THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT IN THE LITERATURE OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

MICHEL BÉNAMOU
ROLAND GRASS
PHILIPPE JULLIAN
VLADIMIR PADWA
IRMA RANTAVAARA

A COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF LITERATURES IN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES
SPONSORED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE LITERATURE ASSOCIATION

HISTOIRE COMPARÉE DES LITTÉRATURES DE LANGUES EUROPÉENNES
SOUS LES AUSPICES DE L'ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL DE LITTÉRATURE COMPARÉE

Volume II
The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages
Edited by Anna Balakian

THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT IN THE LITERATURE OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

Edited by

ANNA BALAKIAN

JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY
AMSTERDAM/PHILADELPHIA

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences — Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Symbolist movement in the literature of European languages / edited by Anna Balakian.
p. cm. -- (Comparative history of literatures in European languages = Histoire comparée des littératures de langues européennes, ISSN 0238-0668 ; v. 2)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Symbolism (Literary movement). 2. Literature, Modern--19th century--History and criticism. 3. Literature, Modern--20th century--History and criticism.
PN761 .S95 1982
809/.915 19 82229562
ISBN 978 963 05 3895 4 (alk. paper) CIP

Published 1982 by Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest

13 12 11 10 09 08 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

John Benjamins Publishing Co. • P.O.Box 36224 • 1020 ME Amsterdam • The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America • P.O.Box 27519 • Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 • USA

GENERAL PREFACE TO ALL VOLUMES PUBLISHED AS PART OF THE "COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF LITERATURES"

This is one of a series of volumes in the "Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages" (hereafter: "Comparative History") sponsored by the International Comparative Literature Association. The "Comparative History" is under the editorial supervision of a "Coordinating Committee" consisting at present of sixteen scholars from various countries. The Committee appoints the directors of the particular research projects, issues general guidelines to them, monitors the genesis of the manuscript, and gives final approval before publication.

The "Comparative History" was launched by the International Comparative Literature Association in 1967. It is based on two fundamental premises: one, that the writing of literary histories confined to specific nations, peoples or languages must be complemented by the writing of literary history that coordinates related or comparable phenomena from an international point of view: two, that it is not possible for individual scholars to write such comprehensive histories but that we must now rely on structured teamwork drawing collaborators from different nations.

We have tried to select periods or movements in which the transformation of forms and ideas is lively and promotes an understanding of the historical process in literature. We have chosen epochs or currents which display a correlation of stylistic expression, where the fruitfulness of the international give and take (as opposed to the idea of national preeminence) can be demonstrated, and, through the comparative approach, significant analogies and contrasts pointed out.

Within these principles and criteria, the scholars entrusted with each project are given the latitude needed to put together the best possible volume under the circumstances. Writing a comparative literary history by way of international teamwork is a revolutionary procedure in literary historiography. Few scholars can claim ability to cover the entire range of literature relevant to the phenomenon under study. Hence the need for partial syntheses, upon which more and more truly international syntheses will be built as our project progresses.

The "Comparative History" will consist of volumes composed in either French or English. Most contributions will be written in these two languages, some will be translated into them from other languages. But we are anxious to emphasize that this in no sense reflects a hierarchy of values. To be sure, the broad and deep penetration of English, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish literature must be recognized, but the literary specificities of every nation or cultural entity, large or small,

acclaimed or neglected, will be valued. As a matter of fact, no discipline is as apt to do justice to the literatures of smaller diffusion as Comparative Literature.

The charge of the Coordinating Committee is limited to the consideration of literatures in European languages. We are keenly aware of the inherent worth of literatures outside the European language orbit and are strongly supporting the newly created research and publication committees of the International Comparative Literature Association which are expected to chart the course for new projects that will include literatures of Africa, Asia, and the Americas composed in non-European languages. But the task of coordinating the historiography of literatures written in European languages is already a formidable one, and by including African and Latin American literature created in these languages we are at least entering hitherto unexplored or neglected areas of literary activity whose present or future contribution to world literature is enormous.

We realize that volumes dependent on the collaboration of many scholars from different countries and cultures will not always be evenly balanced in topic, approach, or merit. Nor is it always possible to recruit scholars for all important aspects of a particular topic. Some collaborators are unable to finish their assignments, and on occasions all efforts to replace them within a reasonable time fail. The task we are undertaking is a tremendously difficult one, but it must be pursued with patience and courage because the writing of literary history, in its effort to fulfil the mission entrusted to it by society, *must* arrive at conclusions, results, and syntheses in order to give literary scholarship significant leverage in the evolution of the Humanities.

As the current President of the Coordinating Committee, entrusted with the task of continuing and expanding the "Comparative History" launched by my predecessor, Professor Jacques Voisine of the Sorbonne, and the Secretary, Professor György M. Vajda of the Institute for Literary Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the University of Szeged, I want to pay tribute not only to their pioneering vision but also to the project directors and volume editors who have taken on, unselfishly and undauntedly, an awesome challenge on behalf of historical literary studies. Whatever the shortcomings of this or any other volume in our series, they and their collaborators deserve the warmest thanks of all men and women of good will throughout the world dedicated to vital humanistic scholarship.

Henry H. H. Remak
President, Coordinating Committee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction by Anna Balakian (N. Y. U.) 9

Part I. *The Delimitation of Symbolism as a Literary Movement* 15

1. What is Symbolism? by René Wellek (Yale) 17
2. The Structure of the Symbolist Movement by György M. Vajda (Budapest) 29
3. Presence and Poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé: International Reputation and Intellectual Impact by Lloyd James Austin (Cambridge) 43

Part II. *The French Cénacle*

1. The Background of French Symbolism by Robert Jouanny (Rouen) 67
2. The Language of Symbolism by Claude Abastado (Paris) 85
3. Symbolist Imagery by Louis Forestier (Paris) 101
4. The Fate of Symbolism by Michel Décaudin (Paris) 119

Part III. *The Emergence of the International Symbolist Movement*

Section A: Catalysts and Intermediaries

1. The Liberated Verse of the English Translators of French Symbolism by Clive Scott (Norwich) 127
2. German Poets in the Proximity of Baudelaire and the Symbolists by Kurt Wais (Tübingen) 145
3. A Graver Decadence: Reactions to Symbolism in Spain by Gordon Brotherston (Essex) 157
4. The Translation and Refraction of Symbolism: A Survey of the Hungarian Example by André Karátson (Lille) 165

Section B: Diffusion and Symbiosis

1. On the Spread of Symbolism by Miklós Szabolcsi (Budapest) 183
2. Models for Symbolism and Expressionism: Stefan George and Herwarth Walden by Manfred Durzak (Kiel) 191
3. Symbolism and Modernism by Ricardo Gullón (Texas) 213
4. The Symbolist Mode in the Spanish American *Modernista* Novel, 1885–1924 by Roland Grass† (Western Illinois) 229

Part IV. *The Consolidation and Metamorphosis of the Symbolist Imprint*

1. Expectation and Resignation: Stefan George's Place in German and in European Symbolist Literature by Manfred Gsteiger (Lausanne) 255
2. Valéry and his International Reputation by James Lawler (Halifax/Chicago) 269
3. Yeats: The Question of Symbolism by Denis Donoghue (Dublin/N.Y.U.) 279
4. Eliot: An English Symbolist by Ruth Z. Temple (New York) 295
5. D'Annunzio and International Symbolism by Ezio Raimondi (Bologna) 311
6. Juan Ramón Jiménez and the Heritage of Symbolism in Hispanic Poetry by Bernard Gicovate (Stanford) 335
7. Jorge Guillén and the Symbolist Imprint on the Generation of the 1920's by André Debicki (Kansas) 347
8. The Symbolist Turn in Endre Ady's Poetry by Péter Pór (Siegen) 361
9. Andrey Bely and the Symbolist Movement in Russia by Boris Christa (Queensland) 381

Part V. *Typological Studies*

1. The "Beyond" and the "Within": The Place and Function of Myths in Symbolist Literature by Pierre Brunel (Paris) 399
2. Symbolist Theater by Hartmut Köhler (Freiburg) 413
3. The Symbol in the Austrian Literature of the Turn of the Century: Problems and Attempted Solutions by Manfred Hoppe (Chicago) 425
4. Contribution to a Typology of Symbolist Painting by Lajos Németh (Budapest) 437
5. Displacements of Parental Space: American Poetry and French Symbolism by Michel Bénamou† (Wisconsin) 455

Part VI. *The Symbolist Impact on Music and Art*

1. Symbolist Music by Marcel Schneider (Paris) 471
2. Musical Settings of Symbolist Poems by Elaine Brody (New York) 483
3. Symbolism in Alexander Scriabin's Music by Vladimir Padwa† (New York) 493
4. The Spread and Evolution of Symbolist Ideals in Art by Edouard Roditi (Paris) 499
5. The Other Symbolist Inheritance in Painting by Dore Ashton (Cooper Union) 519
6. The Esthetics of Symbolism in French and Belgian Art by Philippe Jullian† (Paris) 529

Part VII. *Some National Perspectives*

1. Symbolism in Portuguese Literature by Jacinto Prado-Coelho (Lisbon) 549
2. The Symbolist Movement in Belgium by Elizabeth Hess (Dartmouth) 565
3. Early Scandinavian Symbolism by Lief Sjőberg (Stony Brook) and N. L. Jensen (Aarhus) 575
4. Symbolism in Denmark by Lief Sjőberg (Stony Brook) and N. L. Jensen (Aarhus) 587
5. Symbolism and Finnish Literature by Irma Rantavaara† (Helsinki) 595
6. Symbolism in Baltic Literatures by Vitautas Kubilis (Vilnus) 603
7. Polish Symbolism by Michal Głowinski (Warsaw) 609
8. Czech Symbolist Poetry by Alena Hájková (Prague) 617
9. Symbolist Elements in Serbian Poetry by Vladeta R. Košutić (Belgrade) 627
10. Symbolism in Bulgarian Literature by Georgi Dimov (Sophia) 641
11. Symbolism in Greece by Robert Jouanny (Rouen) 647
12. Aspects of Symbolist Poetry in the United States by Haskell M. Block (SUNY, Binghamton) 653

Part VIII. *Symbolism in Other Contexts*

1. Symbolic Statement: A Psychological View by Leon Edel (Hawaii) 661
2. Darío and Rodó: Two Versions of the Symbolist Dream in Spanish American Letters by Emir Rodríguez Monegal (Yale) 669

Conclusion by Anna Balakian 681

Bibliography compiled by Ulrich Weisstein (Indiana) 699

Index 718

INTRODUCTION

In an age of analysis, we have undertaken the brave or perhaps brash task of essaying a synthesis of a literary movement of which a universally acceptable definition is yet to be found, but which is perhaps the most global of all literary movements to date. In fact, Pierre Brunel in his essay on the Symbolist use of myth quotes Etiemble's reference to the scope of the Symbolist movement: "For the first time and until now for the only time in the universal history of literature, a literary school propagates its influence upon the entire planet". In using the label "symbolist" in the classification of certain works, we have proceeded on the assumption stated by René Wellek in his essay, "Symbolism in Literary History", that despite ambiguities "a term has fulfilled its function as a tool of historiography if it has made us think not only about individual works and authors but also about schools, trends, and movements and their international expansion".[1]

The purpose of this volume, distinguishing it from the existing books on Symbolism, is not to trace the literary fortunes of French Symbolism and its influence on other literatures, but to deal with the flow and development of the movement and its transmutations and transformations, simultaneous in some cases, sequential in others, in the literatures written in the European languages. Symbolism, though cosmopolitan, had its impetus in Paris and within the context of the development of French poetics. When it spread to other countries it did not become a foreign literary mode but was amalgamated with native trends and local propensities: it catalyzed inherent attitudes. The Symbolist movement paid back with interest the elements of foreign heritages previously borrowed by French literature. This is indeed what is involved in the case of German Romanticism and French Symbolism. A History of the movement has to function on two levels. First, it has to conform with and observe the general trends it crystallized in the Europe of the waning years of the nineteenth century, as well as their effect on the development of an international poetic expression. If indeed its first language was French, its theoreticians were non-national in their concern with the relation between the evanescence of human life and its surviving imprint through the permanence of an art form; to this end, they agreed on a certain notion of the Beautiful, devised a linguistic code consisting of special uses of metaphor and myth, understandable on a superlinguistic basis, somewhat like a musical notation, recogniz-

[1] René Wellek, *Discriminations* (New Haven, 1970), p. 121.

able on the metaphorical and mythological plane, viable on various soils and in various languages, and containing a thematic context of universal signification.

On the second level, the volume discerns native originalities in form and content as the general Symbolist trend appropriates the heritage of a particular literature and relates to the historical moment of the individual country or zone. These national flowerings occurred at specific points in time, often triggered by the high productivity of a *chef d'école*, by a zealous editor of a literary journal, or under the aegis of an academic codification. As István Sőtér points out, trends in literature, moving from one region to another, may well retain a homogeneity of form but convey a changed attitude according to the historical movement: "The conception that a group of authors may have of the world can fundamentally modify the function, the objective of a literary tendency."[2] So it is that a basically non-national kind of literature evolves in some countries into a distinctly national one.

Furthermore, if in terms of genre Symbolism had its primary blossoming in poetry, it became clear that a delimitation by genre in our History would be artificial since the symbolist performer would be a poet in point of view whatever medium of literary expression he chose, and endow with a poetics all domains of literature. In addition there was also a permeation by Symbolism of the other arts: i.e. of art, music and the theater, and these related manifestations could not be overlooked.

From non-national to multinational as the direction was, and from poetry to other literary genres and to the other arts, Symbolism went into an ultimate phase of stylization in language and in the plastic and musical structures; the mode became homogeneous again in its decline as it struggled between the demon of analogy and capitulation to philosophical discourse.[3]

As the teamwork entailed a distribution of sections of research we had to keep in mind two very important considerations: the volume had to be internationally as inclusive as possible in terms of the primary sources studied, and it was to be internationally representative in terms of scholarship as well. The participation of scholars had to reflect both basic considerations; and the problems this selection entailed were multiple.

In the course of deliberations, some fundamental paradoxes emerged in the concepts of literary history and of scholarship. In this age of science, it is natural that we should aspire to use scientific methods to reach literary classifications. This attitude posed two major difficulties: the giants of creative literature are elusive of classification, and eminent scholars (giants in their own way) do not work by prescription. Yet, had we left out the giants involved but partially with Symbolism, and distributed the work among researches (*chercheurs*), apprentices, and collated their findings with the anonymity of most manuals of history, we might have produced a very unified and structured manuscript, but without the sparkle of the personalities in-

[2] István Sőtér, *Acta Litteraria Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Tom. X, p. 11: "La méthode du symbolisme a suscité, dans la poésie française, une école totalement éloignée de la politique, tandis que chez le Hongrois Endre Ady ou le Russe Alexandre Blok, elle a fourni la possibilité même d'une poésie révolutionnaire".

[3] This in spite of Jean Moréas' admonishment that "the essential character of symbolic art is never to go all the way to the conception of the idea itself". *Figaro littéraire*, 18/2/86.

volved. Most of the first-line collaborators agreed that the precious time we would be spending on this book was not to be expended on the production of a dull systematic unit of reportage.

Some scholars, more accustomed to performing in committee and team research, had misgivings concerning the autonomous critic and his personal choice of focus. They also viewed with apprehension the highlighting of individual writers included under the label of "Symbolism". Monographic studies were suspect. It is true that the giants of literature transcend literary movements, and enter literary coteries only as path blazers. They are the demons of literary historians, impeding the scientific organization of literature, interfering with the collective classification of traits, often tempting the classifier to exclude them entirely. Sainte-Beuve realized the problem in talking about Chateaubriand: "Very great individuals rise beyond a group. They themselves make a center, and gather others to them. But it is the group, the association, the alliance and active exchange of ideas that gives to the man of talent all his *participation in what is outside himself*, all his maturing and value. There are talents that participate in several groups and which do not cease to move through different environments, either perfecting, transforming or deforming themselves".[4]

In our instance, certain writers highlighted the Symbolist mode and drew around them clusters of adherents or spiritual followers. Such were the cases of Mallarmé to begin with, Stefan George, Rubén Darío, Hofmannsthal, Endre Ady, Blok, etc. Without pursuing monographic studies of the total capacities of these internationally famous writers, we agreed to draw attention to the *Symbolist slice* of their careers. If it is true that secondary writers best illustrate the general characteristics and conventions of a literary style, it is the writer of first rank who sets the conventions even if he soon tires of them and goes on to other things. Actually, this is a crucial philosophical problem pondered by historians since the beginning of the writing of history: does the hero create events or do events create heroes? The historians have not solved the problem; as literary historians we chose to be eclectic in the wielding of individual versus collective factors that govern the shape and destiny of literature.

Another concern revolved around the study of the less familiar literatures, erroneously labeled "minor" literatures. If studies were to be done of these literatures in the general framework of Symbolism, they were not to be treated in isolation but drawn whenever possible into the general referential spectrum making the previously unfamiliar become part of the collective body of universal literature. Many of the scholars dealing with general problems of Symbolist stylization and attitudes, and social or cultural climates, were able to achieve this objective. In fact, the investigation of Symbolist qualities in terms of the larger perspective tended to bring about a new attitude toward regionalism; many scholars were able to avoid the strictly parochial in the effort to introduce the particular into the international frame of reference.

The final paradox is that of the notion of unity. We can outline a logically structured project for collaborrative study but since our collaborators come from different

[4] Sainte-Beuve, "Chateaubriand", *Nouveaux Lundis*, Paris, no date, Vol. III, p. 23 (The translation is mine).

backgrounds and bring to their study varying frames of reference, we might say that they view the Symbolist Movement from different windows and therefore, have different perspectives. Our contributors do not derive their observations and conclusions from a single and same reading list nor can they adhere to a single definition and conform to a standard, preestablished scale of values. To have reduced their various perspectives to a single vision would have been to impose a preconceived hypothesis. In our "history" of literature we made every effort to avoid the pitfalls of history books that originate from a single vantage point and which see events from a single angle. As our colleague Roland Grass quotes from José Martí in his section on the Symbolist mode in Latin American literature: "To know diverse literatures is the only way to be liberated from the tyranny of the several".

