because the gardener, now deceased (happy choice) had heard talk about how Spatolino was intending to build a shrine of his own right opposite the gate, and he had wanted to give Spatolino warning that the piece of ground on the other side of the road belonged to him, and that he'd better take good care not to put up any nonsense like that on his property. He added further that one day, when he told his master that Spatolino, in spite of having been forbidden to do any such thing, was digging there with three workmen, his master had replied, " Well, let him dig. Don't you know he's crazy ? Perhaps he's looking for treasure to finish Saint Catherine's church." And of course the evidence of Dom Lagaipa, notoriously the inspirer of so many of Spatolino's crazy acts, was

of no good at all. What more was there? Even the workmen testified that they had never seen Ciancarella and that they had always received their day's pay from the bricklayer, who had engaged them.

Spatolino rushed from the court-room as though out of his senses. It was not so much the loss of his money, thrown away there in building that shrine; it was not so much the costs of the trial, which to cap the climax the court had ordered him to pay; it was the crumbling of his faith in divine justice. . . .

"But then," he kept saying to himself, "there is no God any more."

At Dom Lagaipa's instigation he appealed his case. That was the final blow. On the day when the news reached him that even his appeal had been lost, Spatolino could scarcely breathe. With the last few cents left in his pocket he bought a yard and a half of red cotton, and three old sacks, and went home.

"Make me a tunic!" he said to his wife, throwing the three sacks on to her lap.

His wife looked at him as though she had not heard.

"What is it you are trying to do now?"

"I've told you. Make me a tunic. . . . No? I'll make it myself."

In less time than it takes to tell, he ripped open two sacks and sewed them together lengthwise. In the top one he cut an opening. With the third he made sleeves and sewed them into two holes cut in the first sack that he tacked together here and there, so that the widest opening made the collar. He bundled up his work, took the red cotton cloth, and, without a word to anyone, went away.

About an hour afterwards the news spread through the countryside that Spatolino, stark mad, had set himself up as a statue of Christ tied to the column in the new shrine there on the high-road, just opposite the Ciancarella villa.

"Set himself up? What do you mean?"

"Why yes, he himself, like a Christ, inside the shrine!"

"You're joking!"

"It's true, I tell you!"

And everybody was running to see him, inside the shrine, behind the iron rail, all tied up in that sacking that still bore the grocer's name stamped on it, his yard and a half of red cotton over his shoulders like a mantle, a crown of thorns on his head, a reed in his hand.

His head was sunk on his breast, and leaned a little to one side; and his eyes were fixed on the ground. Nothing disturbed him in the slightest degree, neither laughter, nor the devilish howls of the crowd that was growing like a spring freshet; more than one young ragamuffin threw rotten fruit at him; and several, leaning down there under his nose, spat cruel insults at him; but he was impassive, motionless, as a real statue; only now and then his eyelids quivered.

Neither the prayers nor the curses of his wife, who had come running with the other women, could move him, nor the squalling of his children. Finally two of the rural police intervened, and, to put a stop to the merry-making, broke down the railing in front of the shrine and carried Spatolino off to jail.

"Leave me alone! Who is more Christ than I?" Spatolino began to cry out, struggling to get loose. "Don't you see how they mock me and revile me? Who is more Christ than I? Leave me alone! This is my house. I made it for myself, with my own money and my own hands. I poured my own blood into it. Leave me alone, you Jews!"

But the Jews didn't want to let him go before nightfall.

"You go home," the judge admonished him. "Go along home, and take care what you do, now!"

"Yes, signor Pilate," answered Spatolino with a bow.

And, stealthily, he returned to the shrine. Again, he dressed himself up as Christ; he passed the night there, and never left the shrine again.

They tempted him with hunger; they tempted him with

fear and mockings; in vain. Finally they let him alone. He was nothing but a poor crazy fool who never hurt anybody.

VI

And now someone brings him oil for the lamp; and someone else, food and drink; and the little country girls whisper to one another that he is a saint, and ask for his prayers; one of them brought him a new tunic, not so rough as the old one, and in return asked him for three lottery numbers. . . .

The carters, passing by night along the highway, have grown accustomed to that little lamp burning before the shrine; they like to see it from afar off down the road; and they stop to chat a bit with the poor Christ who always smiles benignly at their jokes no matter how bad they are; then they go away. The rumble of the cart-wheels dies out little by little in the silence; and poor Christ goes to sleep again, or perhaps climbs down to attend to his human needs behind the wall, without a thought for the moment of how he is dressed up as Christ with his tunic of sacking, and his mantle of red cotton.

But often a stray cricket, attracted by the light, hops on to him and wakes him with a start. Then he starts praying again. But not seldom it happens that while he is praying, another cricket, the old chirping cricket, awakens within him. Spatolino shakes off the crown of thorns from his forehead—he is already quite accustomed to it—and, scratching himself here and there where the thorns have left their prick, and with his eyes grown vague, he begins again to whistle:

—Fififi . . . fififi . . . fififi. . . .

THE STORY OF TRISTRAM AND ISOLT IN ENGLISH POETRY

By T. STURGE MOORE

PART II. DRAMATIC VERSIONS

MICHAEL FIELD published anonymously in 1911 *The Tragedy of Pardon* and *Tristan de Léonois*. Unfortunately the best work of the two poetesses (who collaborated under this pseudonym) is represented by neither of these dramas so well as Swinburne's, Arnold's, or Mr. Binyon's poems may stand for their best. Yet both throw light on the demand that this subject makes on a poet. *The Tragedy of Pardon* follows the old romance [1] through a crowd of scenes, but with a new emphasis. Each time King Mark discovers the lovers together he pardons them, blinded by a fortuitous seeming-innocence in their attitudes at the moment. The repetition of such a mistake might be both natural and tragic and express to the last drop the wine of this story. He who is forced to doubt those whom honour binds to him will welcome every excuse to think that he has yielded to unfounded suspicions. King Mark thus becomes a pathetic figure, and the wearing and degrading repetition of such ordeals would be an original and tragic motive were the king the hero, as the title might lead us to expect; but he is not, and his pardons produce no more effect on the characters of the lovers than did their more casual escapes in the old story