By allowing the various perspectives of our collaborators to be juxtaposed we have given the readers of our work a free field of appraisal of the range and variations of Symbolism, and an opportunity for speculation. The volume, though not aiming at a unity of view, has sought a unity of structure, balancing all the parts and aspects of International Symbolism. Its impartiality does not stem from the objectivity of each study but from the plurality of views through which we hope to open up paths of truth. As a result, many of the writers included in the study of Symbolism are evoked and analyzed by more than one scholar and in more than one context.

One of the most prevailing symbols of the Symbolist Movement is the Tree, and indeed the Tree is the truest metaphor of this History of Symbolism and the model for the structure of this work. The most obvious visual presence of a tree is its trunk, which we might liken to the French Symbolist *Cénacle* and its immediate repercussions suggestive of a certain collective, monolithic appearance. But the sap fed into that bark comes from a proliferation of roots—rich and diverse sources of influence—feeding into the body of the structure. A tree also has branches spreading in various directions and flourishing under the same sun, but hit from different angles by the same sun. In terms of Symbolism, the roots lead us back into various stratas of philosophical soil and many literary nutrients, some so pristine as to make it possible for one scholar, Angelo Bertocci, to have written a book called *From Symbolism to Baudelaire*. Its trunk gives us the collective esthetic values and linguistic code, whereas the branches consist of the variances and transformations of the Symbolist imprint in various national literatures.

The plan of the work follows the general tree structure. An introductory section deals with the problem of definition and overviews of Symbolism, its international roots and plurivalent sources. The Second Part is an historical narrative centering upon the Paris *Cénacle* between 1885—1890, a "Place de l'Etoile" of Symbolism where the main trunk emerged. This part contains studies of the techniques, poetic and linguistic, created by the Symbolists in Paris, the emergence of certain images and symbols later to be recognized throughout the world. This part was apportioned and written by specialists of French literature under the direction of Professor Michel Décaudin.

The Third Part deals with the spread, diffusion, impact, and doxology of the Symbolist esthetics and ethic that burgeoned out of the Paris School. This part, strictly comparatist in perspective, presents various and possibly conflicting views on the impact and ramifications of Symbolism. It attempts to throw light also on some of

the frontiers between literary movements contiguous with Symbolism, such as Modernism, Hermeticism, Estheticism, and Expressionism. Much of the ramification is observed through the work of such intermediaries and catalysts as Stefan George, Rubén Darío, Maurice Maeterlinck, Arthur Symons and a number of others.

The Fourth Part is strictly "International Symbolism", and is concerned with what is individualistic and original in the symbolism of certain giants of national literatures; the golden leaves of the branches, particularly in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It is this era that produced Yeats' *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), Federico Garcie Lorca's *Libro de poemas* (1921), Ugo Betti's *Re Pensieroso* (1922), T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), Paul Valéry's *Le Cimetière Marin* (1922) as well as his earlier *Fragments de Narcisse* and *La Jeune Parque*, Juan Ramón Jiménez' *Segunda antología poetica* (1922), Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duineser Elegien* and *Sonette an Orpheus* (1923) and Wallace Stevens' *Harmonium* (1923). This section includes studies of the Symbolist slice in the writing of Yeats, Eliot, Bely, Valéry, Jiménez, Hofmannsthal, D'Annunzio, Ady and others.

The Fifth Part of the work consists of a synchronic approach to the "problematics" of Symbolism through Comparative Literature, a metholodogy that aims at "horizontal perspectives". This part contains syntheses, overviews, and typological considerations of Symbolist conventions and their survivals: utilization of myths and folklore, changes in prosody, the permeation of Symbolism in the drama, the mutations and transformations appearing in Symbolist esthetics in its association of the poetic image with the dramatic and the plastic. This is the domain which C. M. Bowra has called "the heritage of Symbolism".

The Sixth Part deals with the impact of Symbolism on Music and Art; it consists mainly of the work of Marcel Schneider in Music and of Philippe Jullian and Edouard Roditi in Art, all professional critics stationed in Paris and using descriptive and historical methodologies. They were ably assisted by Elaine Brody, Dore Ashton and Wladimir Padwa of New York.

The Final Part consists essentially of the work of literary historians of national literatures. Viewing the international paradigms, archetypes, and tropes from the point of view of national optics they determined the point and degree of Symbolist effects on the development of the various literatures in European languages. These studies deal with parallel periods of literature and the diachronic changes manifested by the Symbolist factor. This last part is far from being comprehensive. Some national literatures are missing because their Symbolist context has been covered in earlier parts of the volume. Others are not yet fully researched. This part will remain open-ended so that future editions of the work or scholiastic supplements will continue to document the study of the global impact of the Symbolist phenomenon.

Although many scholars and graduate students have collaborated in the translation of those texts that were not originally written in English, the major burden of translation fell upon Edouard Roditi and his professional team. We received considerable financial support in the preparation of this volume from a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant of the USA, and in paying the cost of translation we were also aided by the Kirk Edward Long Foundation.

The National Endowment also provided funding for the compilation of a major bibliographical work as a supplement to the History of the Symbolist Movement. An additional grant from the American Council of Learned Societies brought about the meeting of some of the principal collaborators in mid-stream at New York University in the spring of 1973 to work out problems of both a theoretical and a practical nature. Two travel grants from the International Research Exchange made it possible for me to go twice to Budapest to confer with collaborators there, primarily with my associate editor, Miklós Szabolcsi, who procured and evaluated most of the contributions from Central European scholars.

Upon termination of his monumental work, *Message du Symbolisme*, Guy Michaud said that perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the Symbolist movement was its influence on the world at large. He concluded that to trace this diffusion would entail the collective work of a large team. In the absence of such a team he felt that he had to leave in abeyance questions of technique and of repercussions on the other art forms. We have had such a team whose objective went far beyond the tracing of the impact of French Symbolism in the world at large. Instead, it researched a literary and ontological phenomenon which emerged simultaneously and sometimes sporadically within the context of many literatures, the common sources enriched with numerous variables. Although our work, which took six years to come to fruition, will not exhaust the subject, it reflects into the record of a multifaceted literary expression the response of our own moment in history.

New York, July, 1976

ANNA BALAKIAN
Editor-in-Chief of the Volume

PART I

THE DELIMITATION OF SYMBOLISM AS A LITERARY MOVEMENT

René Wellek

WHAT IS SYMBOLISM?

In asking this question we must decide what kind of answer we can expect to give to it Obviously, we shall not be concerned with symbolism in general, with the symbols that pervade all the religions and the plastic arts, not to speak of symbolism as we use the term in mathematics or logic. We are speaking only of symbolism in literature, but must immediately admit that the symbols in literature overlap with those in religion and iconography and often are embedded in the very language itself and its metaphors. We must agree with Ernest Jones that "if the word 'symbolism' is taken in its widest sense the subject is seen to comprise almost the whole development of civilization".[1] It is better to focus, rather, on the meaning of symbolism as a literary trend or movement or possibly period-term at a specific time in history. Even after providing some answer to this question we shall, however, be confronted again with the general question of what a literary symbol is, for defining symbolism without some clear idea of the symbol seems a rather futile exercise. But what is meant by definition? Is it at all possible to define a term for a movement or a trend or a period? Is it possible to give a "real" definition of symbolism in the sense in which Plato and Aristotle required that a real definition reveal the internal causes of the things to be defined? Is there an essence of symbolism? We have, I think, to give up such an attempt: it always turns out an arbitrary model unrelated to the variety of history. We have to be content with the more modest ambition of modern logicians and linguists. We must try to give an explanation of how the word is or has been used and to give an account of the phenomena designated by this use and finally admit that all definition will contain some kind of prescription or at least recommendation for its future use. John Stuart Mill, in his *System of Logic* (1843), found the formula long ago: "The simplest and most correct notion of a Definition is a Proposition declaratory of the meaning of a word, namely either the meaning which it bears in common acceptation, or that which the speaker or writer . . . intends to annex to it".[2]

But such a clarification is only the first step, for in literary scholarship we are confronted with the difficulties connected with the multiple meanings of such concepts as trend, movement, and period. I have argued as far back as 1936[3] for a meaning of

[1] "The Theory of Symbolism", in *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (London, 1948), p. 87.
[2] London, 10th ed., p. 86.
[3] In "Theory of Literary History", *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague*, 6, (1936), pp. 173–91. A later version in "Periods and Movements in Literary History", *English Institute Annual*, 1940, New York, 1940, pp. 73—93, and in *Theory of Literature* (New York, 1949).

the concept of period which would avoid the kind of nominalism that treats such terms as mere linguistic labels, wittily formulated by Paul Valéry when he claims about terms such as "romanticism" and "classicism" that you cannot get drunk on the labels of bottles. (Some people, one could argue, do.) On the other hand, I also rejected the view that period is an entity whose essence has to be intuited, as the German *Geistesgeschichte* or the American variations, with their Baroque or Puritan minds, assume. Rather, a period, I argued, is a time-section dominated by a set of norms (conventions, genres, ideals of versification, standards of characters, etc.) whose introduction, integration, decay, and disappearance can be traced. These norms have to be extracted from history itself: we have to discover them in the observable literary process. Symbolism thus is not a unitary quality which spreads like an infection or a plague, nor is it a mere verbal label: it is rather a historical category, or, to use a Kantian term, a "regulative idea" (or, rather, set of ideas) with the help of which we can interpret the historical process.

In discussing the concept of symbolism it seems obivous that we can distinguish meanings that widen almost like concentric circles. The most narrow is that of a coterie, a group, or possibly a school in Paris in the eighteen-eighties and -nineties. More widely, Symbolism represents a trend in French poetry which we can trace back at least as far as Nerval and Lautréamont and follow at least as far as Claudel and Valéry. Its meaning was soon extended to prose and drama, and then, more broadly, we can speak of Symbolism as a European movement (and its offshoots in the Americas), and finally, though I wish to discourage such a use, we can think of symbolism as a recurring type of art spread all over the history of literature.

Obviously the fashion for the term is due to the coterie of poets who called themselves by that name in Paris in 1886. The story has been told many times, in great detail, by Barre, Raynaud, Michaud, Kenneth Cornell,[4] and others and bears repetition only as far as we need it for our purposes. Jean Moréas (the pseudonym of Joannes Papadiamantopoulos 1856—1910), the French poet of Greek extraction, was disturbed by a contention of Paul Bourde's which classified him with Mallarmé among the decadents. In *Le XIX^e Siècle* of August 11, 1885, Moréas protested that the decadents sought the pure concept and the eternal symbol in their art. "Les poètes décadents — la critique, puisque sa manie d'étiquetage est incurable, pourrait les appeler plus justement des *symbolistes* — que M. Bourde a estrapadés d'une main courtoise sont: MM. Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Laurent Tailhade, Charles Vignier, Charles Morice et le signataire de cet article".[5] Moréas, together with Gustave Kahn, founded a little magazine, *Le Symboliste*, of which the first number appeared on October 7, 1886. Its leading article, by Paul Adam, again protested against the malicious confusion between Decadents and Symbolists. "Malicieusement, on confondit ces œuvres [of the

[4] A. Barre, *Le Symbolisme: Essai historique* (Paris, 1911); E. Raynaud, *La Melée symboliste*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1920—23); G. Michaud, *Message poétique du symbolisme*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1947); quoted as "*Message*"; K. Cornell, *The Symbolist Movement* (New Haven, Conn. 1952).

[5] Michaud, *Message*, Vol. 2. p. 331.

decadents] avec celle des réelles personnalités du mouvement symboliste".[6] In the *Figaro Littéraire* of September 18, 1886,[7] Moréas published his famous manifesto.

As the manifesto shows, Moréas was perfectly aware that the coterie had antecedents reaching far back into history and that its creed was various and undefined or rather defined mainly in opposition to preceding trends: to didacticism, declamation, and objective description. Declamation presumably alludes to Hugo and "objective description" to the Parnassians. The new freedom of diction, supposedly modeled on the freedom of sixteenth-century French, and the freedom of verse, which included free verse, and a defense of obscurity made up the main argument. On the question of symbol, which after all gave the name to the group, Moréas is much vaguer. He reduced it to the old Hegelian idea of a sensuous appearance of the Idea, where the sense of Idea and even "primordial Idea" remains unclear.

Moréas obviously did not invent the term: by lucky chance or combination of circumstances he hit on a designation which had been bandied about long before. Elsewhere,[8] I have traced the history of the term in its literary use back to Kant and Goethe and the German romantics, particularly Schelling. There is a growing literature devoted to details of this history:[9] it can be shown that Winckelmann, Lessing, and Herder did not distinguish between symbol and allegory, while Goethe established the distinction, which was then taken over by Schelling and from there by Coleridge, Emerson, and Carlyle. But there were more immediate sources at hand: in France the term was used by Madame de Staël, by Alexandre Vinet, by Pierre-Simon Ballanche, by Théodore Jouffroy, by Charles Magnin,[10] and particularly by Pierre Leroux, the Utopian socialist, who exalted poetry as a language of symbols, as a system of correspondences, a network of "vibrations". Leroux elsewhere recognizes that "metaphor, symbol, myth are different degrees of allegory" and calls symbol "an intermediary form between comparison and allegory properly speaking. It is truly an emblem, the metaphor of an idea".[11] Thus the term shifts from a rhetorical category to an element in a mystical view of nature. Oddly enough, a little-known critic, Paulin Limayrac, concluded that "symbolic poetry has no future in France, and socialism, by monopolizing the term, has dealt symbolism a hard blow".[12] But Limayrac's prophecy proved to be quite wrong.

Undoubtedly, Baudelaire's poem *Correspondances*, which speaks of the "forest of symbols", proved the most influential text suggesting the term, though Baudelaire's

[6] Ibid., Vol. 2.; p. 346.

[7] Reprinted in G. Michaud, *La Doctrine symboliste* (Documents), (Paris, 1947), pp. 23—26; quoted as "*Doctrine*".

[8] In "Symbol and Symbolism in Literature", in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener, New York, 1973, Vol. 4. pp. 337—345.

[9] See Curt Müller, *Die geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen des Symbolbegriffes in Goethes Kunstanschauung*, (Berlin, 1937), Maurice Marache, *Le Symbole dans la pensée et l'Œuvre de Goethe*, (Paris, 1960); Bengt Algot Sörensen, *Allegorie und Symbol: Texte zur Theorie des dichterischen Bildes im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 1972).

[10] See my *History of Modern Criticism*, Vol. 3. (1965), passim. Also Margaret Gilman, *The Idea of Poetry in France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958); Angelo F. Bertocci, *From Symbolism to Baudelaire* (Carbondale, Ill. 1964); Pierre Moreau, "Le Symbolisme de Baudelaire", in *Ames et visages romantiques* (Paris, 1965), pp. 231—245; Pierre Moreau, "De la symbolique religieuse à la poésie symboliste", in *Comparative Literature Studies*, 9, (1967), 5—16.

[11] *Œuvres*, Vol. pp. 330—31.

[12] "La Poésie symboliste et socialiste", *Revue des Deux Mondes*, N. S. 5, 1844, pp. 669—682.

esthetics centers rather on creative imagination than on the symbol. In Baudelaire "symbol" occurs rather casually in the context of the theory of correspondences and universal analogy and is interchangeable with allegory, cipher, hieroglyphics, and even emblem. But Mallarmé, apparently well before Moréas' manifesto, orally expounded a doctrine which was labeled symbolist. Thus Anatole Bajou in *Le Décadent*, April 10, 1886, refers to Mallarmé as "le maître qui a formulé le premier la doctrine symbolique".[13] However, in Mallarmé's printed writings (certainly before 1886) the term symbol is used only very sparingly. Mallarmé does not use the term in the "Avant-Dire" to René Ghil's *Traité du Verbe* (1886), while Ghil speaks of the poet as composing the only worthy vision: "Le réel et suggestif Symbole d'où, palpitante pour le rêve, en son intégrité nue se lèvera l'Idée prime et dernière, ou Vérité".[14]

Teodor de Wyzewa (actually Wyźewski), the critic of Polish origin, who at that time had begun to contribute to the *Revue Wagnérienne*, formulated a theory of Symbolism two month before Moréas' manifesto in an article on Mallarmé in *La Vogue* in which he ascribes to the poet the idea of monadology. "Tout est symbole, toute molécule est grosse des univers: toute image est le microcosme de la nature entière." ". . . Et l'art, expression de tous les symboles, doit être un drame idéal,résumant et annulant ces représentations naturelles qui ont trouvé leur pleine connaissance dans l'âme du poète. . . . Ainsi M. Mallarmé a cherché les intimes correlations des choses. Peut-être n'a-t-il point vu, dans sa curiosité, que le nombre des symboles était indéfini, qu'il avait en lui le pouvoir de les renouveler sans cesse, et qu'il s'épuiserait vainement à les vouloir tous saisir?"[15] Wyzewa violently disapproved of Ghil, whom he considered a parodist of Mallarmé, while Ghil proclaimed the founding of a new group, "le groupe Symbolique et Instrumentaliste". It was expressly put under the aegis of Mallarmé and grouped Stuart Merrill, Henri de Régnier, and Francis Vielé-Griffin around Ghil. They professed a grandiose goal: "chercher, induisant de Symbole en Symbole, la raison de la Nature et de la Vie".[16] But the very first expounders of the idea of symbolism soon abandoned it. Wyzewa, in the *Revue Indépendante* of February 1887, saw that the symbol has a puzzling multitude of meanings. It is simply the replacement of one object by another. "On peut donc être symboliste lorsqu'on emploie des signes pour exprimer sa pensée," but then all art is symbolic. The symbol is also simply comparison: the representation of a complex idea by a simple, easily comprehensible one. But such a symbol cannot interest our "young symbolist poets", who do not want to make their thinking more accessible. Finally Wyzewa doubts the importance of the symbol in Mallarmé's poetry. "Je sais que mon maître M. Mallarmé tente, avec une exemplaire constance, cette création d'un art enfin symbolique. Mais son œuvre devra sans doute à la vie qu'il y créera, à la noble hauteur des pensées et à l'expressive harmonie des syllabes, non à l'usage du symbole, son charme précieux".[17] Edouard Dujardin ousted Wyzewa from the *Revue Indépendante* in December 1887, and Wyzewa left

[13] Michaud, *Message*, Vol. 2. p. 335; also *Doctrine*, p. 47.
[14] Michaud, *Doctrine*, p. 28.
[15] Ibid., p. 64.
[16] Michaud, *Message*, Vol. 2. p. 350.
[17] Delsemme, *Teodor de Wyzewa* (Brussels, 1967), p. 147.

the polemical battles about poetry. Also, Moréas deserted his own brainchild. On September 14, 1891, in another number of *Figaro*, he blandly announced that "symbolisme" was dead. He founded a new school which he called *l'école romane*.[18]

In spite of these dissensions and the perplexities to which they gave rise, the term "Symbolism" established itself after all, in ways which deserve to be traced in detail, though one should note that one of the main theorists of the time, Charles Morice, in his *La Littérature de tout à l'heure* (1889) speaks rather of synthesis and dismisses the term "symbolisme" as applicable to all literature,[19] and that others thought of symbolism as a label designating "les poètes idéalistes de notre génération".[20] But as early as 1894 Saint Antoine (pseudonym for Henri Mazel) prophesied that symbolism "est sans doute l'étiquette sous laquelle notre période sera classée dans l'histoire de la littérature française".[21] Yet many poets repudiated the term for themselves. Verlaine, for example, said in 1891 that there are as many symbolists as there are different symbols and that symbol is simply metaphor and thus poetry itself.[22] He called the term an "allemandisme" and wrote even a little rhymed squib beginning "à bas le symbolisme mythe et termite".[23] Similarly, Vielé–Griffin complained about the many senses of symbolism.[24] Possibly only Gustave Kahn preserved a loyalty for both the doctrine and the term. In the preface to his *Symbolistes et décadents* (1900) he avers that he has never tried to "enfermer le symbolisme dans une trop étroite définition" and boasts that "je suis resté à peu près le seul symboliste. C'est que j'étais un des rares qui l'étaient vraiment de fond".[25]

Any number of times Symbolism was declared defunct. Thus Jules Lemaître in a condescending article dimissed the symbol as simply a new word for "the allegory of our fathers" and concluded: "Je crains que la race des Symbolistes ne soit aux trois quarts éteinte".[26] Also René Doumic decided that "l'Ecole symboliste se présente ainsi à nous comme une école qui a accompli sa tâche et qui a fait son temps".[27] But in 1905 a new review, *Vers et Prose*, was founded, in which its main critic, Robert de Souza, in a series of articles entitled "Où nous sommes" ridiculed the many attempts to bury symbolism and proudly claimed that Gustave Kahn, Paul Verhaeren, Francis Vielé-Griffin, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Henri de Régnier were then as active as ever.[28]

By 1911, a thesis, *Le Symbolisme* by André Barre, looked back on symbolism as a past movement and could describe its vicissitudes with some precision: and slowly, I am not sure exactly by what means, the concept of a symbolist period in French literature extending far beyond the group of the original Symbolists became com-

[18] See M. Décaudin, *La Crise des valeurs symbolistes* (Toulouse, 1960), p. 22.
[19] Ibid., p. 296.
[20] Adolphe Retté in *La Plume*, 15 February, 1892, reprinted in Michaud, *Doctrine*, p. 7.
[21] Quoted by Décaudin, from *L'Ermitage*, June, 1894.
[22] Michaud, *Message*, Vol. 2. p. 394.
[23] In *Invectives*, (1896). See Barre, pp. 160–161.
[24] In *Entretiens II*, March, 1891, pp. 65–66.
[25] Reprinted as *Les Origines du symbolisme* (1936), p. 69.
[26] In *Revue Bleue*, January 7, 1888.
[27] In *Revue des Deux Mondes*, July 15, 1900.
[28] In *Vers et Prose*, 1 (March-April-May, 1905), p. 79. De Souza's articles were also published separately (1906).

monplace. For example, Rémy de Gourmont, in *Promenades littéraires*,[29] refers to the "symbolist period" without qualms, and especially after the First World War, when surrealism had definitely broken with the Symbolist past (whatever its continuities with it), Symbolism was seen as a mighty movement stretching from Baudelaire or even Nerval through Rimbaud, Verlaine, and Mallarmé to the actual Symbolist group of 1886 and beyond it into the twentieth century, to Péguy, Claudel, and Valéry. The main codification of this view is Guy Michaud's three-volume monograph, *Message poétique du symbolisme* (1947), but the general conception was established much earlier. It is sufficient to look into a book such as John Charpentier's *Le Symbolisme* (1927) to see an attempt to trace its history into the distant past and to select a wide range of poets beginning with Lautréamont and to include the novel and the drama. Not only did the extension to the novel claim Edouard Dujardin's stream-of-consciousness novel, *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1887), and the novels of Rémy de Gourmont, but soon Proust was added by Valéry Larbaud in the preface to Emeric Fiser's *L'Esthétique de Marcel Proust* (1933). The argument that the theory expounded in *Le Temps retrouvé* is a symbolist esthetics seems convincing, though Proust disliked Péguy and Claudel and in 1896 wrote an essay condemning obscurity and even composed a pastiche of Henri de Régnier, a mock-solemn description of a head cold.[30] The penetration of symbolism on the stage was largely due to the enormous success of Maurice Maeterlinck. Le Théâtre d'art, founded by Paul Fort in 1890, staged *L'Intruse* and *Les Aveugles* in 1891. The Théâtre de l'Œuvre, directed by Lugné–Poe, produced *Pelléas et Melisande* in 1893. But one should not forget that Villiers de l'Isle–Adam's *Axel* was printed in part in *La Renaissance* in 1872 and in *Vie Artistique* in 1882 long before the symbolist manifesto, and that it was presented at the Théâtre de la Gaité in 1894. Maeterlinck said: "Everything I have done I owe to Villiers".[31]

On the whole this conception of a large French movement extending from Baudelaire to Valéry seems a reasonable solution to the problem of periodization and is not refuted by Valéry's own highly nominalist dismissals of the question of the existence of symbolism as a myth, especially since at other times he gives a simple definition of symbolism. "Ce qui fut baptisé: le Symbolisme, se résume très simplement dans l'intention commune à plusieurs familles de poètes (d'ailleurs ennemies entre elles) de 'reprendre à Musique leur bien'. Le secret de ce mouvement n'est pas autre."[32] Though on several occasions Valéry denied that symbolism has an esthetic,[33] *Existence du Symbolisme* (1938) gives really a fairly detailed account of its heroes such as Poe and Wagner, of its antecedents and preoccupations, as do several other of his essays on Mallarmé.

We can delimit or at least describe a movement by setting it off from its antecedents and successors. There cannot be any difficulty in seeing the Symbolist move-

[29] *Cinquième série*, 1913, p. 152.

[30] "Contre l'obscurité", in *Revue blanche*, July 15, 1896; reprinted in *Chroniques*. More in Walter A. Strauss, *Proust and Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), pp. 191–193, 204.

[31] Dorothy Knowles, *La Réaction idéaliste au théâtre* (Paris, 1934). — Jacques Robichez, *Le Symbolisme au théâtre* (Paris, 1957).

[32] P. Valéry, *Œuvres*, ed. J. Hytier, (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), Vol. 1. p. 1272.

[33] Ibid., Vol. 1. pp. 1738, 1766.

ment as a reaction to Realism and Naturalism, flourishing at the same time. The break with the Parnassians is also obvious enough. The Symbolists wanted words not merely to state but to suggest: they wanted their verse to be musical, i.e. in practice, to break with the oratorical tradition of the French alexandrine and, in some cases, to break completely with rhyme. Free verse, the invention of which is usually ascribed to Gustave Kahn, outlasted the movement. Kahn himself summed up the doctrine simply as "antinaturalism, antiprosaism in poetry, a search for freedom in the efforts in art, in reaction against the regimentation of the Parnasse and the naturalists".[34] It is more difficult to draw a clear dividing line with regard to Romanticism, particularly if we conceive Romanticism widely, so widely that Symbolism will appear a descendant. But again the philosophical difference between Symbolism and French Romanticism is obvious: the Romantics were Rousseauists while the Symbolists believed in the fall of man, or, if they did not use this religious phrasing, knew that man is limited and is in conflict with nature. They distrust the exaltation of the ego of the Romantics, their reliance on inspiration and mere effusion of personal emotions. Clearly, they have more affinities with the the German romantic movement, but these affinities should not be overrated to the point of assuming any direct contacts. There is an article by Jean Thorel (1891), *"Les romantiques allemands et les symbolistes français,"*[35] which draws attention to Friedrich Creuzer's erudite investigations of symbolism in religion and mentions Fouqué's *Undine*. Even before, Teodor de Wyzewa had somewhat absurdly called Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Mallarmé "presque de purs fichtéens" and had himself apparently embraced a solipsism for which he quoted as authorities Plato, Berkeley, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Hartmann quite indiscriminately.[36] But no real knowledge of German philosophy was needed to arrive at a feeling for the illusiveness of reality, for the sense that "life is a dream", or even that only I exist, or to succumb to a general pessimism, to the mood of decadence, *fin de siècle*, *Götterdämmerung*, or the death of God prophesied by Nietzsche. Many young or not so young men had lost their religion — a phenomenon so widespread in the later nineteenth century that we need not search for sources. Still, there were some direct contacts. Novalis came late: Maeterlinck wrote an article on him (1894) and compiled a little anthology in translation (1896).[37] But Heine, a *romantique défroqué* as he called himself, was a well-known figure in Paris, and his account of the German romantic school, ironic and hostile as it is, played its part in informing the French and certainly supplying Baudelaire with the phrase "surnaturalisme".[38] E.T.A. Hoffmann had been widely translated and was known in France. Baudelaire quotes him on synaesthesia and discusses several stories.[39] There was, of course, Wagner, whose influence was so widespread among writers, at least since Baudelaire's piece on *Tannhäuser* (1861), that the *Revue*

[34] *La Société nouvelle*, April 1894, quoted by Décaudin, p. 15.
[35] In *Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, September, 1891, 2, pp. 95—109.
[36] Delsemme, pp. 128 ff.
[37] In *La Nouvelle Revue*, 1894; *Les Disciples à Saïs, suivi de fragments* (Brussels, 1895). The article on Novalis is included in *Le Trésor des humbles*, (1896).
[38] Kurt Weinberg, *Henri Heine: Héraut du symbolisme français* (New Haven, 1954).
[39] See Jean Pommier, "Baudelaire et E.T.A. Hoffmann", in *Dans les chemins de Baudelaire* (Paris, 1945), pp. 297–321.

Wagnérienne can be described as a symbolist organ.[40] Mallarmé's attitude to Wagner, while admiring of the music, was tinged with irony for Wagner's subject-matter,[41] but Mallarmé is an exception among the general enthusiasts of Wagner's myths. The *Revue Wagnérienne* contained accounts by Wyzewa of Wagner's theoretical writing and even a partial translation of the piece on Beethoven.[42]

But the indirect sources flowed even more abundantly: Carlyle's chapter on symbolism in *Sartor Resartus*, also known through Taine's *History of English Literature*, and his essay on Novalis; Coleridge, from whom, through another intermediary, Mrs. Catherine Crowe, Baudelaire drew his concept of "constructive imagination";[43] and Emerson, who had expounded a highly symbolist esthetic, and been translated by Edgar Quinet.

Edgar Allan Poe, whose enormous influence in France is something of a puzzle to Americans, also drew on Coleridge and A. W. Schlegel.[44] But his case most clearly demonstrates the difference between French Symbolism and Romanticism. Poe has been described as an "angel in a machine"; he combines a faith in technique and even technology, a distrust of inspiration, a rationalistic eighteenth-century mind with a vague occult belief in "supernal" beauty. Baudelaire quoted him as if he were Poe himself, sometimes dropping all quotation marks. Mallarmé translated the poems. Valéry wrote admiringly even about the cosmological fantasy *Eureka*. All the French writers accepted *The Philosophy of Composition* and *The Poetic Principle* almost as gospel. There could not be anything less romantic than the elaborate hoax describing the supposed stages in which Poe composed *The Raven*. French Symbolism differs from Romanticism — if we mean by it the exaltation of imagination and the worship of an organic nature — precisely in its admiration for Poe.

French Symbolism was exported abroad and caused an international movement, which, as Anna Balakian has argued persuasively, was the first movement in which "art ceased in truth to be national and assumed the collective premises of Western culture. Its overwhelming concern was the non-temporal, non-sectarian, non-geographic, and non-national problem of the human condition".[45] In the Paris of the 1890's, poets lost their national identity. Francis Vielé-Griffin and Stuart Merrill were native Americans. Foreigners flocked to Paris: Arthur Symons, George Moore, and W. B. Yeats, Stefan George, Ruben Darío and the Machado brothers, Hofmannsthal and Rilke all received decisive stimuli from their stays in Paris. But we must draw distinctions. We must ask what reports about the French movement were heard abroad. They have been studied often and in great detail.[46] They may not mean more than

[40] The basic book is still K. Jäckel, *Richard Wagner in der französischen Literatur*, 2 vols., (Breslau, 1931–1932).

[41] *Œuvres complètes*, ed. H. Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris 1945), pp. 541–546.

[42] May 8 and August 8, 1885, Delsemme, p. 127.

[43] *Curiosités esthétiques*, ed. Conard (Paris, 1923), p. 279. Quoted in English from *The Night Side of Nature* (London, 1848), pp. 320–321. See also G. T. Clapton, "Baudelaire and Catherine Crowe", *Modern Language Review*, 25, 1930, pp. 286–305.

[44] See discussion in my *History of Modern Criticism*, Vol. 3. pp. 158, 162.

[45] *The Symbolist Movement* (New York, 1967), p. 10.

[46] Georgette Donchin, *The Influence of French Symbolism on Russian Poetry* (The Hague, 1958); René Taupin, *L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine de 1910 à 1920* (Paris, 1921); Enid L. Duthie, *L'Influence du symbolism efrançais dans le renouveau poétique de l'Allemagne*

cultural reporting, may reflect no more than curiosity about goings-on in the literary marketplace in Paris. Then, there are the translations, which were sometimes done by mere rhymesters and sometimes by the greatest poets themselves, such as George's versions of Mallarmé or Rilke's of Valéry, and then there is the question of actual influence on the poets abroad. I have tried to sketch these questions in an earlier article:[47] only an expert in a specific national literature can say whether this or that writer can be called a symbolist, but one can investigate the consensus and examine literary critics and historians as to whether and when they spoke of a Symbolist movement in their country and whom they called a symbolist. I was struck by the enormous differences among the main countries in their reaction to the term. I showed that the term was immensely successful in Russia, in the United States, and in Bohemia. It was less so in England and Spain (where they preferred the wider *modernismo*) and hardly at all in Italy and Germany. In Germany there was a long tradition of discussion on symbolism from Goethe to F. T. Vischer, but in spite of that Germans rarely spoke of a Symbolist movement and preferred *Neuromantik* or the neutral *Moderne*. It must have been a deliberate decision of Stefan George to avoid identification with the French Movement which kept the term from receiving wide acceptance in Germany. In Italy *ermetismo* was successful rather than *simbolismo*. One must, I think, assign a large role to chance or to personal predilections. Every student of an individual literature can no doubt align his native poets with the French at the time and account for specific contacts, but it takes a trained ear and prolonged meditation to decide which poet was a real symbolist. To give examples from literatures not discussed in my earlier piece, was Ola Hansson (1860—1925) in Sweden a symbolist poet, was Olaf Bull (1883—1933) in Norway, was Sophus Claussen (1865—1931) in Denmark, or, to shift to the Baltic countries, was the Latvian Raines (1865—1929), the Lithuanian Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1873—1944), or the Estonian Marie Under (born in 1883) a genuine symbolist poet? How about Ivan Krasko (1876—1958) in Slovakia, and what shall we say if we read in a reputable literary history that Ivo Vojnović (1858—1929) belongs to "realistic symbolism"?[48] There are many problems. It is dangerous to engage in mere terminological quibbles but we must also refrain from dismissing them, for there was an undoubted radiation of the French movement all over Europe and the Americas, and a constant struggle to translate the French achievement into new settings which at times strongly modified the original impetus.

We simply cannot get around the central question. What do we mean by a symbol if it is to characterize symbolism and allow us to apply some kind of norm identifying a symbolist in different countries? Here the confusions and difficulties pile up. Some modern theorists use symbol extremely widely. Thus Northrop Frye in the *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) is content to call symbol "any unit of any work of literature which can be isolated for critical attention. In general usage restricted to the smaller units,

(Paris, 1933); Ruth Z. Temple, *The Critic's Alchemy: A Study of the Introduction of French Symbolism into England* (New York, 1953).

[47] "The Term and Concept of Symbolism in Literary History", in *Discriminations* (New Haven, 1970), pp. 90—121.

[48] Gerhard Gesemann, *Geschichte der südslavischen Literaturen* (1930), p. 41.

such as words, phrases, images, etc."[49] But this usage leaves us completely up in the air. We cannot make any distinctions between theme, motif, image, and so forth. More widespread is the view voiced by Paul Verlaine in 1891 that "le symbole, c'est la métaphore, c'est la poésie même".[50] Frank Kermode narrows this definition only slightly when he identifies the symbol of the French "with the Romantic Image writ large and given more elaborate and magical support".[51] One can also try to define symbolism by its highest unattainable aspiration, as Geoffrey Brereton does when he says that "symbolism abolished the separation between subject and object, the internal and external worlds",[52] something the Romantics also hoped to do and did not achieve, as, in fact, nobody ever has, literally. All this does not set off symbol in the Symbolist movement from most of the poetic devices used throughout the history of literature.

One can try historical definitions as I have tried in setting symbolism off from other trends, but one ends largely with negatives, as does A. C. Lehmann when he speaks of "the refusal to be attracted by social, propagandist, and other extraliterary interests" and says, quite correctly, that "in 1895 symbolism attached to a writer's name signifies little more than friendship and reverence for Mallarmé".[53] One can return to the standard definition in Goethe or Coleridge which aims at the distinction between symbol and allegory and in practice consider allegory a one-to-one relationship, while symbol points toward something essentially mysterious, ineffable: as "plurisignation", as Philip Wheelwright would say.[54] In my and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature*, symbol is differentiated from allegory and metaphor by insisting on its recurrence and persistence. Warren is thinking of the symbolic systems of Yeats or Blake, or the traditional, natural symbolism used by Robert Frost when he speaks of "the road not taken" or of "miles to go before I sleep".[55] But all of this applies to an enormous variety of literature far beyond the confines of the Symbolist movement.