[1] See J. Bédier: *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut.*

or in Swinburne's poem. These incidents are only mechanically threaded on to the main theme, as Arnold and Mr. Binyon may perhaps have felt; they have never become part of its vital organism. Why then were they retained? The authors had doted on the quaintness of their originals till they became dilettante archæologists in spirit. They could not bear to cut away picturesque circumstance in order that the naked beauty of their theme might move unhindered through the mind. They clung not only to jumbled local colour gathered during the growth of the story from many countries and epochs, but also to inadequacies of psychology and incoherent construction. In narrative, atmosphere becomes more easily an essential part of the medium through which man's spirit views the possibilities of a situation as inevitable. But the stage is before our eyes, there actual bodies and voices are seen and heard. Shakespeare begged us to—

> "Piece out their imperfections with our thoughts,"

but we must accept them before we "deck them." Then in a drama the fact that a thing is said and to whom must always be more important than where and when it was said. Because we now hear words passing between persons, atmosphere and local colour must play a secondary rôle. The poet would ever address the audience over the actors' heads, but his voice is fainter than a flitter-mouse shriek, save as it seem felicitously theirs. That dilettante mood which condones the childishness of the mediæval mind is yet more a frustrate ghost in the theatre than in the library. The ancient bards were proud to weave as many of their favourite incidents as possible into each story that they told; and their audience no more noticed that they were pleased at the expense of the main theme than those who watch musical comedy to-day complain of irrelevancies that delight them. But can a tragic poet allow his heroine to cheat God of a miracle by the equivocation at an ordeal by fire of never having lain with any man save her husband and this old beggar who has just

fallen at the landing with her in his arms, but who is Tristram disguised ? [1] This is a late addition to the story as impertinent as could be conceived. So too the " sword unsheathed " is a true and pregnant symbol between Brynhild and Gunnar's body in which the transferred soul of her husband Sigurd lies still in drugged and betrayed loyalty, but between Tristram and Isolt in the forest lodge it is a meaningless lie. Michael Field does not ignore this after Swinburne's fashion, but the explanation given only underlines the weakness of the old tale. King Mark having overheard Tristram whistling against the birds and then both him and Isolt sigh for freedom says :

> " You have sung
> Yourself free of the cage. I set you loose. . . .
> Those penetrating, sovereign notes—why, even
> A murderer's heart were softened at their fall.
> Go forth, and pair in the singing woods. Go forth
> Together, true to what you are, together
> As paramours ! "

In the next scene he finds them with the sword between, laid there by Tristram in spite of Isolt's remonstrance because he had heard horns and fears they may be found asleep.

> " One kiss
> Across the spiteful flash ! (the sword's) O God of love,
> Be worshipped that this check is but a lie,"

the lover has said before lying down, and when they wake :

> " Yet, if Mark
> Spied on us, heaven be praised the sword was there."

Mark then gives freedom, but does not give it ; the lovers accept yet doubt the gift. The one scene treats physical continence as unimportant in Mark's eyes, the next scene as essential. It is true that successive throes of his soul's grapple

[1] The lie is double in the play, for she has not lain with her husband and has with Tristram. In the old story the Brangwain hoax is merely for the first night, to cloak the fact that Isolt is no longer virgin. But modern sentiment is reluctant to let her husband share Isolt's bed alternatively with Tristram.

with a nightmare experience might well inform this contradiction with life, but that the lovers should play consciously for such a frantic volte-face cannot convince us unexplained. Colour and glamour, hints and flashes in every direction, till the outline is lost in an opalescent haze of dazzling suggestions, may pass in a novel, but not in a tragedy.

Tristan de Léonois is better conceived, though still the fairy-tale element dominates.[1] Any trait in the characters of the lovers which might account for the situation detracts from the tragedy of their having been so placed against their will. Mr. Binyon's supposition that Tristram was already in love with Isolt before he sought her hand for his uncle, is of this nature. And in this play the poetesses let a dæmonic element in Isolt's character well-nigh rival the philtre.

That Tristram banished by the offended Mark should shortly return disguised as a fool, and deceive not only King and court but Isolt herself, is an invention more likely to be seized open-armed by the creator of *Cyrano* than of *Macbeth*. It is too ingeniously pregnant with theatrical effect for Tragedy. In the second act Isolt escapes on shipboard to fly to her dying lover sped by a tempest, then held up by a calm till Brangwain dies an unexplained death in her arms. Whereas, whether from exposure, madness, or some sea-accident, it is the Queen of Cornwall's own death that we should witness. As it is, her relation to Tristram remains unchanged throughout the act—that is, the story's main business has stood still; yet Isolt dies before they reach land, though we are informed neither when nor how. I fear the authors mistakingly supposed that for us to witness her death would forestall the great surprise of their third act, when her phantom enters with the very cup retrieved from the sea, from which she and Tristram had drunk love, and bids him drink death from it. She is a sorceress only half-human, and this addition to her powers is all subtracted from the poignancy of the situation created by the philtre. Though she wail—

[1] See J. Bédier: *Les deux poèmes de Tristan fou.*

"I had no waking
From childhood and no waking into love;
It was all thrust on me,"

the effect is obliterated by her inhuman behaviour and laughing reappearance after death. Like the passage where she mounts the stair in Mr. Binyon's poem, this scene of her ghostly return seemed dear to the lyric impulse, because it avoided a meeting, complicated by the hostility of the white-handed Isolt, a difficulty it would have been more like Shakespeare to face and triumph over. This play, indeed, both these plays, abound in flashes of beauty, throbs of poignancy. Tristram cries:

"It is incredible
To Mark, his friend should be to him a liar,
Amazing, curious as a miracle
I should betray. He does not hear the trumpets
That blow their triumph through me in his presence,"

and Brangwain to Isolt:

"There is a love
Of woman unto woman in its fibre
Stronger than knits a mother to her child.
. . . . . O my dear,
To keep you moving in and out my days!
Let me go forth and to the multitude
Publish the story of my great neglect;
And I will take the iron in my hand,
And pray that it may burn me to the bone,
If all I speak before the holy bishop,
The King and all his lieges be not true:
That you are under spell and innocent,
That you and the lord Tristan are as one,
Are fashioned to each other, as the cup
To acorn; and no other use is yours,
Or purpose in the world."