We must try to find a definition of the symbol which limits it to its use by the Symbolists. There seems to me a fairly clear convergence of opinions on this score by students in very different traditions. Jan Mukařovský, the leading theorist of the Prague Linguistic Circle, in discussing a Czech Symbolist poet, Karel Hlaváček, found a simple formula by saying that in the Symbolist metaphor, the relation between the "thing" and the "image" (or in the terms familiarized by I. A. Richards, the "tenor" and the "vehicle") is reversed.[56] One could develop this by saying that in most older poetry the "thing" was the theme and the "image" illustrated it, while in Symbolism the image assumes materiality and the thing is merely its accompaniment. Grammatically, Symbolist poetry could be called poetry of the predicate. It speaks of something or somebody, but the subject, the person or the thing, remains hidden. Symbolist poetry thus tries to distance the language utterance from the extra-linguistic situation. It plays down the

[49] Princeton, 1957.
[50] In *Figaro*, quoted by Michaud, *Message*, Vol. 2., p. 394.
[51] *The Romantic Image* (London, 1957), p. 5.
[52] In *Cassell's Encyclopedia of World Literature*, Second ed. (1973).
[53] *The Symbolist Aesthetic in France* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 14, 16.
[54] *The Burning Fountain* (Bloomington, Ind.), 1954, pp. 112 ff.
[55] New York, 1949, pp. 193–195.
[56] *Kapitoly z české poetiky* (Prague, 1948), Vol. 2., p 220.

"here" and "there", the socially concrete situation: the characteristic Anna Balakian emphasized in her book, and earlier in her *Literary Origins of Surrealism*, where she speaks of the spiritual crisis exemplified by the work of Lautréamont, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé as a "tendency to disregard the natural phenomenon . . . by divesting it of the concepts of time, space, and movement; a tendency toward dehumanization through a detachment from human emotions".[57]

Bernard Weinberg, using different terminology, says the same as Jan Mukařovský, whose work he could not have known, in his *Limits of Symbolism*. "A symbolist poem", he says, "was one in which a half-metaphor served as the basis of the structure; that is, the object or the person represented throughout the poem was one which, in a metaphorical structure, would have been analogical to another object or person . . . Only, that other object or person was nowhere specifically identified". The symbol appears as "a truncated metaphor", i.e., as in Mukařovský, the vehicle has become the tenor and the original tenor is suppressed or rather is merely hinted at. Or, as Weinberg says, we have "a true symbol only where there is the suppression of one of the ratios in a proportional metaphor".[58] We should realize that such a definition excludes many poems which are ordinarily called symbolist. For example, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* is a narrative with metaphors, but does not suppress the tenor at all. But here a plausible definition is found which agrees with the formula proposed by Henri de Régnier in 1900: "Un symbole est, en effet, une comparaison et une identité de l'abstrait au concret, comparaison dont l'un des termes reste sous-entendu".[59] It is what Christine Brooke-Rose in her *Grammar of Metaphor* calls Simple Replacement: "the proper term is replaced altogether by the metaphor, without being mentioned at all".[60] But the proper term or the thing or the tenor must somehow be hinted at or understood from the context, for otherwise the poem will be incomprehensible (as some Symbolist poems are) or so ambiguous as to lend itself to the most divergent interpretations. But simple replacement is, of course, a device much older and more widespread than French Symbolism. On this analysis, even a proverb such as "a rolling stone gathers no moss" would be a symbol. This clearly will not do. We have to limit "simple replacement". The hidden tenor cannot be simply "man" or, in the case of this proverb, "the footloose man, the wanderer", but it must be some internal event or experience that hints at something transcendent and, with many symbolists, at something supernatural or even occult. The thing, any thing, as in Rilke's *Dinggedicht*, can become the vehicle, but it will always suggest the concealed tenor: the mystery of life and the world. We are back at a definition of the world-view of the Symbolists, but we have returned to it via a stylistic requirement: the structure of the symbol. The Symbolist symbol has its special character: simple replacement *and* the suggestion of the mystery.

This may be a narrow definition of Symbolism. It does contain, as I admitted earlier, a prescriptive meaning, but it allows us to distinguish Symbolism as we know

[57] 1947; new ed. 1965, p. 97.
[58] Bernard Weinberg, *The Limits of Symbolism. Studies of Five Modern French Poets* (Chicago, 66).
[59] "Poètes d'aujourd'hui et poésie de demain", in *Mercure de France, 35*, 1900, p. 342.
[60] London, 1958, p. 24.

it from about the time of Baudelaire to Valéry and Rilke from that all-pervasive symbolism which would include half of the world's literature. In this widest sense, the term loses all usefulness for the student of literature. Of the four concentric circles we have distinguished: the coterie in Paris in the eighteen-eighties and -nineties; the French movement from Baudelaire to Valéry; the international movement that spans the continents and includes all or almost all literatures between 1880 and 1920; and the symbolism of all ages and places. The third meaning, the concept of the international movement, is clearly the one most relevant to our concerns as comparatists.

GYÖRGY M. VAJDA

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

"O Beauté, dur fléau des âmes . . . "
(Baudelaire: *Causerie)*

Symbolism's contribution to the development of modern literature and art on an international scale has yet to be evaluated. There is one point, however, about which we can be certain: throughout its history, Symbolism was never an isolated movement in European literature. In the literatures of all the European languages, we find a number of other movements flourishing contemporaneously with it.

It is its structure which differentiated the Symbolist movement from those concurrent and contiguous with it. This structure can be said to consist of a peculiar layer of ideological nature (the philosophical background) a methodology, i.e. a poetics; and a stylistic layer, the sum total of formal devices. Instances of some or all of these elements can be discovered in every Symbolist work.

Every movement has its own philosophical layer, its own methodology, and its own style. It is the content of each of these layers which varies from movement to movement. We are able to place a work within a movement if it possesses the features most characteristic of each of these layers. The first step in such an identification is the delineation of the structural layers of a given movement. The intention of this study is precisely to attempt to give such a characterization of Symbolism.[1]

For all their historical concreteness, literary and artistic movements are but "working hypotheses". They are primarily a means for us to find our bearings in the flux which characterizes the history of literature and the arts. This history is inextricably intertwined with that of society, of morals, of philosophy, and of ideas — that of the history of an entire culture. Yet, in the final analysis, *qua* specialized literary or art history, it consists of the interrelationship of a series of works.

Rarely can the entire lifework of a writer or an artist be considered as belonging to a given movement. *Works rather than personalities, writers, painters, sculptors, or poets belong to movements.* An argument over whether all of Balzac's works are realistic, or whether all of Zola's are naturalistic, would be a fruitless one indeed. Strindberg, too, wrote naturalistic, realistic, symbolistic or, more precisely, modern style pieces. Maeterlinck's works are not all uniformly Symbolist. And yet it is far from indifferent whether or not we think of works as belonging to clearly identifiable movements. On the one hand, we need to see clearly the structure of literary and artistic movements, to describe the various layers of this structure in order to be able to determine more precisely

[1] Though in this study I have not quoted from Michel Décaudin's masterly book, *La Crise des valeurs symbolistes* (Toulouse, 1966), I feel obliged to confess that I have been most inspired by it, both to assent and to disagree.

the place occupied by a written work of art within the process of literary and art history. On the other, a structural analysis of movements, based as it is on the analysis of individual works, also contributes to a more precise understanding of the works themselves.

1. THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT:

The uppermost *content* layer of the structure of Symbolism is comprised of philosophical principles, ideological elements, and value systems. It is these that we must first consider. However, since in no movement can the layers be completely separated from each other, in discussing this element we shall at times have to refer to the method, the poetics, of Symbolism as well as to some of its stylistic elements.

1.a) The "philosophy" of Symbolism presents a peculiar picture. Perhaps never before in the history of literature and the arts has there been a movement in whose ideology and value system Beauty was given such an eminent position. The fact that Symbolism was contemporaneous with Naturalism served to emphasize this peculiarity.

1.b) Symbolism was as much a product of the *scientific age* as was Naturalism. Naturalism was indeed, as Zola claimed, the prose engendered by the scientific age; but Symbolism was just as unequivocally the age's own peculiar poetry. The Symbolists produced a poetry of utmost refinement, a very language within a language, "un langage dans un langage", as Valéry put it in a lecture on the relationship of poetry and abstract thought. ("Poésie et pensée abstraite", 1939). Naturalistic prose used everyday language to convey its own truths. Symbolist poetry, on the other hand, deliberately endowed its linguistic signs with an esthetic function, thus helping modern students of language and style to better understand the peculiarities of the language of poetry. Valéry frequently speaks of the peculiar function of poetic language. He lived at a time when twentieth-century symbolic logic and linguistic structuralism were already taking shape; he had at his disposal the results of formalistic stylistic analysis. His interpretation of Symbolism is thus partially conceived in terms of the concept of "symbol as a linguistic sign," which — as a sign for a meaning — is theoretically related to mathematical symbols. Finally, mention should be made of the Symbolist René Ghil, who, while Mallarmé was writing "poésie symboliste," was writing his own "poésie scientifique, partant des données de la science, et pour la pensée directrice et pour la technique".[2]

Natural science takes nature, reality, matter for the object of its studies. Mathematics — though in the final analysis it, too, is rooted in reality — takes numerical relations and interrelationships. Even without attempting to give an ontological definition of mathematical "existence", we can assert with certainty that, of all the sciences, mathematics — and logic — represent the highest level of abstraction from reality.

Abstraction is a methodological element of artistic composition. Nevertheless, we shall discuss it briefly at this place of our study in order to clarify its relationship to Symbolist ideals.

[2] René Ghil, *De la poésie scientifique* (Paris, 1909), p. 19.

At least two kinds of poetic attitudes are typical of works within the Symbolist movement. In the first, it is the intellect which dominates, and — in our opinion — this is Symbolism *par excellence*. Works by Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Valéry and Babits represent this stream. In the second, it is the emotional-sentimental-moody element which is preeminent. These works display a remarkable sensitivity to impressions; the poems "swim" and "float". Verlaine, Rimbaud, Samain already wrote poems of this kind. In the German poetic tradition, George is closer to the first, Rilke to the second type. "Type", I say, for the expression "type" by no means presumes to strictly define the artist and his work. The ideal of Beauty, however, is the *primum movens* of the philosophy and esthetics as much of the intellectual, as of the emotional type of Symbolism.

Abstraction is a means of mentally stepping out of reality; it involves the creation of concepts, of general principles, and of universals. Whereas some Symbolists arrived at mathematical abstractions of reality, i.e., at symbols, others—the emotional-sentimental-moody Symbolists— expressed atmospheric effects, shades of feeling, and a general indecisiveness in their melodious lines. Fundamentally, however, this latter method was simply a variety of abstraction. The continuation and transposition of the former method in the fine arts can be seen in the Cubism of the beginning of the twentieth century, which reduced the natural shapes of the body to geometric forms. The equivalent in the fine arts of the emotional-sentimental-moody Symbolist trend was Impressionist painting and sculpture; its subsequent development was abstract painting based on color effects, a style which Kandinsky initiated even before the First World War. Abstraction, therefore, is a combination of both Symbolist trends; it is a necessary element in any treatment of Symbolism in the history of modern literature and art. The very utilization of symbols, from which the movement received its name, is itself a classical form of artistic abstraction.

1.c) But let us return to the ideational-content layer of Symbolism, to the description of its philosophy. The Symbolists' language, unlike that of the Naturalists, was not meant to "copy" the world; its purpose was to create another, poetic world. This other world derived its meaning from, and was grounded in, a conscious or semiconscious philosophical position. The ideational content (*Ideengehalt*) of the Symbolist movement did not imply the existence of the real world, whatever the *personal* convictions of the individual Symbolist poets might have been in this regard. In this, it differed radically from Naturalism, which aimed at the enumeration of the facts and documents of a reality which it presupposed as a given fact. Drawing this contrast is not tantamount to saying that no Symbolist poem ever reflected the real world. Mallarmé and Valéry did, indeed, perfect a *poésie pure*, a "bodyless" linguistic music. But others—Baudelaire, the early Rimbaud, and, later, more intensively, Verhaeren, Blok, and Ady—wrote a type of poetry geared toward reality, replete with social, national, and, on occasion, even revolutionary elements.

In the poetics of Symbolism, however, the main goal was never to present a faithful depiction of reality. While the Naturalists derived their inspiration from men preoccupied with the natural sciences, the Symbolists turned to their favorite philosophers: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Eduard von Hartmann, Kierkegaard, Bergson. The com-

poser they most admired, Richard Wagner, primarily treated topics which, though full of subtle psychological detail, were essentially devoid of factors relating to concrete reality. Such, indeed, was the Niebelung tetralogy first performed in 1876; the composition of the second half of the opera series coincided with the productive years of Zola, Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé.

1.d) Along with Beauty, *mysticism* was also incorporated into the Symbolist view of the world.

> Je me mire et me vois ange, et je meurs, et j'aime
> — Que la vitre soit l'art, soit la mysticité —
> A renaître, portant mon rêve en diadème,
> Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté !
>
> (Mallarmé: "Les Fenêtres")

Beauty, art, and mysticism: these elements were as integral to the intellectual, mathematical type of Symbolism as they were to its emotional-intuitive stream. By way of substantiation, we might refer to Hugo Friedrich,[3] who alludes to the numerology to be found in Baudelaire's poetic cycles; and perhaps it is not inappropriate to note, in this same regard, the three-word titles Ady gave to his poems.

Thus, while the trend toward Realism and Naturalism in literature and the arts built upon the philosophic realism of Diderot and Lessing—or at least upon the traditions of rational thought—the Romanticism and Symbolism contemporaneous with it also drew upon the traditions of the "shady side".[4]

1.e) Decadence marked the spiritual mood (*Lebensgefühl*) of poetry at the end of the nineteenth century; it was the attitude which fin-de-siècle—and perhaps even earlier—poets adopted toward existence. For although it was only in 1883 that Verlaine wrote his famous lines: "Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la décadence"; and not until 1885 that the concept of decadence, i.e., of decline as applied to literature, gained popularity through Gabriel Vicaire's and Henri Beauclaire's satire, *Les Déliquescences d'Adoré Floupette*; and although it was only in 1886 that Anatole Baju started his journal, *Décadent*, which Verlaine's "sponsorship" kept alive for three years; and only in 1884 that J. K. Huysmans, the "renegade naturalist", published the novel whose hero, Duc Jean des Esseintes, was to become the very incarnation of decadence—nevertheless, the concept, the *Lebensgefühl*, the "pose", the attitude of decadence was a much earlier phenomenon. The parallel Verlaine drew between the decline of modern man and of the modern age, on the one hand, and the decadence of the Roman Empire on the other was, in fact, a thought that had come into vogue precisely one hundred years earlier (1776—1786) with the appearance of the six volumes of Edward Gibbon's *The*

[3] Hugo Friedrich, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik*, sixth edn. (Hamburg, 1962).

[4] One of the most recent works in this connection is Alain Mercier's, *Les Sources ésotériques et occultes de la poésie symboliste* (Paris, 1969), who examines in detail the ideological and personal ties of the Symbolists to the mystics, occultists, heretics, and satanists of their own, as well as of previous ages. He traces the preoccupation with mysticism and the occult throughout the nineteenth century, convincingly demonstrating that the so-called "dark side" (*versant obscur*) of the Enlightenment—that represented by the mystics, spiritualists, and demonists who flourished in the eighteenth century—stretched in an unbroken line throughout the previous century.

History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. The historical prototype of decadence was, therefore, a discovery of the eighteenth century. As a Romantic "attitude", however, it developed after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. First psychological considerations, then, increasingly, societal considerations were marshalled to justify it. As examples, we might mention Sénancour's *Obermann*, Constant's *Adolphe*, Byron's *Don Juan*, Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, Lermontov's *Pechorin*, Goncharov's *Oblomov*, to name just a few. In the Russian literary tradition, it is Dobrolyubov who gives us the social and psychological histories of impotent decadent figures. Not only the Romantics, but also the masters of Realism—Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Turgenev, and Tolstoy—evoke for our inspection the long columns of "declining" characters. Thomas Mann's novel of a family's decline, *Buddenbrooks*, written at the turn of the century, is also a part of this tradition. So are his subsequent novellas in which, however, the psychological and social analyses already display features of modern artistic decadence. As we can thus see, decadence, in both its subjective and objective manifestations, appears as the subject of literary examples throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The decadents of modern times, however, themselves became examples of decadence; they made it their life-style.

The modern concept of decadence was therefore enlarged. It still implied the attempt to escape from workaday triviality of an ordered bourgeois existence, but it sought this escape in a peculiar and refined estheticism, in the cult of the extraordinary, of the exceptional, and in pessimism and morbidity. The method and style of Symbolism were particularly suited to the expression of the essence of this kind of decadence. The new trend broke away from the Realists' objective illustration of decadence and exaggerated the Romantics' "attitude". Already in 1891, Hermann Bahr called the new efforts of the *fin de siècle* "a nervous Romanticism" (*nervöse Romantik*) and noted that, with the passing of Naturalism, the quest for truth had again been replaced by the quest for "poetry": "Es verbreitete sich am Ende der langen Wanderung nach der ewig flüchtigen Wahrheit wieder das alte Gefühl des Petöfischen Liedes: 'Die Träume, Mutter, lügen nimmer'; und wieder wurde die Kunst, die eine Weile die Markthalle der Wirklichkeit gewesen, der 'Tempel des Traumes', wie Maurice Maeterlinck sie genannt hat".[5] And it was likewise to a feature of the Romantics' creative method that Bahr traced what is perhaps the main characteristic of the method of poetic decadence: "Sie wollen keine Abschrift der äusseren Natur. Sie wollen *modeler notre univers intérieur*. Darin sind sie wie neue Romantiker . . ."[6]

In some way or other—as attitude, as illustration, or as the object of criticism—the concept and subject of decadence has become part of the mainstream of modern literature. Thus, even if, with Gustave Kahn (*Symbolistes et Décadents*, 1902), we apply the name "decadent" only to the precursors of the Symbolists, or to a group, or to a faction within the movement, it is, in fact, to an attitude characteristic of the entire movement that we have alluded. An estheticizing decadence is evident in the method and style

[5] Hermann Bahr, *Die Überwindung des Naturalismus* (Dresden and Leipzig, 1891), p. 153.
[6] Hermann Bahr, "Die Décadence", *Studien zur Kritik der Moderne* (Frankfurt/M., 1894), p. 21.

(both words could be used in the plural) of the Symbolist movement; it is a decadence that is most compatible with its uses of a mathematical model, its grounding in idealist philosophy, and its fascination with the mystic and the occult.

2. THE METHOD OF SYMBOLISM

2.a) The method involved in the creation and use of symbols is a direct result of the very nature of the Symbolist movement. *This method, as we have seen, is a prime example of abstraction.* Susanne K. Langer gives the following general definition of a symbol: "A symbol is any device whereby we are enabled to make an *abstraction.*"[7] This definition considers a symbol as a shorthand sign for a wider and more pregnant meaning; it is, in fact, a kind of "condensation", an abstraction of a concrete thing. A poetic symbol is particularly rich in shades of meaning. Rimbaud's *Bateau ivre* not only managed to paint a novel and arresting series of pictures by means of the metaphor of a ship—used and abused from the Greek lyricists to the Parnassian school—it also succeeded on another level as a prophetic illustration of the poet's own inner situation.[8] We can even see the metaphor of the drifting, aimlessly tossed wreckage as a general symbol of human life. This sole symbol involuntarily leads us to the realization that Rimbaud's Symbolist poetry reflects an attitude that is fundamentally akin to the existentialist experience of living.[9]

2.b) *Symbol*, the key-word of Symbolism as a movement, has different meanings in different periods of literature.

"Das ist die wahre Symbolik, wo das Besondere das Allgemeine repräsentiert, nicht als Traum und Schatten, sondern als lebendig-augenblickliche Offenbarung des Unerforschlichen".[10]

Goethe thus sees the particular case as the symbol expressing a general law. Werther's personal fate is a symbol of the precariousness of the life of a man of talent in an absolutely ruled principality; Faust is a symbol of man at the beginning of the nineteenth century or, more generally, of the active, searching, creative man. In the esthetics of both Romanticism and Realism, such a symbol is called the "type," i.e., the particular case representative of an entire group, class, or community. Stendhal's hero, Julien Sorel, is the symbol of the Romantics' adventurous and career-minded youth. Gorky's figure of the Mother is an individual and, as such, is a "sign"; but, in a general way, she "signifies", or symbolizes an entire class.

This interpretation of "symbolism" leads us to the fundamental question of artistic depiction, and especially of realistic artistic representation. The above, however, is not the sense in which "symbolic" applies to the method of the Symbolists. Jean Moréas's 1886 manifesto suggested the name Symbolism for the movement because its members wrote poetry which aimed "à vêtir l'Idée d'une forme sensible". Such poetry

[7] Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (London, 1953), p. xi.

[8] Cf. Pierre Brunel, *Rimbaud. Thema—Anthologie* (Paris, 1973), p. 53.

[9] Cf. Paul Henri Paillou, *Arthur Rimbaud, père de l'Existentialisme* (Paris, 1947).

[10] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, Berliner Ausgabe, vol. 18, ed. by Siegfried Seidel (Berlin and Weimar, 1972), p. 520.

was not an end in itself, but was totally dedicated to the expression of the ideal, totally subordinate to the ideal. As Guy Michaud observed,[11] Moréas gave no precise definition of the nature of the ideal hidden behind the sensible form. But Mallarmé expected the perceptible words themselves to disclose "the pure essence of things." In 1886, he wrote: "Un désir indéniable à mon temps est de séparer comme en vue d'attributions différentes le double état de la parole, brut ou immédiat ici, là essentiel".[12]

From these comments and statements we can conclude that the Symbolist movement which evolved in the 1880's saw as its task the creation of a poetry which, through the instrumentality of *sensible* forms, i.e., words, pictures, metaphors, etc., expressed something *non*-sensible. What we can sense is the sign; what the sign expresses is its meaning. The signs used in poetry—the instruments of symbolization in its most general sense — are words. The meaning which the word-symbol expresses is the Idea, the sign's "symbolic reference".[13]

The "symbolic reference", i.e., the way in which a symbol relates to its meaning, is not the same in every case of symbolization. There is here, in fact, as we have already seen, a fundamental dichotomy. For the reference of one kind of symbol admits of rational, discursive, unambiguous apprehension; while the reference of the other admits only of intuitive discovery: the meaning of these symbols is a matter of conjecture, they can be but "felt". The former is usually true of the symbols of the sciences, the latter of the symbols in the arts. (Susanne K. Langer's quoted book suggests this distinction.) We used the qualifier "usually" because what Goethe, for example, meant by an artistic symbol must be rationally understood. The poetic method of the Symbolists, however, relies on the use of symbols of the latter kind, i.e., of the intuitively comprehended symbols.

In this respect, there is no difference between the intellectual and the emotional-intuitive-impressionist streams in Symbolism; for, besides the use of symbols, the basic component of the poetic method of all Symbolist poets was their reliance upon *intuition*. The intellectual stream expected to arrive at an intrinsic understanding of the ideal, of the essence of things. They expected the same intuitive ability of their readership as well, and brushed aside the charges of unintelligibility raised against their works by conservative literary critics with this same appeal to intuition.

It would appear, therefore, that any distinction drawn between the artistic and scientific uses of symbols is, at best, ambiguous. For although understanding in science is generally a step-by-step process—discursive and thus rational—there is also such a thing as intuition in science, immediate insight, and self-evident truth. It is precisely the scientific model used by the Symbolists, i.e., mathematics, which is based on self-evident truths, on axioms which need no discursive proof. On the other hand, we see that intuitive recognition or understanding in art is not necessarily non-intellectual in nature. We come to recognize in Brecht's Galileo the symbol of the inevitable downfall of the scientist too weak or too corruptible to speak the truth through an immediate,

[11] Guy Michaud, "La Doctrine Symboliste", *Message poétique du Symbolisme* Documents (Paris, 1961), p. 726.

[12] *Traité du verbe* de René Ghil. Quoted by Michaud, op. cit., p. 726.

[13] Cf. Alfred North Whitehead, "Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect", *Alfred North Whitehead: An Anthology* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 536.

but by no means a non-intellectual insight. The understanding of an artistic symbol used in a realistic work of art is, in fact, a rational act, although we recognize its symbolic reference directly. From the epistemological point of view, therefore, a symbol in realistic art is not unlike a scientific symbol: both refer to one and the same "reality."

The symbols used by the Symbolists are of another nature. They are uncertain and ambiguous in meaning; they are expected to be understood not rationally but through an emotional-intuitive approach.

2.c) It is from the nature of Symbolist intuition that the third decisive element of the movement's method, namely, *impressionism*, logically follows. For impressionism is not, in fact, an independent artistic and literary trend, but an artistic method, with its own characteristic stylistic elements. In painting, these are motion, brilliance, and a multitude of shades melting into each other. In sculpture, it is smooth flowing surfaces (Rodin); in music, the extraordinarily subtle, light, and graceful expression of shades of emotion, and an intermeshing of musical themes (Debussy, Ravel); in poetry and literature, it is tonal painting, musicality, synesthesia, and the modern stylistic means for illustrating the fine shades of psychological states: interior monologue, stream of consciousness, *style indirect libre*, to name just a few. An impressionist school of international significance we find only in painting, namely, the French school which flourished during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and which, if we regard its beginnings, can be said to have coincided with Naturalism and Symbolism in literature. The Impressionist painters turned against the academicism of the conservatives who worked in ateliers illuminated by artificial light. They returned to the great sun-drenched outdoors, rediscovered the landscape, and filled their canvases with fresh colors; they intermingled colors and shades to create a motley effect and delighted in capturing the motion of large crowds at leisure. Beyond a doubt, their painting was more natural and more realistic than that of their academic forbears. In fact, it was in the name of Naturalism that Zola espoused their cause; from that time on, not a few art critics have regarded Impressionism as a variety of Naturalism. The Impressionists were "naturalistic" in their ability to capture the moment, in their concentration on its exterior appearance rather than on providing information about the object depicted. But it was precisely this devotion to appearances and to the moment which led the Impressionist painters beyond Naturalism and placed them in the risky position of giving back but pure impressions, "clusters of sensations" as a substitute for visible and perceptible nature. Ernst Mach's subjectivist-sensualist philosophy, which saw the world as being but bundles of sensations which each man must interpret for himself, would have served as the theoretical basis for Impressionist painting. Hermann Bahr had already noted this. The ideology or the philosophical basis of the Impressionist painters was thus, in this respect, very similar to that of the Symbolist poets. It is for this reason that the Impressionist method could become the method of Symbolism in poetry, prose, and drama.

2.d) Bringing to the surface the subconscious world, giving free play to the imagination, and recording the stream of consciousness are all "techniques". The theoretical foundation and background common to them all is modern psychology, which, transcending associational sense psychology, probed into the deeper layers of the psyche.

Jean Martin Charcot, Freud's French master, was a contemporary of the first generation of Symbolists; the second generation already had Bergson, Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud to learn from. The Symbolist self extended beyond the conscious self to the subconscious, and thus expanded to embrace—along with the known world—the but barely and obscurely known inner world: its ancestral heritage, the instincts, and even the unconscious world beyond the subconscious. René Ghil had already noted this mysterious extension of the self, "prolongements obscurs de notre Moi": and of the "more than the All" of which man thus becomes aware: "Et comme il (i.e., Moi) est, tout entier, et conscient et inconscient, en communion avec le Tout, davantage du Tout sera donc en même temps porté à notre connaissance".[14] We cannot understand the poetry of Rimbaud or Mallarmé, nor even of the early Ady, without this characteristically Symbolist "self-extension". This theory of the expansion of the world of the self was largely derived from modern psychology and psychoanalysis; but the already-mentioned occult-mystical sources also played their part.

2.e) Finally, we must mention an element of the Symbolist method characteristic of the work of many poets of the movement: lyrical "impersonality". The lyrical self does not speak in the first person, but rather yields its place to a suggestive and impersonal lyrical object. Hugo Friedrich[15] tells the story that when Rimbaud read his *Bateau ivre* to Théodore de Banville, the latter asked him why the poet did not start the poem with the the declaration that he himself was the wandering ship. Friedrich seems to me to be correct in singling out this element of impersonal, "objective" lyricism as the main difference between Romantic and Symbolist lyric poetry. This objective lyricism, whose parallel we find not in Romantic lyric poetry, but rather in the poetry of medieval hymns, often makes a sort of "monodrama" of the poem constructed around the symbol—this, in fact, is true of *Le Bateau ivre*—and, at the same time, gives us the clue to Symbolism's adaptability to drama. For Symbolist drama is typically an instance of the impersonal lyric poem where the poet cannot appear in the first person, though he is present in the objective dramatic structure of the work.

Impersonal lyric poetry possesses a unique and dominant stylistic device, the "absolute metaphor". In the latter, one half of the comparison is left out and the other half assumes the function of a total simile. "The great secret of symbolism", wrote Gyula Illyés in 1936, "is that the poets have publicly slain one word: the word 'like".

3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SYMBOLIST STYLE

This is an area that has been explored and described by many critics. By the nature of things, critics' comments and poets' self-analyses apply mostly to style. This is all the more natural in that it was only through the instrumentality of style that the Symbolist ideal of Beauty, that "hard scourge" (*dur fléau*) of souls, could be realized. Looking back over the past hundred years, we cannot fail to see that the stylistic standards demanded by the Symbolists raised European poetry to a new height.

[14] *Traité du verbe...* Quoted by Michaud, op. cit., p. 39.
[15] Hugo Friedrich, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik*, p. 55.

It is their standards and their achievements that at least two or three subsequent generations of poets have tried to emulate or disprove. Their enduring preeminence is due not to their philosophy or their poetics (i.e. method), but rather to their style.

3.a) It was Verlaine's famous *Art poétique* which gave rise to the view that Symbolism's primary esthetic ideal is *musicality*. "De la musique avant toute chose". Without a doubt, a major reason for the enormous influence of French Symbolist poetry on literatures throughout the world was its musical form — both internal and external — the music of its language and the musicality of its composition. We can find this latter feature even in some of the prose of the writers.

It was, no doubt, from Romanticism that Symbolist esthetics inherited the concept of music as the "culmination", the "model" of all art, possibly through the mediation of Schopenhauer, who was becoming better known by the middle of the century. Schopenhauer held that the aim of every *other* art was to render more or less explicit "the objectification of the will" (*die Objektivation des Willens*), in other words, to illustrate ideas through the depiction of individual objects; *music*, however, had another goal. For music "transcends" (*übergeht*) ideas, and individual objects as well; it is independent of the perceptible world: ". . . da sie die Ideen übergeht, (ist) auch von der erscheinenden Welt ganz unabhängig, ignoriert sie schlechthin, könnte gewissermassen, auch wenn die Welt gar nicht wäre, doch bestehen: was von den anderen Künsten sich nicht sagen lässt".[16] This idea, that the more independent an art is of the objective world the "higher" it is, well illustrates the hierarchy into which idealist esthetics placed the arts. Romanticism—especially German Romanticism — accepted this esthetic theory, as indeed did Symbolism.

Thus we must not regard the Symbolists' ideal of "musicality" as an accidental or contingent principle, but rather as one which logically follows from the very nature of their philosophy and their esthetics. Considered from another angle, this is tantamount to saying that Symbolism demanded musicality from poetry not as "an end in itself", but rather in order that it might, through its own media, approximate the most closely the art of "the highest order", music, and thus Beauty, of which music was the realization and which "could exist to some degree even if there were no world at all".

The ideal of musicality belongs to the stylistic layer of Symbolism, for music in literature is a function of language, of style. It is the stylistic element which is the most deeply rooted in the esthetics and value-hierarchy of the Symbolist movement, and one which graphically illustrates the interrelatedness of ideas and of style, and the possibility of expressing ideas through the medium of art.

3.b) We shall make no attempt systematically or exhaustively to enumerate Symbolist stylistic devices, for style, as the framework of each individual piece, appears in innumerable variations. We shall, however, attempt to list some of the devices characteristic of Symbolism, as well as those which follow directly from the principles of the Symbolist method. The second among these must be *pictorialness*. The symbol itself is a picture, and so are the similes. The "absolute metaphors" are all the more pictures

[16] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Book III, § 52, in Sämtliche Werke, ed. by I. Frauenstädt (Leipzig, 1891), vol. II, p. 304.

in that, by definition, only their pictorial part remains. The allegories and the metaphors are all pictures. Never in the history of European poetry has there been such a plethora of pictures as in the poems of the Symbolists. The pictures are in living color—yellows, blues and greens—though their function is often to create an atmosphere, as is that of the mood adjectives frequently used for "padding". It is again Rimbaud's *Bateau ivre* which provides us with a fitting example:

> J'ai rêvé la nuit verte aux neiges éblouies,
> Baiser montant aux yeux des mers avec lenteurs,
> La circulation des sèves inouïes
> Et l'éveil jaune et bleu des phosphores chanteurs!
> .....
> Glaciers, soleils d'argent, flots nacreux, cieux de braises!
> Échouages hideux au fond des golfes bruns
> Où les serpents géants dévorés des punaises
> Choient, des arbres tordus, avec des noirs parfums!

3.c) If we add to the pictorial a sense of musicality, a quality which heightens the expressive power of the latter, we begin to detect in the union of the Symbolists' stylistic devices an attempt to achieve a kind of total art. Richard Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* comes to mind as having perhaps inspired such an attempt. For Wagner intended this work to be the fusion of the devices employed by every art, in order that it might simultaneously affect all man's senses, and through his senses, his emotions, his intellect, and his will. He wanted, in short, to confront man with the world in all its totality; with that which is rational and sensible in the world as well as with that which appears only in the guise of the faintly suspected, the subconscious, the "suppressed" element of mythology. "It is the All that I wish to put into my verse," wrote the Hungarian Symbolist Mihály Babits, succinctly characterizing the above-mentioned attitude. Symbolist poetry wished to realize through the sole instrumentality of words, through onomatopoeia and pictures, all that Wagner wanted to achieve in his musical dramas through the fusion of lyrics, music, scenery, and motion. And the Symbolists hoped to capture in the synesthetic experience the same magic, the same enchantment, and the same suggestiveness that they sought in obscurity and mystery, in the harmonious music of all the senses, or like Yeats or Ady, in the pictures and symbols of ancient folklore.

Just as Wagner, in his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, made the linguistic element, the dramatic script, the essential vehicle and repository of the totality of the work, so the Symbolist poets strove to express the unity and the totality of the world of impressions through poetry. It is Lichtenberger, the famous French Wagnerian, who first noted this: ". . . dans l'union des deux arts, la poésie représente, selon Wagner, l'élément mâle, la semence fécondante qui contient en germe le drame tout entier".[17]

3.d) It is thus the language of poetry which must contain and conjure up all the magic which Symbolist poetry aims at: the blurred or glaring impressions, the dreams,

[17] Henri Lichtenberger, *Richard Wagner poète et penseur*, (Paris, 1898), p. 2. Quoted by Michaud, op. cit., p. 209.

the atmosphere, the enchantment. The greatest contribution of French, Russian, South American Spanish (*modernismo*), German, Austrian, Czech, Croat, Polish, or Hungarian Symbolism to literature is that it renewed or recreated the language of poetry.

The basic Symbolist tenet of the identity, in poetic language, of the expression, and of the thing expressed—or, in other words, of the sign (*signifiant*) and of its significance (*signifié*)—was consonant with Bergson's or Croce's esthetic theories, as well as with Symbolism's own philosophical background, which Rémy de Gourmont expressed in the following neo-Kantian terms in 1896: "Nous ne connaissons que des phénomènes, nous ne raisonnons que sur des apparences; toute vérité en soi nous échappe; l'essence est inattaquable".[18] What remains, therefore, is language, the "system of signs", as Ferdinand de Saussure put it. There remains a system of evocative poetic signs. Saussure was a contemporary of the Symbolists and certainly knew of their stylistic theories; Rémy de Gourmont was among the first critics to discuss the latter in *Le problème du style* of 1902.

The school of stylistic analysis which was reborn at the turn of the century no doubt paralleled the stylistic problems of the Symbolists. Charles Bally's two-volume work on style, *Traité de stylistique française*, which appeared in 1909, already contained a clear differentiation between the rational and affective elements of language. Although they had no explicitly esthetic orientation, his theories laid the groundwork for the philosophy of the Formalist linguistic and literary analysts who associated with the Russian Symbolist poets; they also served as the basis for the system built by the Prague Circle of linguists, who, in turn, had ties with the Czech modernists.[19]

Language as esthetic expression, as the expression of the beautiful, was the poet's autonomous creation; the Symbolist's poetic language could not be fettered by the rules of centuries of poetic tradition. The Symbolists replaced traditional lines with free verse, which was to become one of Symbolism's most significant stylistic innovations. It gave to the changed world, to the scientific age, the new forms of expression by means of which it could convey its own message.