Fine lines! yet readers are liable to be haunted rather by an abuse of broken syntax to imitate talk or the small daring of words used in a strained sense. Nevertheless should any young man determine to give us that version of this story for which the poetical genius and language of our race appears

to wait, he will do well to read and reread these with the other versions of this story before he allows that final one to crystallise in his mind, nay, may well find these more suggestive than some he might admire more.

Fortunately we can turn from our more or less inadequate English versions of the Tristram romance to that of Richard Wagner, where we find a potent grasp on the central bearings of the subject, an adequate King Mark and have done with that superfluity of naughtiness, the white-handed Isolt.

In his Isolt of Ireland the pride of race and class is accepted as a law; she owes her very essence to them, and is willing to pay her debt by the sacrifice of life; Tristram is like her, but the greater freedom of his sex, the roving for adventure, the satisfaction of victory after victory, have enisled him in an ocean of favourable exception. He is a Brahman of nobility whom indignities are not only forbidden to touch, but do not. Isolt's demand that he shall drink poison as expiation for having slain Morolt, her betrothed, is met as a claim at law. It has been wiped out, forgiveness has been sworn openly between the two countries. She replies that she had not sworn, and since she once had him in her power and spared him, deceived by a false name, he owes her his life, now that she knows him for the slayer of Morolt. How can she expect King Mark to avenge her on the man whose unheard-of good fortune has enabled him to bring her to him for a bride? She herself will die too, for his uncle would be bound to slay her if she did not, to avenge Tristram's death. He admits the dilemma. They drink. Both sacrifice themselves to the conception of honour which has made them what they are proud to be, noble. But Brangwain has changed the potions. They drink love, not death. Thus both become traitors to their whole conception of life. A passion, which according to their own ideals they should die rather than yield to, takes possession of them in the very act by which they had sought immunity from life's ignoble compromises. The felicity, pregnancy, and directness of this invention of

the shuffled draughts makes one catch one's breath. Why, at such a moment, any innocent syrup exchanged for expected, accepted, instantaneous death, might throw young people so wrought up into one another's arms! The symbol of the cup adds nothing but its plasticity.[1] The scene were inevitable though there had been in it no magic brew. For them past and future can have nothing in common. They are like new-born babes, utterly innocent of any collusion with that which has brought them into being: they must be "done for" and "seen after" by Brangwain and Kurvenal; so much we perceive before the curtain descends. When it rises for the second act both instinctively, inevitably seize on the night which allows them to meet, as the symbol of this new world into which they have been thrust. A world of darkness that contains nothing but their bliss-like, death, like extinction, except in being filled with their mutual joy. Their habits, their honour, estate, friends, foes, which have made their world hitherto, are things of an unreal, fictitious, unimportant, almost forgotten pre-existence, of which they might, reversing the poet's words, speak pityingly.

> "But trailing clouds of sadness do we come,
> From hatred to our home:
> Hell lies about us in our infancy:
> But from the waning glare love sets us free."

So much is this their case that, when that world bursts in upon them and the day begins to dawn, Tristram, throwing his cloak over Isolt, commands its spectres to depart: "Phantoms of day, morning's illusions, deceitful and desolate, avaunt, begone!" But these visions speak, King Mark brings home to Tristram the drear reality. "O King," he answers, "that

[1] Its plasticity is the true ground why the supernatural is so felicitous an element in the art both of those who actually believe in it and those who do not; it is in itself of the nature of art; though it may have symbolical significance, this is not necessary if as plastic invention it strikes the mind powerfully. In the present instance the plasticity is as intimate as that of a sigh or a kiss.

thou wouldst know, canst thou never learn." Then he turns to ask Isolt to come away with him to his own country, the land of darkness out of which he was born. She replies that even as she had followed him to Cornwall she is ready to follow to that land " that over all the earth doth span," that lies behind the light. At this the traitor Melot is roused to an extremity of virtuous indignation. Tristram draws sword and attacks him, but instead of fighting runs on his betrayer's weapon. In the third act the fugitive, wounded, fever-stricken Tristram deliriously reproaches Isolt for devoting him to eternal torture, and preventing his death. " Night throws me back on the day, that my miseries may for ever be pasture, and yet again pasture, to the cruel gaze of the sun," and then, seizing on the whole fact of man's existence, he cries : " In the pain of my parents, in bygone lovers' woes, in tears and laughter, joys and wounds, I found poisons for the drink. —I have brewed thee ! Thou, that wert poured forth for me, The time has been when with rapture I drained thee." Yes, not only the horrible nightmare world, but his love, his bliss have been drawn from the past. Yes, we are a mere part ; both what we would reject in ourselves, and what we delight in, is bound to the past and binds us to the future. Thus the inevitable solidarity of the race (linked to its antagonist complement, the sense of individual responsibility—the " I have brewed thee, I have enjoyed thee " breaks over the soul. Why has the chain been forged ? Why are we fastened to it ? riveted into it ? There is no answer ; it is the mere mockery of incapacity that pretends that a reason is known. Why, when millions of negroes grin at me, must I own that there is more that binds me to them than that separates me from them ; why, when the inarticulate ape gibbers, must I recognise in the travesty of his shape and sounds the passions that move me or the greater number of them ? Never has this inevitable nausea at the mundane spectacle that lies in wait for those whom its beauty has enchanted been more tragically presented than by Wagner, with the vain flight of

the lovers from the light of day; till the dying Tristram owns that the last resource of the imagination, the last hope that clings to existence, is a curse, and that even annihilation were better than life. But his dream grips him again like a vice the moment the possibility of Isolt's coming is suggested to him, and he tears off the bandages of his wound that his blood may flow freely, since "she who shall heal it, once for all, like a hero approaches." As a consequence he dies in her arms. A few moments later, we learn from Mark's lips that Brangwain has confessed, and that he is come to repair the wrong he had unconsciously done his dear nephew, and to rejoice in his truth who had meant to die, not betray his trust. But hardly have we heard this when the great hope against hope, the fundamental lyrical reaction, pours itself through the ecstatic lips of the unheeding Queen and with it her soul escapes.

There are two criticisms directed against the structure of this masterpiece which weigh with me.

Matthew Arnold in his old age writes from Munich:

"Went to the opera to see *Tristram and Iseult*. I may say I have managed the story better. . . . The second act is interminable, and without action. The hero and heroine sit on a sofa and sing to one another about light and darkness, and their connection with love. The theatre was a brilliant sight, and the prima donna is a handsome woman with some sweet notes in her voice; but at the end of the second act, at about half-past ten, the piece having begun at half-past six, I was quite worn out and came away. The third act is better, I imagine, but even in that less is made of the story than might be made."

Arnold came from a day's drudgery at school inspection, to which task our characteristic and improvident Government still kept him. In a later letter he says:

"His stories interest me so much, and his libretto is so

poetically written, that I like to see his operas, though of course the music says little to me."

What he meant by having "managed the story better" I cannot conceive, unless he still had a fond eye on that white-handed young lady who so fascinated his prime. The length of the performance is not only due to the music; for many have censured Wagner for dragging in Schopenhauer's philosophy with that over-extensive elaboration of the image of night and day. No doubt this criticism is in both these forms frivolous; for great art is not less great because two acts of it in the evening entirely exhaust a jaded school-inspector nor because it can be described as illustrating a philosophy. Dante and Milton may equally be condemned for tediously and vainly dragging in the systems of Catholicism and Protestantism. Vainly because neither Catholics nor Protestants accept the exposition as sufficient; just as those who look up to Schopenhauer pooh-pooh Wagner's use of his ideas. But Wagner himself was conscious of the exorbitant demands he made on our time and attention, and provided for his audiences a veritable sabbath in the pure air of the pine woods. The second act, as I have shown, does not lack most important action, though the period passed on the sofa before it matures is abnormally protracted. Yet for other ears and minds this is just what is most absorbingly delightful: I remember to have overheard in the gallery at Drury Lane, during the interval between the first and second acts, this reply made in a husky voice by a middle-aged German to a young friend who had, I suppose, not been quite favourably impressed: "Vait, there's von hour and a half of loff duets commin'." This may explain Wagner's popularity, but he is neither great because he is popular, nor popular because he is great, as there are sufficient examples both of popularity and greatness to prove. Romeo and Juliet's dialogue in the parallel scene is only thirty-six lines of blank verse; this of Tristram and Isolt equals perhaps a

hundred and twenty. There is no scene of such length I believe either in Shakespeare or the Greek Tragedians solely occupied by lovers in expressing their mutual passion. Of course this monstrous attention to these lovers' joint self-indulgence is justified in Wagner's eyes by the fact that every phrase has weight as an exposition of man's destiny. But you have only to read his preface to feel uneasily that this exposition was something very like a self-indulgence since it embodied convictions he was proud to have reached. His preoccupation with his own mind and soul strike you as disproportionate; they seemed inevitable to him, and he communicates more or less of this feeling to his reader, but this incapacity to forget himself in his subject may well account for the lopsidedness felt in one way by the husky-voiced German and in an opposite way by Arnold and those who resent being reminded of Schopenhauer. We look back to his lovers as to some splendid group of sculpture set up on the massive pedestal of this symbol of Night and Day; but we see Romeo and Juliet at doorway or window, or turning the corner of a street frequented by men and women like ourselves and forget Shakespeare and know nothing of his theories.

The second criticism which casts a shadow on my admiration for this masterpiece is less fundamental and more technical. What has happened in the interval between the first and second acts? It is not easy to imagine, and the poem's silence appears ominous. Have King Mark and Isolt been married? We must suppose so. Has that marriage been consummated? Every possible answer to this question seems to demand some reflection that is lacking in the text. There is not a hint that Brangwain has taken Isolt's place. Has Isolt been kept secluded from her husband as an invalid? Though this supposition best meets the needs of the case, how can we make it in the absence of any lead by the author? And if, as perhaps were grandest and most in harmony with the rest, it has been consummated, was it worthy of such an intention to leave it doubtful, almost inconceivable? There

is of course every excuse, but must not Wagner stoop to accept any one of them? It is obvious that he desired that we should escape with his lovers into the night and its "faery lands forlorn." Therefore it must be tactless to insist on the physical degradation of their plight. Perhaps from the plane to which Wagner hoped to raise us, this degradation, so important in the practical world, is supremely unimportant. Things which up to the time they drank the philtre would have filled them with nausea, and have humiliated them insupportably, have lost their reality; like the fire into which the martyr thrusts his hand, like the cross that bears the world's conquered foe to victory, this bitter bestial life is no longer of importance save as darkness is important to light, as pain is to bliss. We can say all this if we like. But if we condemn the silence of Mr. Binyon about the servants and attendants that ought to have been present, if we demand an explanation for the naked sword laid so wantonly between the lovers by Swinburne's superb nonchalance, we must confess that this silence is parallel to that commonest fault of love-stories, the tacit supposition that the hero and heroine are infertile. Wagner's version alone avoids this too convenient espousal of the less likely case by shortening the time to a few weeks or at most months, yet this silence about the relation between husband and wife has the same facile convenience, and is as emotional an avoidance of plausibility. Something must have happened that it is vital to our comprehension to know. He has not told us what—from haste, from lack of clear thinking, from fear of Mrs. Grundy, from absorption over other aspects of his theme, in any case from lack of full creative freedom.[1]

Perhaps a critic has no right to find a fault of this kind with so admired a masterpiece without indicating how he considers

[1] Here Michael Field's admirable development of the motives and character of Brangwain might have been of happy stimulus for Wagner, perhaps have helped him to untie the knot that he seems to have pulled tight in hopes it would run past unnoticed.

it might have been avoided, and in so doing the exact nature and weight of an objection may best be given precision. I think this act should have begun with a scene between Mark and Isolt in which he would woo her and she refuse to accompany him to bed, until he, exasperated, determined to take Melot's advice and go on the midnight hunt so as to lay a trap for the lovers. After this, both the scene with Brangwain and that between the lovers might be shortened and yet gain in effect. Had Wagner been caught by such thoughts, he might have felt forced to develop a philosophic counter to the lovers in Mark, till on internal evidence the author's opinion could have been identified with neither. The middle-aged German might then have never missed forty minutes or more of "loff duets" and Arnold have found the interest of the second and third acts commensurate with their length. So strong and well poised the structure of the drama would then be, that I think it could flourish after Shakespeare's fashion, in the full tide of many more trivial lives, or these three admirable personages isolated as the creator of Berenice might have preferred, could evolve as delicately pulsed a tragedy with the sole help of their confidants, Melot, Kurvenal, and Brangwain. Nay, a tragedy unaltered by artificial conventions and polite as opposed to kindly forms of converse! Not that I would suggest that this structure is the only one worthy of the story, only that it is profoundly bedded in it.