The Symbolists—especially the French Symbolists, who broke with the heretofore strictly formalized poetic style—saw the liberation of verse and of rhythm as one of their moral victories. To attain it, they used the intellectual weapons of experimental science—much as Zola had used them to create his naturalistic experimental novels. The concepts of "experimental" and "scientific" were by no means foreign to the Symbolists' vocabulary, and it is a fascinating, though dialectically necessary fact that their most important contribution to world poetry, *viz.* free verse, was intimately connected with the experimental scientific outlook, and was, in fact, the fruit of its literary-stylistic equivalent.

Francis Vielé-Griffin's reflections of 1907, published under the title *Une Conquête morale*, deal with this question at length:

[18] Rémy de Gourmont, Préface *Livre de Masques*. Quoted by Michaud, op. cit., p. 723.
[19] cf. Wolfgang Kayser, *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk*, sixth edn., (Bern und München, 1960), pp. 273–274.

C'est en conséquence de leur conception très haute de l'art du poète que les meilleurs symbolistes, en même temps qu'ils édifient une philosophie de la vie et une éthique intellectuelle, interrogeaient critiquement les ressources mêmes du langage et abordaient expérimentalement l'étude de ces possibilités musicales. Cette recherche expérimentale d'une base réelle et logique à l'expression rythmée de la pensée fut générale . . . L'esprit scientifique aidant, le Symbolisme accentue ses traditions et débute, comme un Lavoisier, par des expériences qui ne furent pas toujours concluantes.[20]

Translated by Éva Pálmai

[20] Quoted by Michaud, op. cit., pp. 783–784.

Lloyd James Austin

PRESENCE AND POETRY OF STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ: INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION AND INTELLECTUAL IMPACT*

Mallarmé's fame, as Paul Valéry once wrote, is the supreme paradox of the history of the mind. It is as if, thanks to a devoted few (of whom Valéry himself was one of the most active and effective), the *Grand Œuvre*, the supreme Book which Mallarmé had meditated writing all his life which was by definition impossible to realize, had indeed been realized and recognized as such.[1] When Mallarmé died in 1898, at the age of fifty-six, he had indeed not completed the major work he had planned; but he left a body of critical writings on the nature of poetry, and a collection of poems, small in bulk but of incomparable density and evocative power, which have gradually come to be recognized as of fundamental importance in the history of poetry. The progressive revelation of his extensive posthumous works, and the gradual publication of his letters, have little by little convinced an at first somewhat sceptical posterity that Mallarmé had not usurped the central position in the literary and artistic life of Paris in which, during his lifetime, his friends and disciples had unhesitatingly placed him as the ideal incarnation of the Poet.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (an excellent judge of poetry) had been able to say that French was "wholly unfit for poetry" because of the very quality which made the French language so admirable in prose: its clarity.[2] By the end of the nineteenth century, no one could have said such a thing without immediate contradiction. French poetry was no longer criticized by its enemies nor extolled by its friends for having the clarity of prose. Hostile critics abused it for the new vice of obscurity. Mallarmé rejected the charge and claimed that he and his fellow poets had restored one of the most vital values of poetry: the sense of mystery.

Easy communication is excellent in itself, Mallarmé held, but it is not beyond questioning. What, first of all, is communicated? In a sense, immediate understanding is possible only on a superficial level: where one man tells another what he, as it were, already knows. Much ordinary conversation consists precisely of references to what is immediately recognized and therefore imparts nothing new. Ordinary communication is, in fact, based on the existence of a common stock of concepts or notions which can be referred to without further ado. For all practical matters this is excellent: 'tis words that make the world go round. But how can one convey new experience?

* This article was written in 1973. Much important work has appeared since then. It has been possible to add only a few references. L. J. A., October, 1981.

[1] Paul Valéry, *Œuvres*, ed. Jean Hytier (Paris, 1957), I. p. 1737.

[2] *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. K. Coburn, (London, 1957), I. Entry No. 383 (not paginated).

It cannot be referred to, for as yet it exists only for one. It cannot be named, for as yet it has no name. Clearly, language can here no longer be used as a means of exchange, a form of barter. It has to recover what Mallarmé called its "virtuality", its original creative force, its power to find a name for all things visible and invisible. Language has to become poetry. That was the problem that faced the poets of nineteenth-century France. Many poets and theorists contributed to a solution. None perhaps saw more deeply into its essence nor brought a more decisive contribution, both by precept and example, than Mallarmé.

For Mallarmé, poetry was the supreme value. "With Mallarmé, from the start, the questions, What is life?, and, What is poetry?, were one".[3] In his poetic career, he lived through the three main phases of French poetry in the nineteenth century. He began as a schoolboy by the eager imitation of the Romantic poets; he created, in his *Hérodiade*, a masterpiece of his own from certain tendencies inherent in what was called "Parnassian" poetry; and, adopting and developing the theories and practice of Edgar Allan Poe and of Baudelaire, he emerged as the leader of what was called French Symbolism. But, like any great poet, he transcends all "schools" and defies classification.

Although he did not possess the precocity of Rimbaud, Mallarmé began writing poetry early. In 1859—1860, while a seventeen-year-old boarder at the provincial *lycée* de Sens which now bears his name, he clandestinely filled four notebooks, one with his own poetry, under the title *Entre quatre murs*, and three with the poetry of other writers.[4] The original poems amount to nearly two thousand lines, more than the total of his canonical works. They constitute an epitome of Romantic themes and techniques derived from Lamartine,[5] Alfred de Musset, André Chénier, Béranger and, above all, Victor Hugo, imitating especially the recently published *Contemplations* and *La Légende des siècles*. The boy seeks and finds in his favorite poets echoes of his own adolescent emotions, which he expresses, in his turn, in elegiac laments, bacchic boastings, erotic reveries, religious musings, pantheistic effusions, or outbursts of truculent blasphemy. Certain details foreshadow his later poems. The line:

Les nymphes en riant fuient un faune lascif[6]

looks ahead to *L'Après-midi d'un faune*; and the interrogation: "[. . .] qu'est la terre?"[7] will recur in the climax of *Toast funèbre*, where this same question is put to the inarticulate dead:

Souvenirs d'horizons, qu'est-ce, ô toi, que la Terre?

[3] *The Prose of Christopher Brennan*, ed. A. R. Chisholm and J. J. Quinn (Sydney, 1962), p. 137.

[4]. See Henri Mondor, *Mallarmé lycéen* (Paris, 1954), pp. 121—225; L. J. Austin, "Les Années d'apprentissage de Stéphane Mallarmé", *RHLF*, LXVI (1956), pp. 65–84; and Austin Gill, *The Early Mallarmé*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1979), *passim*.

[5] See Luigi de Nardis, "L'influence de Lamartine sur les poèmes de jeunesse de Mallarmé", *Actes du Congrès des Secondes Journées Lamartiniennes* (Mâcon, 1965), pp. 35–43.

[6] *Mallarmé lycéen*, p. 152.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

Many other key words and images are already present. But Mallarmé had not yet found his real self nor his real style. With characteristic lucidity he realized this; and in a poem dated November, 1859, he disarmingly cries: "Ces vers sont bien mauvais."[8] In 1860, after this salutary self-criticism, he wrote only two short poems, but he filled three notebooks with extracts chosen from many poets: some eight thousand lines in all. Among them were nine poems of Edgar Allan Poe and twenty-nine poems by Baudelaire. With the help of these two poets and their new conception of poetry, Mallarmé was to find himself and to lead French poetry onto new paths.

Mallarmé may have overestimated the value of Poe's poetry, which he later translated.[9] But he found above all in Poe a new poetics based on the quest of calculated effects, of lucid control in composition, and of "pure poetry", reducing to a minimum narrative, descriptive, and didactic elements. In Baudelaire he found at this stage Romanticism pushed to extreme intensity: he significantly omitted many poems which he must later have regarded as of importance, including the sonnet *Correspondances*.[10] But in 1861 he immediately acquired the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* and the rest of his career reveals that he had understood the deepest levels of Baudelaire's poetry and had carried Baudelaire's theory of correspondences and universal analogy beyond its logical conclusion in the poetry of Symbolism into the imaginative conception of the supreme Book.

Poetry as Baudelaire and Mallarmé preached and practiced it was truly a way of life, the perpetual quest of an ideal harmony reconciling the dissonances of life. Baudelaire had based his poetry on the sharp sense of these dissonances and had provided his own bitter but triumphant resolution. The eleven poems that Mallarmé sent to the first series of the *Parnasse Contemporain* in 1866 (he was 24) are a powerful restatement of Baudelairean themes and a fruitful application of the Baudelairean technique of correspondences, which involves essentially the "deliberate use of images taken from the external world for the perfect expression of the inner".[11] At the heart of these poems is a revulsion from crass reality and an ardent aspiration towards a finer life. The poet denounces with searing scorn the revolting happiness of those gross appetites that are so easily satisfied. He evokes the vision of a realm of anterior and paradisal beauty, discerned through the windows of art or of mysticism. Deep discouragement is the explicit theme of these poems, but it is belied by the tone, by the vigour of the invective in the denunciation of mindless, purely animal existence, and by the subtly splendid evocation of the ideal world behind its crystal barrier. And already the poet knows that this realm is accessible even in the midst of life. As always with Mallarmé, his poetry was in advance of his conscious thought. Soon he was to describe in his correspondence the imaginary death and resurrection he had undergone; and this was to become one of the central themes of his mature work. Death to the world of contingency and resurrection in the realm of art is hailed in the poem *Les Fenêtres*, which Mallarmé

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 198.

[9] See P. Mansell Jones, "Poe, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé: A Problem of Literary Judgement", *The Background of Modern French Poetry* (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 38–58, and Eléonore M. Zimmermann, "Mallarmé et Poe: précisions et aperçus", *CL*, VI (1954), pp. 304–315.

[10] See Austin, "Les Années d'apprentissage . . . ", pp. 79–80.

[11] *The Prose of Christopher Brennan*, p. 53.

placed at the beginning of the series of poems for the *Parnasse Contemporain*: it is evoked as the last remaining hope in the final poem. With beautiful appropriateness, Mallarmé placed as an *Épilogue* to these poems of conflict and distress the evocation of this new possibility. Weary of his idleness and even wearier of his desperate struggle with the tyrannical demands of the voracious art of a cruel country where the artist is supposed to be prolific, he will choose death in life, the idea of the sage, and achieve serenity by imitating the limpid, delicate art of the Chinese porcelain painter for whom one simple theme can provide a lifetime's inspiration; the poem ends with a lovely evocation of a landscape by the tiniest, subtlest touches of the brush: a lake, a crescent moon, a cloud, and three great emerald eyelashes for reeds.[12]

By the time these poems appeared in the first *Parnasse Contemporain* (1866), Mallarmé had already moved beyond the conception of poetry that they tellingly illustrated. They had been conceived, he explained to his friend Henri Cazalis (the poet Jean Lahor), as "so many intuitive revelations of [his] temperament, and of the note it would give"; "none of them had been conceived in view of Beauty".[13] They still belonged to the tradition of personal lyricism; but Mallarmé was moving on to a new conception of the necessary impersonality of the artist. He was reliving in his own way the central experience of Flaubert, just twenty years before.

In October, 1864, Mallarmé had begun work on his greatest poem, *Hérodiade*; and the very effort of creation was soon to lead him to a crisis from which he emerged radically transformed. His old beliefs were gone; but, although his intellectual crisis brought with it years of mental stress and physical illness, he rapidly achieved a new, unshakeable faith in the power of poetry to create a new beauty and a new significance from an apparently or really absurd and fortuitous universe.

Hérodiade was first conceived as a tragedy in three acts, which Mallarmé hoped to offer to the Comédie Française. He first completed the dialogue between Hérodiade and her old nurse, which was to become his contribution to the second series of the *Parnasse Contemporain* of 1869—1871. The young princess is a fusion of the two biblical figures of Herodias and Salome; but Mallarmé stressed that she was a purely independent figure, one utterly separate from history.[14] The untamed virgin, with her massive tresses of golden hair, her great mirror, and her fierce, inviolable purity, is shown withdrawn into herself in contemplation of her own beauty. The language of the poem is of incomparable harmony and splendor, dominated by images of jewels and precious metals, of ice and snow and chill, glittering stars to which Hérodiade feels akin. The stately, hieratic alexandrines move with subtle variations of rhythm, soon to be carried much further in *L'Après-midi d'un faune*; and the sustained development of some of the sinuous periods slowly built up over many lines already shows Mallarmé's masterly control of the poetic resources of syntax. The dialogue illuminates Hérodiade's

[12] For a detailed discussion of these poems, see L. J. Austin, "Mallarmé disciple de Baudelaire: *Le Parnasse contemporain*", *RHLF*, LXVII. (1967), pp. 437–449.

[13] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance, I.* (1862–1871), ed. H. Mondor and J. P. Richard (Paris, 1959), p. 215 ("bien qu'aucun de ces poèmes n'ait été en réalité conçu en vue de la Beauté, mais plutôt comme autant d'intuitives révélations de mon tempérament, et de la note qu'il donnerait . . . ").

[14] *Corr. I.* p. 154.

mind and aspirations by contrasting them with the down-to-earth humanity of the nurse, who arouses Hérodiade's horror and indignation by her well-meaning but clumsy remarks about the possibility of marriage and a husband. And the nurse makes three symbolical gestures: she tries to embrace Hérodiade; she offers her perfumes; and she tries to touch her hair. Hérodiade feels in these words and gestures an obscure threat and omen of the end of her jealously guarded isolation.

Here Mallarmé halted, not then really knowing, as he admitted later, how to continue. What he had consciously put into the poem was the symbol of his own temptation to withdraw from life. But poetic creation was for Mallarmé a means of self-discovery. He realized only gradually the significance of his subject in itself and for himself.[15] Soon he was to see that the symbol of Hérodiade was of much more than personal significance, and that his proud, virginal princess, as he had portrayed her, could be the incarnation of the idea of Beauty in the first phase of a triadic development: from innocence through experience to an ultimate serenity fusing the two in a higher synthesis. This was to involve a mystical marriage between Hérodiade and the severed head of St. John the Baptist. The poem was to be called *Les Noces d'Hérodiade. Mystère.*[16] Mallarmé worked on it at intervals throughout his life; it was nearing completion when he died. His last virtually completed poem may well have been the magnificent *Cantique de saint Jean*, in which the saint, at the very moment of his beheading, proclaims the triumphant reconciliation of his mind and body in death.[17]

But even before Mallarmé had completed the dialogue scene from *Hérodiade*, a totally different symbolic figure had fired his imagination. He spent the summer months of 1865 writing the first of three known versions of his most famous poem, *L'Après-midi d'un faune. Églogue.* Here a faun awakes from sleep and recalls, or thinks he recalls, that he had captured two nymphs the previous afternoon beside a Sicilian marsh beneath the slopes of Mount Etna. One was fair, blue-eyed and chaste, the other, dark and sensual. The faun is not sure whether they were real or only a dream vision conjured up by the sound of his flute. This ambiguity between dream and memory is admirably created and sustained. It is because of this doubt that the faun turns to the creative imagination, which achieves the synthesis of reality and dream. He evokes this "magical and synthetic power"[18] in a lovely image. When he has sucked the bright pulp from grapes, he holds up the empty bunch to the sky and, blowing into the luminous, transparent skins, he looks through them until evening falls. Even so, he now seeks to recreate his memories of the nymphs. He evokes in lines of ardent sensuality his capture of them, their escape, and his boastful dream of seizing Venus herself. He then sinks down, overcome, not by the thunderbolt of an avenging deity, but by the oppressive heat of the afternoon. He will dream of the nymphs once more. The poem exemplifies, in verse of extreme musicality, the power

[15] *Corr., I.* p. 221: "*Hérodiade*, ou je m'étais mis tout entier sans le savoir".

[16] Ed. Gardner Davies (Paris, 1959). Dr. Davies has subsequently published a series of exegetical studies of the various parts of this work, collected in *Mallarmé et le rêve d'Hérodiade* (Paris, 1978), 303 pp.

[17] In addition to Gardner Davies' article, see L. J. Austin, "*Le Cantique de saint Jean* de Stéphane Mallarmé", *AUMLA*, no. 10 (1959), pp. 46–59.

[18] The expression is Coleridge's. See his *Biographia Literaria*, ch. XVI.

of art to evoke, by means of subliniated reminiscences, the ideal essence of fleeting phenomena. One of the central tenets of Mallarmé's mature poetics was that poetry has the duty of recreating reality in an ideal form, using memories as the raw material. Not until the world has been transformed in this way by the mind of man is it a fitting dwelling place for him. Only then do we know that we really are where we should be.[19]

Mallarmé had intended the *Monologue d'un faune* to be declaimed by Constant Coquelin at the Comédie Française, just as he had originally intended *Hérodiade* to be submitted to that theatre. But his monologue was refused on the grounds that it lacked the indispensable anecdotal interest. Mallarmé therefore laid it aside for the moment. He later revised it radically and offered it in 1875 to the editors of the third *Parnasse Contemporain*. They rejected it and Mallarmé published it separately in 1876 in a sumptuous rare edition illustrated by Edouard Manet (who had illustrated Mallarmé's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*, published the previous year).[20]

Meanwhile, in the autumn of 1865, Mallarmé, temporarily abandoning his theatrical ambitions, had taken up *Hérodiade* again, no longer as a tragedy, but as a poem, he would thus, he said, gain "attitude, costumes, setting, furniture, not to mention mystery".[21] He spent the winter of 1865—1866 working on the poem. In April, 1866, he announced that he had completed a draft of what he called the "musical overture", which he (rightly) believed to be far superior to anything he had yet achieved: "I can say without presumptuousness that it will make an unprecedented impression and that the dramatic scene you know, compared with these lines, is simply what a vulgar colorprint is to a canvas by Leonardo da Vinci".[22] And indeed this *Overture* (first published posthumously in 1926)[23] represents a new kind of poetry. Here fugal patterns of initially unelucidated images, each taken from a different sensuous realm of reference, are gradually woven into a significance.