Wagner's poem, even where its lyricism may betray a personal bias or lack of freedom in his mind, is of a high order and addressed to the complete soul. His convictions were less private and more representative than Swinburne's, who perhaps borrowed from him the symbol of night and day, yet used it ironically in a sense such as only knowledge not yet attained could fully justify. William Blake has drawn a cross with a naked youth dancing with health and freedom gazing up at its forlorn and lifeless burden. This poor and hasty sketch, as an hieroglyph of the idea, seems more pregnant than any picture of the crucifixion known to me, whether

we regard the young man as the soul liberated and gazing on its former slough, or whether we regard him as destined in the course of time to be himself nailed upon the wood. The choice of significance here is, between Wagner's and Swinburne's, between the future's and the past's: are we best judged by what has gone by or is to come? This German Tristram and Isolt shout the future, eagerly accepting the condemnation of the actual day, intoxicated by the all-but-grasped ideality of their union, but immediately the past delivers its judgment upon them and it is complete acquittal, with the promise of help and trust restored. This is the sentence of the day which they have fled, of the friends brought up in the same school of honour as themselves, of the man whom they have wronged. At first we are overwhelmed by the immense life-likeness of what we have seen and heard; it is as if we had gazed on our lives whole as we see our momentary selves in a glass. Yes, we have seen the soul with its wonderful promise of perfect relations, overtaken by the agony caused by its own ignorance of the world, and the ignorance of that world in respect to it—we have seen this unrealised promise pass suddenly out of sight, but protesting as it passes, that it well-nigh is, and surely shall be, fulfilled.

Contrast this complex and inconclusive burden with Swinburne's "short way" with excessive prospects, with the confident finality of:

> "They have the night, who had like us the day;
> We, whom day binds, shall have the night as they.
> We, from the fetters of the light unbound,
> Healed of our wound of living, shall sleep sound."

At moments Wagner well-nigh says this, yet with a suggestion that the spirit may exist under unknown conditions, no longer linked to pain and doomed to death. Whereas Swinburne cannot enough rub it in that nothing else is, that the end we see is the very end; nevertheless, so much has not yet been proved.

"So came their hour on them that were in life
Tristram and Iseult: so from love and strife
The stroke of love's own hand felt last and best
Gave them deliverance to perpetual rest. . . .
For death is of an hour, and after death
Peace: nor for aught that fear or fancy saith,
Nor even for very love's own sake, shall strife
Perplex again that perfect peace with life. . . .
Nor where they sleep shall moon or sunlight shine
Nor man look down for ever: none shall say,
Here once, or here, Tristram and Iseult lay:
But peace they have that none may gain who live,
And rest about them that no love can give,
And over them while death and life shall be,
The light and sound and darkness of the sea."

Though divinely delivered, is this assurance sound to the core? How much more tentative, how much more in accord with known facts, are Isolde's eager questions, as, turning from the known to the unknown, she decides, that is, dies. "Friends, do you not see . . . not inhume this fragrance? Do I alone hear?"

It may be that Shakespeare would have felt for and found a more classical form in order to leave Tristram's cry "Let the whole universe perish for the sake of my happiness" reverberating from mood to mood in answer to Isolt's last haunting reversal of their old image of day and night in which she describes her lover as the heart of light, the soul of sound.

No philosophy can answer the questions raised. Would King Mark have proved so generous had the lovers confessed on first landing at Tintagel? Was their fatal impatience fortunate; they would have had to endure such a little while longer? Yet the reversal of this world's judgment might never have come or, coming, have failed to restore their faith in its beliefs—in that lost honour of theirs? Did the event actually justify them, or were their aspirations merely wiped off the dark face of things other than ourselves to remain in men's minds only as dreams remain? Doubtless Shakespeare would not have answered such questions even to that degree in which Wagner intended to, and doubtless time would have

again crowned him as wisest, most inscrutable. How brief, and like the casual illumination of wind-swung shutters, are his glances towards "that undiscovered country" when compared with the tirades we have admired!

"Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither.
Ripeness is all."

"If thou and Nature can so gently part,
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch
Which hurts and is desired."

"I have a journey, sir, shortly to go.
My master calls me, I must not say, no."

"I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume."

"Life is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

"Absent thee from felicity awhile."

With like diversity in mood, tragic souls still face death.

Before closing, perhaps I ought briefly to indicate from what standpoint I examined these works of art.

Literature is the least plastic, the least sensuous of the arts, but it is the most comprehensive. Though it gives but a reflex suggestion of the harmonies of form, colour, and sound, though words comport no rigour of definition sufficient to satisfy logic, for which formulæ and diagrams must be preferred, yet it can confront the soul with a structure in which all her powers find proportionate and harmonious poise, nay, win her to exert all in a chosen order.

He who taught that literature should aspire towards the condition of music had perceived a very partial truth, and is the father of that eccentricity which regards "Kubla Khan" as the *nec plus ultra* of poetry. Unattached fragments of verse must always lack those major relations which organic

incorporation confers; therefore conditions for the existence of supreme eloquence only occur in highly composite works.

Admiration, devotion, delight, and other emotions create orders in thought differing from that of logic and more puissant: yet intelligibility is the purpose of language, therefore reason must be the central virtue of literature. "Divine madness" must be related to it, not it to that, as Blake presumed.

Poet and artist create new objects to occupy man's complete attention and rival nature, that creation not made for his content. The more complex, the more coherent, the more felicitously organised, the better chance such objects have of fulfilling their purpose. Personal bias in the artist means defect in the work, a lack of freedom to perceive and shape in some direction; when limitations are necessary and neither arbitrary nor casual, the contemplating soul is brought to poise and freed from self-interest and that vain effort to understand an illimitable universe which wears her out—for she beholds an object, a disposition of parts akin to her own coherence, or follows a narrative of which every relevant aspect has been felt: whereas she can never be sure that all those important to the comprehension of actual events have moved her.

The work of art is not, then, an expression of some experience or emotion existing independently, much less is it an impression transferred from external appearances: such views only dominate the artist in so far as he fails to create a sufficiently complex and harmonious object—by shortcoming alone can his work betray his personality, his unnecessary likes and dislikes, all his meanness.

THE THIEF

By STEPHEN HUDSON

ON my seventh birthday Uncle Max came down to Craythorne on purpose. I can't remember exactly, but I think he always had been there. Papa said though it was on Thursday this time and account-day, he was coming all the same, but they would probably be late. I had been waiting for him ever since six, but it was past seven when they got home. Mamma had arranged all my presents on the whatnot table in the little room half-way up the stairs where the floor always creaked on the landing. We called it the green room. The curtains and sofa and chairs were green, but it was all shiny black wood inside and smelt of Minnie because her basket was there. I didn't much like her really, but I pretended to because of Mamma, and Alexander said I must be kind to her, she was so faithful. I think partly Alexander liked her because her eyes were red round the edges like his, as though they had both been crying. I'd hardly touched the presents because I wanted Uncle Max to show them to me properly. Papa showed me the top you put different pieces of wire into so that when it spun round it made figures doing all sorts of antics. But he was in such a hurry to go to the city he could only show me three out of the whole box. I knew Uncle Max would like spinning it so that it would go off with a whirr like a stormy wind. I waited in the hall for the sound of the wheels, but I didn't hear them because it was snowing and it was only when Alexander ran through to open the door that I knew they'd come. Uncle Max shook a lot of snow off his coat on the mat and lifted me on to his shoulder saying, " Glücklicher

Geburtstag, Spitzbub!" I asked him to come and look at the presents, but he said he was tired and sat down in the big leather chair in the library and pulled me on to his knee. I twisted the curly hair behind his ears but I couldn't keep him awake. Minnie came in and I got down and pinched her tail a little and she snapped at me. That woke him up and he said, "Fred'l, get a paper parcel out of my coat-pocket." When he'd undone it, there was a silver money-box shaped like a beehive. He put his finger-nail under one of the bees, the top opened, and out fell a lot of coins. He shut the hive up and made me drop the coins through the slit at the top and count them; there were ten altogether. "Ten thaler from Grandpapa in that silver beehive all the way from Austria for Fred'l. The bees work hard all day getting honey; Fred'l must be industrious like a bee." Then he put his fingers in the top pocket of his waistcoat and took out a gold piece. "Drop that in too," he said, "and now let's go and look at the presents." He spun the top a lot of times and showed me, but I wanted him to read one of the new books called *The North Pole* before Papa and Mamma came down. It was all about Captain Hatteras and Cyrus Field and Gideon Spillett and about their ship which stuck in the ice, a brig with a very strong, square-built hull.

On my birthday I was allowed to sit down at the table and have some dessert. There was champagne with little bits of ice floating about chinking against the side, and Papa held up his glass and said "Hoch, hoch, die Eltern" and Mamma and Uncle Max touched his glass with theirs. Then Uncle Max winked at me and said, "*Prosit!* Spitzbub," and Papa told Alexander to put a little in my glass so that I could drink some too.

Nanny put the silver beehive on the mantelpiece opposite my bed. The firelight made it look like a red ball, and I fell asleep and dreamed of being roasted like Cyrus Field, the engineer, talked about in the book.

The next morning while Alexander was doing the silver

I told him about the brig, and he said he would make me one. He had been a sailor and he told me about his ships and voyages. It took a long time, but at last she was finished. She had three masts and two jibs and spars and squarsails and a mainsail and a helm. She was painted brown and was sticky and smelt of tar and turpentine. I thought her perfect, but Alexander said she wasn't and he would make a much better one. We took her down to the pond, which was very long but not so very broad and had willows all round. There was a spring in the middle and it was awfully deep, ever so far over even Papa's head, and there was thick mud at the bottom, so if you sank, you got stuck and you never came up again. It was dreadfully dangerous. At the ends the banks were very steep and there were a lot of rushes and frogs, and when you got down by the water, no one could see you. That's how I dodged Fräulein Schwind. But the worst of it was that the brig wouldn't stay straight. Alexander said she needed a keel and he would see what he could do. Fräulein Schwind always tried to prevent my being with Alexander, but we got away behind the round-house where the engines were and she never found out we were at the pond. But the brig never would stand up, and Alexander said we wanted a good piece of lead, only that would cost some money and he wouldn't have any before February. I stayed awake that night thinking about the brig, because the end of the pond was all frozen exactly like the North Pole, and if only we could get the brig stuck fast in the ice properly, we could build the hut and make a fire and explore.

As soon as everything was quiet I got out of bed. I put a chair in front of the fender and stepped on it with one foot. I could just reach the money-box. I tried and tried, but it wouldn't come undone till I banged it against the leg of the bed and it flew open. All the money rolled about on the floor and made such a noise I thought it would wake Nanny up. So I got into bed and pretended to be asleep, but nobody came and I got out again and put all the money back except the gold piece

Uncle Max had put inside and the box shut up just like before. At breakfast Papa said Minnie had woke him up by growling in the middle of the night.

I didn't see Alexander all the morning because Fräulein Schwind never let me out of her sight, but just after dinner I saw him come out of Mamma's boudoir. When Mamma took me into the green room and asked me if I had heard anything in the night, I said I hadn't, but I was very frightened and she said nothing else.

I didn't see Alexander all day, though I looked everywhere for him. I wanted to give him the gold piece and I was so afraid that beast Fräulein Schwind would notice my keeping my hand on it in the pocket of my knickers.

When Papa came home he always went to see Mamma first. Afterwards he asked Fräulein Schwind whether I'd been good or not. This time, though she said " Ziemlich artig," he didn't look pleased but took me into the library and stood me up opposite him in the big leather arm-chair. " Frederick, did you do anything to that money-box Grandpapa sent you ? " I said I hadn't, and when he asked me the same question over again, I went on saying I hadn't.

Then he sent for Nanny to take me to bed, and I went to that place and dropped the gold coin into it.