The *Overture* is in four parts, linked together by certain themes or images which return in accordance with a kind of quasi-musical structure. The setting and atmosphere are those of a dreamlike Middle Ages rather than of biblical antiquity: what Lefébure called "le noir château seigneurial d'Hérodiade",[24] with references to Christian liturgy and Cisalpine military campaigns involving Hérodiade's father, unknown to history. The nurse evokes the sinister dawn of a day charged with foreboding; Hérodiade's room, adorned with weapons of faded gold, the pearly sheen of an old tapestry on its walls, and a ghostly aroma slowly traced to its origin in faded flowers; a mysterious

[19] See Stéphane Mallarmé, "Villiers de l'Isle-Adam", *Œuvres complètes* (*OC*), ed. H. Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris, 1956), p. 482; "(. . .) quelque devoir de tout recréer, avec des réminiscences, pour avérer qu'on est bien là où l'on doit être". For a detailed study of the poem, see L. J. Austin, "L'Après-midi d'un faune — essai d'explication", in *Synthèses* (Bruxelles) décembre 1967 janvier 1968, pp. 24—35.

[20] I have not seen T. Munro, "*The Afternoon of a Faun* and the Interrelation of the Arts", *JAAC*, 10 (1951), pp. 95–111, and *Revue d'Esthétique*, 5 (1952).

[21] *Corr.* I. p. 174. ("Je gagne ainsi l'attitude, les vêtements, le décor, et l'ameublement, sans parler du mystère").

[22] *Corr.* I. p. 207. ("Je peux dire sans présomption qu'elle sera d'un effet inouï, et que la scène dramatique que tu connais n'est auprès de ces vers que ce qu'est une vulgaire image d'Épinal comparée à une toile de Léonard de Vinci").

[23] By Dr Bonniot, "Hommage à Stéphane Mallarmé", *NRF* (1er novembre 1926), pp. 513–516.

[24] *Corr.* I. p. 214, n.1.

voice singing of the glorious past, suggested by the most subtle and sumptuous imagery, a voice that rises and falls; and above all, Hérodiade herself, with her strange aspirations, symbolized by the pure diamantine light of a star that never shone: Beauty in its state of pure virtuality, as a yet unrealized idea ("antérieure").

The *Overture* is an incantation, interweaving sensations into a metaphorical texture of extraordinary richness and subtlety, a moving texture of magically rhythmical and evocative lines, slow and solemn, hieratical and processional in effect. Mallarmé could justifiably feel that he could glimpse "real splendors".[25] Nevertheless, in April 1866, as he completed the first draft of the *Overture*, he had reached a crisis in his thought and art. Hitherto his religious revolt had not shaken a lingering residual belief. Now he came to feel the impact of total scepticism. By delving so deeply into poetic expression he had reached the abyss of Nothingness and had momentarily lost faith in his own poetry. But only for a moment. Immediately he seeks and finds an answer to his own despair: "Yes, *I know*, we are but vain forms of matter, but so sublime for having invented God and our soul. So sublime, my friend! that I want to give myself this spectacle of matter, conscious of existing and, nevertheless, plunging with frenetic determination into the Dream it knows does not exist, singing of the Soul and all similar divine impressions that have gathered within us from earliest time, and proclaiming, before the Nothing that is the truth, these glorious lies! Such is the plan of my volume of lyric poetry and such will perhaps be its title, *La Gloire du Mensonge* or *Le Glorieux Mensonge*. I shall sing as one in despair."[26]

Characteristically, the first thought of a poet in the presence of a new truth, however desperate it may seem, is to find in it new inspiration. We are here at the very heart of Mallarmé's definitive philosophy of life and poetry. Mallarmé is of exemplary significance because he was one of the first major poets of modern times to face the problem of the possible absurdity of the universe outside man. Long before Jean-Paul Sartre, Mallarmé proclaimed that human life begins on the other side of despair.[27] Here we have the expression of his faith in the glory of the creative imagination of man, a glory set against the clear consciousness of limitations and illusions, a triumphant and self-sufficient glory. Within a month, Mallarmé was laying the foundations of a book on the Beautiful and claiming that his mind was moving in Eternity,[28] in July, 1866, he summed up the implications of his first intuition in the victorious affirmation: "After finding the Void, I have found Beauty".[29] By Beauty, as we can deduce from

[25] *Corr.* I, p. 207 ("de vraies splendeurs").

[26] *Corr.* I, pp. 207–208. ("Oui, *je le sais*, nous ne sommes que de vaines formes de la matière, mais bien sublimes pour avoir inventé Dieu et notre âme. Si sublimes, mon ami! que je veux me donner ce spectacle de la matière, ayant conscience d'être et, cependant, s'élançant forcenément dans le Rêve qu'elle sait n'être pas, chantant l'Ame et toutes les divines impressions pareilles qui se sont amassées en nous depuis les premiers âges, et proclamant, devant le Rien qui est la vérité, ces glorieux mensonges! Tel est le plan de mon volume lyrique et tel sera peut-être son titre, *La Gloire du mensonge* ou *Le Glorieux Mensonge*. Je chanterai en désespéré!").

[27] See the introduction by J.-P. Sartre to the edition of Mallarmé's *Poésies* in the collection "Poésie" (Paris, Gallimard, 1966). Sartre's text was first published in the series *Écrivains célèbres* (Lucien Mazenod, 1952). See also Rhiannon Goldthorpe, "Mallarmé: Sartre's committed poet", in the forthcoming *Festschrift, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Valéry*, new essays in honour of Lloyd Austin, edited by Malcolm Bowie, Alison Fairlie, and Alison Finch (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 222–24. I am grateful to the editors for drawing my attention to this book and enabling me to refer to it.

[28] *Corr.* I, p. 216.

[29] *Corr.* I, p. 220 ("après avoir trouvé le Néant, j'ai trouvé le Beau").

his later writings, he meant a system of self-sufficient, satisfying relationships, relationships which are a pure creation of the human mind, no absolute, and all the greater for that. On this basis, after several further years of intense concentration marked by alternations of extreme exaltation and black depression, Mallarmé was to achieve a serenity that merely deepened with the passage of time.[30]

He now drew up his plans for his life's work, which he estimated it would take him twenty years to complete. In strange, magnificent metaphors he tried to convey to his admiring or baffled friends the experiences he had undergone and the discoveries he had made. He had "died and risen again with the jewelled key" of the ultimate treasure-chest of his mind.[31] He had found the "center of [him]self, where", he said (using an image Keats had once employed in his letters), he stood "like a sacred spider, on the main threads that [had] already emerged from [his] mind, with the help of which he would weave *at the points of intersection* marvellous pieces of lacework [. . .]".[32] The culmination came in May, 1867, when Mallarmé related in Hegelian terms how, after a terrible struggle with "ce vieux et méchant plumage, terrassé, heureusement, Dieu",[33] he had eliminated the last remnants of his old religion and replaced it by a new faith. His "thought had thought itself"; he was now "living in Eternity"; he had died as a person and identified himself with the absolute Spirit; he was now "impersonal, and no longer the Stéphane [his friends] had known, but an aptitude the Spiritual Universe possessed of seeing itself and developing through what had once been [himself], until at last it recovered its identity within [his] mind". In "the hour of Synthesis," he had planned the work that would be "the image of this development": "Three poems in verse, of which *Hérodiade* is the Overture [. . .] And four poems in prose, on the spiritual conception of Nothingness".[34]

We have here a poet's variation on a Hegelian theme. Mallarmé had in fact grasped the very center of Hegel's sytem, which develops the Aristotelian "conception of God as pure thought thinking itself" and the "central importance of mind's knowledge of itself as mind". For Hegel, "what makes the universe intelligible is to see it as the eternal cyclical process whereby absolute spirit comes to knowledge of itself as spirit (1) through its own thinking; (2) through nature; (3) through finite spirits and their self-expression in history and their self-discovery in art, in religion and philosophy, as one with the absolute spirit itself".[35] For Mallarmé, as for most if not all poets, poetry was the highest means of self-discovery. What he had reached through poetry, finding

[30] See Paul Valéry's letter to Henri Mondor (16/2/41), in P. Valéry, *Œuvres*, I. pp. 1734–1735 ("Comment et d'où naquit cette étrange et inébranlable *certitude* sur laquelle Mallarmé a pu fonder toute sa vie . . . ?").

[31] *Corr.* I, p. 222 ("Je suis mort, et réssuscité avec la clef de pierreries de ma dernière cassette spirituelle").

[32] *Corr.* I, p. 225 ("centre de moi-même, où je me tiens comme une araignée sacrée, sur les principaux fils déjà sortis de mon esprit, et à l'aide desquels je tisserai *aux points de rencontre* de merveilleuses dentelles . . . ").

[33] *Corr.* I, p. 241.

[34] *Corr.* I, p. 240 ("ma pensée s'est pensée"); p. 242 ("je suis maintenant impersonnel et non plus Stéphane que tu as connu, — mais une aptitude qu'a l'Univers spirituel à se voir et à se développer, à travers ce qui fut moi (. . .) Ainsi je viens, à l'heure de la Synthèse, de délimiter l'œuvre qui sera l'image de ce développement. Trois poèmes en vers, dont Hérodiade est l'Ouverture (. . .) Et quatre poèmes en prose, sur la conception spirituelle du Néant.").

[35] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (14th edn.(1960 rev.) 381 s.v. "Hegel".

in philosophy merely a commentary on this discovery, was something akin to what his fellow poet Keats had called "the Principle of Beauty in all things". For Hegel, the philosopher, philosophy is the goal. For Renan, the historian of religion, the goal was the emergence of God. But for Mallarmé, the culmination of the evolution of the Universe towards total self-consciousness would be, not a philosophical treatise, nor an emergent Deity, but a hymn. "Everything in the world exists in order to result in a book [. . .] the hymn [. . .] of the relations between all things".[36]

That definition was made nearly thirty years later, in 1895, when Mallarmé in full maturity had realized that such a book could be the work only of an inconceivable genius, a quality he modestly disclaimed for himself. But in 1867, Mallarmé at twenty-five really hoped to complete a work symbolizing this development: "It would not be without real anguish that I should enter the supreme Disappearance if I had not finished my work, which is The Work, the Great Work [the Philosophers' Stone], as the alchemists, our ancestors, would say".[37]

What the precise subject of this Work might originally have been we may plausibly conjecture. We know that *Hérodiade* was to be its Overture, and that the real subject of that poem, as Mallarmé himself had only gradually realized, was in fact Beauty; the apparent subject was simply a pretext for approaching Her.[38] If we put together this and various other hints, it seems clear that what Mallarmé had in mind in 1867 was a series of poems evoking in symbolic form the ideal evolution of Beauty from the initial virtuality of Nothingness to absolute self-consciousness. In the same letter of May, 1867, he writes: "I have made a long enough descent into Nothingness to be able to speak with certainty. Beauty alone exists—and it has only one perfect expression, Poetry. All the rest is a lie—except for those who live by the body, love, and that love of the mind, friendship".[39] Poetry, love, and friendship: those were the values Mallarmé was to uphold, by precept and example, throughout his life.

Mallarmé's mature conception of poetry was elaborated in letters, articles, and lectures during the last two decades of his life. When asked in 1884 by Léo d'Orfer, a young poet and journalist, to define poetry, Mallarmé humorously replied that this question was like a punch in the eye, dazzling him for a moment, and asked for an apology for this act of violence. But he gave his definition, in terms of gnomic, suggestive brevity: "Poetry is the expression, by human language reduced to its essential rhythm, of the mysterious meaning of the aspects of existence: it thereby makes us truly at home in this world and constitutes the sole task for the mind".[40]

[36] *OC.* p. 378 ("(. . .) tout, au monde, existe pour aboutir à un livre (. . .) l'hymne (. . .) des relations entre tout".). See L. J. Austin, "Mallarmé et le rêve du "Livre". *MF* (January, 1953), pp. 81–108. For J. Scherer's book on "Le Livre", see below, note 133.

[37] *Corr.*, I, pp. 243–244 ("(. . .) ce ne serait pas sans un serrement de cœur réel que j'entrerais dans la Disparition suprême, si je n'avais pas fini mon œuvre, qui est *L'Œuvre*, le Grand 'Œuvre, comme disaient les alchimistes, nos ancêtres".).

[38] *Corr.* I, p. 193 ("En un mot, le sujet de mon œuvre est la Beauté, et le sujet apparent n'est qu'un prétexte pour aller vers Elle".).

[39] *Corr.* I, p. 243 ("J'ai fait une assez longue descente au Néant pour pouvoir parler avec certitude. Il n'y a que la Beauté — et elle n'a qu'une expression parfaite, la Poésie. Tout le reste est mensonge — excepté pour ceux qui vivent du corps, l'amour, et cet amour de l'esprit, l'amitié".).

[40] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance* II (1871–1885) ed. H. Mondor and L. J. Austin (Paris, 1965). p. 266: "La Poésie est l'expression, par le langage humain ramené à son

A whole philosophy of life is implicit in this brief definition. But it is the philosophy of a poet, an artist in words, and the analysis of language and its different functions lies at the base of Mallarmé's poetics; it is perhaps his most distinctive contribution to poetic theory. He himself modestly put forward his views as being those of his time, but his own part was of decisive importance. He gave theoretical formulation to a new trend in French poetry, which had begun in the middle of the nineteenth century in the works of Baudelaire and Nerval. In this new trend, suggestion rather than statement became the primary aim of poetry. Obviously all poetry relies on suggestion to a greater or lesser degree. But also obviously, it is difficult and not necessarily desirable to eliminate statement altogether from poetry. Nevertheless, the broad distinction exists. Before this turning point, the poet proceeds from an idea, an emotion, a picture, clearly present to his own mind, and his poem is designed to communicate to the mind of the reader as closely as possible what was in his own mind. This is "Latin clarity", as recommended by Boileau in his well-known line:

Ce qui se conçoit bien s'énonce clairement.

The poem is here the means of offering the reader something on a plate, as it were, something which may indeed be excellent, but which is to be absorbed as it is, and which passes with comparatively little effort from the mind of the poet to the mind of the reader. In the poetry of suggestion, however, the poet is concerned not with communicating a clear-cut conception, clearly explained and clearly defined, but with starting trains of activity in the reader's own mind: the poem forces intellect, sensibility, and sensations to follow up hints, fill in connecting links, and work on resonances. The reader is not meant to absorb in a passive way, but, through all the resources of his personality (intellect, sensibility, sensation), to recreate, or, indeed to create. The poem is no longer primarily the record of a past experience, but the means towards a new experience. It no longer simply refers back to an existing reality of which it is a more or less accurate copy, but becomes the means of creating a new reality, a self-sufficient world of harmonious relationships, evoked by the subtle use of all the properties of words.

In this new trend, Mallarmé played a decisive part, in theory no less than in practice. For him, language has two main functions: reporting and creating. Narrative, didactic, and descriptive writing he regarded as a kind of reporting, and argued that if you are simply referring to what already exists, you might as well silently place a counter or coin in your hearer's hand: the counter is a purely conventional sign of a reality existing outside itself and has no intrinsic value in its own right. But in poetry, language recovers its intrinsic value, what Mallarmé called its "virtualité", its sugges-

---

rythme essentiel, du sens mystérieux des aspects de l'existence: elle doue ainsi d'authenticité notre séjour et constitue la seule tâche spirituelle". — Marshall McLuhan makes this comment on the idea of the Book: "This is a matter of metaphysical fact, that all existence cries out to be raised to the level of scientific or poetic intelligibility. In this sense, 'the book' confers on things and persons another mode of existence which helps to perfect them". ("Joyce, Mallarmé, and the Press", *Sewannee Review*, LXII (1954), p. 49.).

tive potentiality as the instrument of the creative imagination.[41] This distinction foreshadows that between the referential and emotive functions of language later drawn by Ogden and Richards; but Mallarmé gives higher status to poetic language than did Richards in his early period at least. The real "jewels of man" are "moods, gleams of [. . .] absolute purity", and these are the source and subject of poetry.[42] Not things, but "the image arising from the reveries they arouse",[43] are the proper source of poetry. In his view, whereas the Parnassian poets took things bodily and displayed them, and were lacking in the sense of mystery, the poet should avoid naming objects; he should simply allude to them, suggest them, evoke them, set the reader's mind to work, making him divine the meaning little by little, and thereby share in the creative process. "Symbolism" is based on "the perfect use of this mystery."[44] The poet may either evoke an object little by little in order to reveal a mood, or else he may choose a given object and bring out a mood from it by a series of decipherings or interpretations.[45]

Our inner experience tends to be falsified by the conventional nomenclatures and stock categories of everyday speech. The means of suggesting the quality of our inner experience is essentially metaphor, whereby the poet can depict, "not the object, but the effect it produces."[46] Mallarmé placed metaphor at the center of his poetic theory; and he carried the quest of metaphor to an extraordinary degree of subtlety and refinement.[47] For him the essential task of the poet is the transmutation of reality into a subtle web of interconnected sensations, emotions, and ideas. Music was of exemplary value to him because he saw in it essentially a rhythmic system of interrelated patterns.[48] The poet's object is to "institute an exact relationship between images" from which should "emerge a third aspect, fusible and clear, offered up to the [reader's] divination".[49] By this process objects are volatilized and only their abstract point of resemblance remains. "Therein lies all mystery: to establish secret identities by a pairing which eats away and wears down objects in the name of a central purity".[50] Poetry

[41] *OC*, pp. 368, 857–858 ("Avant-dire au *Traité du Verbe*" de René Ghil (1886)).

[42] *OC*, p. 870 ("La poésie consistant à *créer*, il faut prendre dans l'âme humaine des états, des lueurs d'une pureté si absolue que, bien chantés et bien mis en lumière, cela constitue en effet les joyaux de l'homme").

[43] *OC*, p. 869 ("l'image s'envolant des rêveries suscitées par eux").

[44] Ibid. (" . . . les Parnassiens, eux, prennent la chose entièrement et la montrent: par là ils manquent de mystère; ils retirent aux esprits cette joie délicieuse de croire qu'ils créent. *Nommer un objet* c'est supprimer les trois quarts de la jouissance du poème qui est faite de deviner peu à peu: le *suggérer*, voilà le rêve. C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole"). See L. J. Austin, "The Mystery of a Name", *L'Esprit créateur*, I, 3 (Fall, 1961), 130–138, where the interplay between evocation and designation in Mallarmé's poetry is examined.

[45] Ibid. (" . . . évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d'âme, ou, inversement, choisir un objet et en dégager un état d'âme, par une série de déchiffrements".).

[46] *Corr.* I, p. 137 ("Peindre, non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit").

[47] See Deborah A. K. Aish, *La Métaphore dans l'Œuvre de Stéphane Mallarmé* (Paris, 1938).