I never saw Alexander again, but I saw Johnny Everest, the head gardener's little boy, on the bank of the pond pulling something along by a string. When he saw me he ran away, and I believe it was the brig.

IN MEMORIAM: MARIE LLOYD

By T. S. ELIOT

IT requires some effort to understand why one person, among many who do a thing with accomplished skill, should be greater than the others; and it is not always easy to distinguish superiority from great popularity, when the two go together. Although I have always admired the genius of Marie Lloyd I do not think that I always appreciated its uniqueness; I certainly did not realise that her death would strike me as the important event that it was. Marie Lloyd was the greatest music hall artist in England: she was also the most popular. And popularity in her case was not merely evidence of her accomplishment; it was something more than success. It is evidence of the extent to which she represented and expressed that part of the English nation which has perhaps the greatest vitality and interest.

Among all of that small number of music-hall performers, whose names are familiar to what is called the lower class, Marie Lloyd had far the strongest hold on popular affection. The attitude of audiences toward Marie Lloyd was different from their attitude toward any other of their favourites, and this difference represents the difference in her art. Marie Lloyd's audiences were invariably sympathetic, and it was through this sympathy that she controlled them. Among living music-hall artists none can so well control an audience as Nellie Wallace. I have seen Nellie Wallace interrupted by

jeering or hostile comment from a boxful of Eastenders, I have seen her, hardly pausing in her act, make some quick retort that silenced her tormentors for the rest of the evening. But I have never known Marie Lloyd to be confronted by this kind of hostility; in any case, the feeling of the vast majority of the audience was so manifestly on her side, that no objector would have dared to lift his voice. And the difference is this: that whereas other comedians amuse their audiences as much and sometimes more than Marie Lloyd, no other comedian succeeded so well in giving expression to the life of that audience, in raising it to a kind of art. It was, I think, this capacity for expressing the soul of the people that made Marie Lloyd unique, and that made her audiences even when they joined in the chorus, not so much hilarious as happy.

It is true that in the details of acting Marie Lloyd was perhaps the most perfect, in her own style, of British actresses. There are—thank God—no cinema records of her; she never descended to this form of money-making; it is to be regretted, however, that there is no film of her to preserve for the recollection of her admirers the perfect expressiveness of her smallest gestures. But it is less in the accomplishment of her act than in what she made it, that she differed from other comedians. There was nothing about her of the grotesque; none of her comic appeal was due to exaggeration; it was all a matter of selection and concentration. The most remarkable of the survivors of the music-hall stage, to my mind, are Nellie Wallace and Little Tich; but each of these is a kind of grotesque; their acts are an inconceivable orgy of parody of the human race. For this reason, the appreciation of these artists requires less knowledge of the environment. To appreciate, for instance, the last turn in which Marie Lloyd appeared, one ought to know already exactly what objects a middle-age woman of the charwoman class would carry in her bag; exactly how she would go through her bag in search of something; and exactly the tone of voice in which she would enumerate the objects she found in it. This was only part of

he acting in Marie Lloyd's last song, "ONE OF THE RUINS HAT CROMWELL KNOCKED ABAHT A BIT."

Marie Lloyd's art will, I hope, be discussed by more competent critics of the theatre than I. My own chief point is that I consider her superiority over other performers to be in a way a moral superiority: it was her understanding of the people and sympathy for them, and the people's recognition of the fact that she embodied the virtues which they genuinely most respected in private life, that raised her to the position she occupied at her death. And her death is itself a significant moment in English history. I have called her the expressive figure of the lower classes. There is no such expressive figure for any other class. The middle classes have no such idol: the middle classes are morally corrupt. That is to say, their own life fails to find a Marie Lloyd to express it; nor have they any independent virtues which might give them as a conscious class any dignity. The middle classes, in England as elsewhere, under democracy, are morally dependent upon the aristocracy, and the aristocracy are morally in fear of the middle class, which is gradually absorbing and destroying them. The lower class still exists; but perhaps it will not exist for long. In the music-hall comedians they find the expression and dignity of their own lives; and this is not found in the most elaborate and expensive revue. In England, at any rate, the revue expresses almost nothing. With the decay of the music-hall, with the encroachment of the cheap and rapid breeding cinema, the lower classes will tend to drop into the same state of protoplasm as the bourgeoisie. The working man who went to the music-hall and saw Marie Lloyd and joined in the chorus was himself performing part of the act; he was engaged in that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art. He will now go to the cinema, where his mind is lulled by continuous senseless music and continuous action too rapid for the brain to act upon, and will receive, without giving, in that same listless apathy with which the

middle and upper classes regard any entertainment of the nature of art. He will also have lost some of his interest in life. Perhaps this will be the only solution. In an interesting essay in the recent volume of *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, the great psychologist, W. H. R. Rivers, adduced evidence which has led him to believe that the natives of that unfortunate archipelago are dying out principally for the reason that the " Civilisation " forced upon them has deprived them of all interest in life. They are dying from pure boredom. When every theatre has been replaced by 100 cinemas, when every musical instrument has been replaced by 100 gramophones, when every horse has been replaced by 100 cheap motor-cars, when electrical ingenuity has made it possible for every child to hear its bedtime stories through a wireless receiver attached to its ears, when applied science has done everything possible with the materials on this earth to make life as interesting as possible, it will not be surprising if the population of the entire civilised world rapidly follows the fate of the Melanesians.

FROM "THE NEW MUSEUM"

By RAMON GOMEZ DE LA SERNA

IF "THEY" REMAINED

IF "they" remained, if "they" all remained, though it might only be as spirits, the air of the house would become so dense, that we could not move about in it.

At times when I have been alone in the house, I have thought of this, and it has been clear to me that, immaterial as "they" might be, "they" would choke the ways. Let "them" be as tenuous as you will, "they" would crowd the corridors; "they" would fill the rooms.

But I swear that "they" are not; for I have made experiments; I have tested densities; I have challenged the silence in such a way that "they" could not but reply. No oath could have bound them to keep silent.

"*They*" *are not there*, not one of "them," for, if "they" had been, we must inevitably have stumbled against "them" in the dark corridors.

THE ELECTRIC CAT

The man with the brush-like hair had always feared a meeting with the electric cat. He was so nervous, was this young man with the stiffened hair, that he was always expecting to meet the feline, which indubitably existed.

Whenever he looked at the electric lamps, and especially

when he turned a switch or slipped in the plug of the electric fans, he felt a terror of the electric cat.

—— Some day when I am shut up alone in a room, he will come out and fly into my face, thought the boy with the electrified hair.

And at last it happened. The electric "grimalkin" darted out from the plug and spat terribly. The young man seized one of the fire-irons from the fender—the ridiculous fool—to defend himself.

The cat retreated for a moment into a corner of the little room, spitting like a sulphuric circuit or like an irritated arc-lamp with sharp carbon teeth. It was wearing the electric bell from the front door, and it was the tinkling of this that most infuriated it—that they should have . . . belled the cat!

The dispute promised to be a tragic one. The fight between the man and the cat would be terrible. The cat's eyes shone as if they were on fire, like the lamps of a motor-car that have two intensities, one soft and the other fierce and penetrating—when, swish! it sprang at the poor boy, whose fear softened his hair for the first time, and it fell limp and parted in the middle. How strange he looked with his combed and parted hair! Even his father would not have known him.

The spitting of the electricity teased his marrow with that kind of uneasiness that destroys the nerves. It was a fearful spitting that filled the narrow room. The electric cat threw the silhouette of the distracted boy on to the walls. It sprang about him and over his head, each time coming nearer and nearer; and, clinging to the nails in the wall, it would hang down like the corpse of a murderer.

The poor boy could only parry the attacks of the electric cat by whirling the tongs, until—swish! came the moment of contact; the cat sprang at his face and scratched; the boy struck out with the iron tongs, and—how awful!—was immediately reduced to a cinder.

Why did he not defend himself with a wooden chair, or some other non-conductor?

THROUGH THE SCREEN

I have always been suspicious of screens. I remember as a child visiting the studio of Luna, the painter, a studio of which I can remember the smallest details. Even as a child I knew that Luna, tired of being deceived, had murdered his wife and his mother-in-law. At the entrance to the studio—I shall always remember it—there was a screen.

Why is it that, in thinking of that tragedy, the screen comes back to my mind, that particular screen, always the screen, as if it were the canvas on which the tragedy was enacted; as if the husband had seen the adultery through a crack, and had fired through the crack?

I repeat, I have always been suspicious of screens. A screen has mischievous intentions. It is waiting for an opportunity to cover or discover, to suggest or to show through a crack a glimpse of a mystery, or to play some other conjuring trick.

Like those devil's pocket-books, in which a bank-note appears and disappears when placed under a little rubber band, the screen shows you changing foliage, unsuspected landscapes, flowers that were not there before, mocking and unknown birds.

If the screen is a Japanese one, how they must smile at our credulity—those painted Japanese, who are not those who were there before, who, it is very plain, have only just come there suddenly, and are trying to pretend you have not noticed that they have changed places with those who were there before.

There is always an imp in a screen, and, when you leave something in an arm-chair in front of it, and, looking for it, you find it gone, the screen is to blame for the disappearance.

A house with many screens is a house of jokes, of crimes, of surprising visits :

" Oh ! Is that you ? " . . .

" What ? You here ? " . . .

That is the exclamation of the person who comes out from behind a screen and meets someone who was unexpected. Ah ! if there had been no screen !

Thanks to a screen, Mr. Golter could cut off the head of a man, show it bleeding in his hands over the top of the screen, and then show the man put together again. No arrangement of mirrors—only a screen.

I am always suspicious of a screen, I say it again, because I have studied them, mistrusted them, watched them as the police watch a door through which a thief will enter.

When I have been alone in a room, I have feared the screen ; I have covered it with the " Browning " of my eyes. Once, in the house of an enemy, I put my hand over the top of the screen, and pulled out his fox of a son, who lay in ambush for me with a revolver.

I have fixed my eyes on a screen, and have seen the dread shown by some sly punchinellos who popped up over the top of it, moved by somebody hidden behind the screen, who, with mocking gestures, indicated that the person sitting with his back to the screen had a long nose.

But I have a screen that has revealed to me more than any other the perfidy of screens, necessary though they may be, inasmuch as they allow many things to be hidden, and, at the same time, thanks to the cracks, allow many things to be caught in their grimaces : the yawning of masks, the stretching of the glasses of pictures, the growth in the height and length of the arms of chairs.

The screen I have showed me the other day my wife in the arms of another, clinging passionately to him.

The view through the crack was sufficient and eloquent. I looked for a pistol in a drawer and burst into the room. My wife was alone, quietly using up her large balls of wool.

I turned and fired at the screen, terrified at what I expected *and nearly saw*—a complicated act of magic something like the collapse of open fans, a great profusion of screens, sons of the screen, an opening of American palms in great number and with great ostentation.

But there was nothing—nothing happened. Perhaps because the bullet never struck anywhere. I never knew what happened to it.

Since then, I have forbidden the use of screens ; I have curtains instead. No longer shall the complicated accordeon of the screen give me the terror of illusion.

I now wonder whether Luna, the painter, who had a screen at the entrance to his studio, may not have killed his wife and mother-in-law in Paris owing to a pure optical illusion caused by the malignity of the screen and its cracks.

THE SWITCHBOARD OF THE SKIES

There is a system of electric switches in the skies, something like that used in theatres. On the great marble slab, the switches are raised or lowered.

Every day when the time for the sky-lighting effects arrives, a little angel operates the levers of the switches, and illuminates the whole of the sky in six or seven successive bursts of light.

Only this little angel scene-shifter understands the business ; only he can manage the spectacle properly.

Some day or other he will make a mistake—there is no help for it.

And then the whole secret of the sky will come out, the whole great scenic humbug of the stars, shining by daylight.

All the peoples will look up with knowing smiles at the sky with its belated stars, insignificant and transparent against the light of day—small, pale glimmerings in an enormous empty sky.

What a row there will be in Heaven that day !

"However did you come to leave the lights on?" the awful voice of God will say; and the angel, the poor little angel, who thought himself immortal will be turned into a lamplighter as a punishment; and then he will be able to enjoy, with the people of the town, the joke of leaving one lamp lit, or of putting them all out before their time.

(Translated from the Spanish by F. S. Flint.)