[48] Mallarmé defined music in these terms: "Employez Musique dans le sens grec, au fond signifiant Idée ou rythme entre des rapports . . . " (Letter to Edmund Gosse, 10/1/93, published by Roger Lhombreaud, *RLC*, XXV (1951), pp. 357–358; Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, VI (Janvier 1893 – Juillet 1894), ed. H. Mondor and L. J. Austin (Paris, 1981), p. 26.

[49] *OC*, p. 365 ("Instituer une relation entre les images exacte, et que s'en détache un tiers aspect, fusible et clair présenté à la divination".).

[50] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, IV (1890–1891) ed. H. Mondor and L. J. Austin (Paris, 1973), p. 293 ("Tout le mystère est là: établir les identités secrètes par un deux à deux qui ronge et use les objets au nom d'une centrale pureté").

lies in "the unspoken part of discourse" as a kind of "air or song running beneath the text," or a mysterious shimmering beneath the surface.[51] Poetry is silent music; and the Muse of Mallarmé was his own Saint Cecilia, whom he celebrated in one of his most beautiful poems as the "musician of silence".[52]

"The mysterious meaning of the aspects of existence" lay for Mallarmé primarily in the harmony the poet establishes, by his conscious fiat, between the beauty of the outer world of nature and the beauty of the inner world of the human mind. It is this kind of symbolism that underlies the poems Mallarmé wrote as a prelude, or as footnotes, to the Great Work. The Imagination, he said, "seeks satisfaction in the symbol manifest in all that can be seen in the world, and tries to establish a link between these sights and the words charged with expressing them".[53] This dual quest, that of the symbolic significance of nature and that of the language appropriate to express this significance, underlies two works which Mallarmé deprecatingly described as potboilers, but which prove to be close to his central preoccupations as a poet: a treatise on mythology and a study of the vocabulary of English. His book *Les Dieux antiques* (1880), translated and adapted from W. G. Cox's books on mythology,[54] is based on the conviction that "myths [. . .] all possess a symbolic element, a reading of the drama of nature in terms of man".[55] His manual on the formation of English words, *Les Mots anglais* (1877), seeks evidence for the law of correspondences in language: "The formation of word groups shows an original correspondence between the sound and the idea".[56] This latter problem exemplifies the basic pattern of Mallarmé's thinking, which involves longing for the Absolute, recognition of the necessary limits of mankind, and an imaginative creation of a patterned solution. For Mallarmé here begins with the hankering after a primeval "mystical" language in which sound and sense might have been perfectly related; moves on to the realization that existing languages give glimpses of an only occasional relation of this kind and more often than not have contradictory sound and sense; but finally affirms that in the line of poetry, or in words in combination, this feeling of unity between sound and sense can be restored. The line of poetry is thus a kind of "new, total and as it were incantatory word," possessing properties which no single real word can ever have.[57]

As for mythology, Mallarmé gave his own interpretation to the theory which saw in all myths variations of an essential pattern of solar mythology.[58] Many of his most

[51] *OC*, p. 386 ("ce qui ne se dit pas du discours"); p. 387 ("l'air ou chant sous le texte"); p. 382 ("je ne sais quel miroitement, en dessous").

[52] *OC*, p. 54 ("Musicienne du silence").

[53] *OC*, p. 921 ("l'Imagination désireuse, non seulement de se satisfaire par le symbole éclatant dans les spectacles du monde, mais d'établir un lien entre ceux-ci et la parole chargée de les exprimer").

[54] Apart from transforming a catechism by question and answer into a continuous narrative, Mallarmé followed Cox so closely that his own original contribution is small but significant. And he seems to have explicity endorsed Cox's views. See Jean Seznec, "*Les Dieux antiques* de Mallarmé", in the *Festschrift* quoted in n. 27 above, pp. 259–282.

[55] *The Prose of Christopher Brennan*, p. 144.

[56] Ibid. See also Edouard Gaède, "Le problème du langage chez Mallarmé", *RHLF*, LXVIII (1968), pp. 45–65.

[57] *OC*, pp. 368, 858.

[58] See Pierre Renauld, "Mallarmé et le mythe", *RHLF*, LXXIII (1973), pp. 48–68.

important sonnets involve imagery derived from the setting sun.[59] Mallarmé discerned in the daily and annual cycle of the sun one vast, ever repeated play of incomparable grandeur and purity, "The Tragedy of Nature".[60] In the funeral pyre of sunset or of autumn, reality is consumed and transformed into pure light. This for Mallarmé was intimately related to the poet's task. In a half-frivolous, half-serious little sonnet, he compares the fleeting, dissolving images of poetry, in which the whole of the poet's soul is summed up, with the smoke rings produced by a smoker whose cigar will burn properly only if the ash is carefully shaken off from the bright fiery kiss of its burning tip. Even so the pure flame of poetry will burn brightly only if it shakes off the ashes of the world it has purified by its refining fire.[61]

Directly or indirectly, a large part of Mallarmé's poetry is concerned with the life and destiny of the poet, the artist, or other heroes of the mind. Sibylline sonnets commemorate Edgar Allan Poe, Verlaine, Baudelaire, Wagner, Puvis de Chavannes, and Vasco da Gama.[62] In the "Toast funèbre", Théophile Gautier is seen as the emblem of human happiness. When man dies, he dies utterly; but the words of the poet remain. His gaze, resting on earthly flowers, removes them from contingency into the realm of the pure Idea. Poetry has the power to recreate Eden.[63] In one of his strangest and most beautiful poems, the mysterious *Prose pour des Esseintes*, Mallarmé evokes a magical vision of ideal flowers which arose before his youthful eyes and filled him with exaltation as he became aware of his new duty as a poet.[64]

That duty Mallarmé performed throughout his life with exemplary fidelity. His poetic output was small in bulk but vast in its range and in its implications. There is a sense of cosmic immensity in his finest poems, as when he sees in the tomb of Edgar Allan Poe a meteorite fallen to rest on earth from some obscure disaster in the skies,[65] or when he imagines in another sonnet the Earth blazing with the sudden splendor of awakened human genius and casting the unwonted mystery of this great burst of light across the darkness of the nocturnal sky.[66] The adamantine brilliance of such poems contrasts with the exquisite delicacy of his occasional verse, as in the lines inscribed on the fans belonging to his wife and daughter,[67] or the playful wit in the octosyllabic

[59] See Gardner Davies, *Mallarmé et le drame solaire* (Paris, 1959); revised by L. J. Austin, "Two Mallarmé Studies", *RR*, LI (1960), pp. 124–129.

[60] *OC*, p. 1169 ("La Tragédie de la Nature"). Mallarmé specifies: "Note particulière à la Traduction".

[61] *OC*, p. 73 ("Toute l'âme résumée . . . "). See L. J. Austin, "Mallarmé et le réel", *Modern Miscellany presented to Eugène Vinaver*, ed. T. E. Lawrenson, F. E. Sutcliffe and G. F. A. Gadoffre (Manchester and New York, 1969), pp. 12–24.

[62] See Gardner Davies, *Les "Tombeaux" de Mallarmé* (Paris, 1950); for the Vasco da Gama sonnet, see L. J. Austin, "The Mystery of a Name", pp. 135–138, for "Le Tombeau de Baudelaire", see L. J. Austin, "Le Tombeau de Baudelaire by Stéphane Mallarmé: Satire or Homage?", *Hommage à W. T. Bandy, Études Baudelairiennes III* (Neuchâtel, 1973), pp. 185–200.

[63] See L. J. Austin, "Mallarmé and Gautier: New Light on 'Toast funèbre'", *Balzac and the Nineteenth Century. Studies presented to Herbert J. Hunt*, ed. D. G. Charlton, J. Gaudon, and Anthony R. Pugh (Leicester, 1972), pp. 335–351.

[64] See L. J. Austin, "Mallarmé, Huysmans et la 'Prose pour des Esseintes'", *RHLF*, LIV (1954), pp. 145–183; "Du nouveau sur la 'Prose pour des Esseintes' ", *MF* (January, 1955), pp. 84–104; "Mallarmé and the 'Prose pour des Esseintes' ", *FMLS*, II (1966), pp. 197–213.

[65] *OC*, p. 70.

[66] *OC*, p. 67 ("Quand l'ombre menaça de la fatale loi . . ."); see L. J. Austin, "The Indubitable Wing", in *Mélanges de littérature française moderne offerts à Garnet Rees* (Paris, 1980), pp. 1–14.

[67] *OC*, pp. 57, 58. Of the latter poem, Valéry wrote: " . . . poème d'une perfection, d'une

quatrains he used to address his letters to his friends.[68] Love, restrained but fervent, is subtly and finely expressed in several sonnets to Méry Laurent.[69] In 1961 Jean-Pierre Richard, whose book, *L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé*, is the finest study of the poet that has yet appeared, published Mallarmé's notes (fragmentary but most moving) for a commemorative work about his son Anatole, who died in 1879.[70] But it is the last, enigmatic sonnets that come nearest to Mallarmé's conception of poetry as the "revels" (*ébat*) of language:[71] here the poem really ceases to be a discourse and becomes (in Mallarmé's own image) like a dimly lit grotto encrusted with a mosaic of precious stones, illuminating each other by the interplay of their reflected gleams as they are kindled and extinguished.[72] His poems nearly always have a musical perfection which makes them immediately and enduringly memorable, while their magic density constitutes a challenge to find meanings worthy of their form, a condition often overlooked by his commentators.[73]

Mallarmé's prose itself is a form of poetry: he himself called his essays critical poems. They were collected the year before his death in the volume called *Divagations*. "They were written apropos of many things", wrote Christopher Brennan, "[. . .] but wherever Mallarmé might begin, the next step always led him into that perfect and coherent sphere of thought into which he transformed the universe. Poems these essays certainly are: his astounding power for perceiving analogy plays here more freely and unrestrainedly than within the severe limits of his verse; here too is room for his gay fancy and his subtle humor".[74] To these must be added his noble and moving funeral oration on his friend Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, given in Belgium in 1890, and his lecture on "La Musique et les Lettres", given in Oxford and Cambridge in 1894, and containing his fullest statement of his theory of poetry.[75]

Meanwhile, however, Mallarmé was working stubbornly at his secret ambition. But he had come to realize that no one person could write the Great Work he had conceived, and he spoke of it increasingly as if the Book were the symbol of universal literature, in which humanity seeks to penetrate the meaning of the Universe, "the mystery whose grandeur we are here to contemplate".[76] For him (as for George Meredith), the "Orphic" or poetic explanation of the Earth was the sole duty of the poet and the "jeu littéraire *par excellence*".[77] All he hoped now to achieve personally was some com-

---

musique et d'un charme si rares que ce serait le chef-d'œuvre de Mallarmé, s'il y en avait un" (*Œuvres*, I, p. 1733).

[68] Vers de circonstance (Paris, 1920); *OC*, pp. 81–186.

[69] *OC*, pp. 58, 60, 61.

[70] *Pour un Tombeau d'Anatole* (Paris, 1961). Reviewed by L. J. Austin, *RR*, LIV (1963), pp. 144–147.

[71] *OC*, p. 386 ("La Langue, dont voici l'ébat").

[72] Ibid. ("Les mots, d'eux-mêmes, s'exaltent à mainte facette reconnue la plus rare (. . .) projetés, en parois de grotte (. . .) prompts tous, avant extinction, à une réciprocité de feux (. . .)").

[73] *Œuvres*, I, p. 646 ("Vouloir leur donner un sens qui ne fût pas indigne de leur forme admirable . . . ").

[74] *Christopher Brennan*, p. 149.

[75] *OC*, pp. 481—510; 635—657.

[76] *OC*, p. 314 ("/ . . .) le mystère dont on est au monde pour envisager la grandeur").

[77] *OC*, p. 663 ("L'explication orphique de la Terre, qui est le seul devoir du poète et le jeu littéraire par excellence"). See L. J. Austin, "Mallarmé et le mythe d'Orphée", *CAIEF*, 22 (1970), pp. 169–180.

pleted fragment wherein the glorious authenticity of the Book would scintillate in one place, hinting at the whole for which one life would not suffice.[78] He was not destined to complete even that "fragment", which was most probably *Hérodiade*. But his existing work contains poetry unique in its magic and mysterious evocative power.

Perhaps the finest example of such poetry is the sonnet beginning "Ses purs ongles très-haut dédiant leur onyx . . ." In this poem, described by Mallarmé as a "sonnet allegorical of itself", the "meaning [. . .] is evoked by an inner mirage of the words themselves".[79] Here, in an empty room at midnight, in an atmosphere of darkness and of dread made up of absence and questioning, when one by one the last vestiges of the light of day and of life itself have died away, suddenly, in the oblivion of a mirror on the wall, seven scintillating points of light are caught in the silent music of a septet of the stars: the constellation of the Great Bear.

The image of the constellation is of central importance to Mallarmé. A constellation, first of all, is sheer shining, blazing beauty, instinctively seen as valid in itself and for itself, unexplained and self-contained, autonomous. But, more important, a constellation is a pattern created entirely by the shaping imagination of man, who weaves the magnificent chaos of glimmers of the night sky into significant combinations. Finally, time and time again in human myth and legend, the constellation is the consecration and commemoration of the apotheosis of the hero, one of them, specially dear to Mallarmé, being Orpheus with his lyre. The evocation of the Great Bear through a musical metaphor as a "septet of scintillations":

De scintillations sitôt le septuor

conveys the double notion of the sparkling brilliance of the stars and of their patterning, for in music, too, the individual note or instrument means nothing in itself, but the relationships are the essential, and the patterned creation resulting from them.

The same image of the constellation recurs in Mallarmé's boldest experiment, *Un Coup de dés*. Here, with a full use of the resources of typography, including space and placing on the page, interlocking themes are set in type of different size and kind. Here, a device used for effects of virtuosity or sensuous delight by poets in the Alexandrian period, by those of the Renaissance, by the English Metaphysicals, and by Guillaume Apollinaire, becomes a means towards intellectual understanding as well as ideographic representation.[80] The complex, tightly knit argument is developed on two planes: one of clear-cut abstract reasoning in explicit philosophic propositions, the other, of highly imaginative symbolism, evocative of a hypothetical illustrative action. More important than what is said is what is implied by the structure of the poem. On

[78] Ibid. ("à en montrer un fragment d'exécuté, à en faire scintiller par une place l'authenticité glorieuse, en indiquant le reste tout entier auquel ne suffit pas une vie").

[79] *OC*, p. 1488 ("Sonnet allégorique de lui-même"), *Corr.* I. p. 279 ("le sens . . . est évoqué par un mirage interne des mots mêmes").

[80] See Gardner Davies, *Vers une explication rationnelle du "Coup de Dés"* (Paris, 1953). See reviews by L. J. Austin of this book, *RHLF*, LV (1955), pp. 243–246, and of Claude Roulet, *Traité de poétique supérieure* (Neuchâtel, 1956), *RHLF*, LIX (1959), pp. 244–246. See, also, S. Bernard, "Le 'Coup de dés' replacé dans la perspective historique", *RHLF*, LI (1951), pp. 181–195; Malcolm Bowie, *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult* (Cambridge, 1978), and the edition of the poem by Mitson Ronat (Paris, 1980).

the abstract level, Mallarmé proclaims inexorably that nothing man can do can alter the radical contingency of the universe. Vainly he tries to abolish Chance. He is doomed to inevitable shipwreck; and when he is gone it will be as if nothing had ever taken place. But the imagery of the poem belies this explicit pessimism. For, just when despair seems total, a miracle occurs. Across the empty sky a new constellation slowly emerges, star by star and comes to rest in a point of ultimate, royal splendor.

Un Coup de dés is, in some ways, the epitome of Mallarmé's thought and art. In 1894 he had defined to his Oxford and Cambridge audiences the status of literature as being in a sense man's supreme reality. Man creates from the very sense of the inadequacy of reality his own frail and splendid refutations of contingency. Comparing literature to a fireworks display, where rockets are drawn up as by a vacuum into the empty sky and explode there, scattering their patterns of brilliant stars, Mallarmé exclaims: "Mais, je vénère comment, par une supercherie, on projette, à quelque élévation défendue et de foudre, le conscient manque chez nous de ce qui là-haut éclate".[81]

And so, although Mallarmé died with his supreme ambition unfulfilled, "his work, as it stands, possesses completeness, as the suggestion of something perhaps unachievable".[82] And his existing work stands in its own right as a miraculous achievement, a unique and self-sufficient expression of man's longing for the Absolute, his recognition of his limitations, and his conquest, by the imagination, of one of the highest and most satisfying forms of activity possible to man, a triumphantly patterned creation.

The international reputation and intellectual impact of Mallarmé are considerable. A vast amount of preliminary work of a delicate and subtle kind remains to be done before it will be possible to delimit in detail and with any rigor the threefold problem involved in tracing "la fortune littéraire de Mallarmé en France et dans la République des lettres": his personal relations with poets and critics, the impact of his work on his contemporaries and successors, and the critical response to it both in his lifetime and since his death, in France and in the world. Only a few brief indications can be given here.[83]

For his personal relations with poets and critics in France and abroad, the richest source of information is Mallarmé's correspondence, supplemented by the published personal reminiscences of some of his disciples and friends.[84] It would be impossible to list the hundreds of names involved, at least as far as France is concerned, names which include some of the most illustrious and some of the humblest poets among Mallarmé's predecessors, contemporaries, and disciples.[85] During the last two decades

[81] *OC*, p. 647 ("But I revere how, by a subterfuge, we project into some forbidden height where lightning flashes, the conscious lack within us of what bursts into splendor in the sky").

[82] *The Prose of Christopher Brennan*, p. 154.

[83] For a brief outline of the development of criticism of Mallarmé, see my article in the *Dizionario critico della letteratura francese*, ed. Franco Simone (Turin, 1972). See also the unpublished thesis by John Foulkes, *Mallarmé Judged by his Contemporaries* (Cambridge, 1978), and D. Hampton Morris, *Stéphane Mallarmé, Twentieth Century Criticism (1901–1971)* (Mississippi, 1977).

[84] Six volumes of the *Correspondance* have appeared; four more are to appear in 1982 and 1983, covering the last five years of Mallarmé's life. The principal personal reminiscences of Mallarmé are those by Paul Claudel, Léopold Dauphin, Édouard Dujardin, André Fontainas, André Gide, René Ghil, Gustave Kahn, Pierre Louys, Camille Mauclair, Henri de Régnier, Francis Vielé-Griffin, and above all, Paul Valéry.

[85] See the table of contents and lists of correspondents in the various volumes of the *Correspondance*, the final volume will contain a comprehensive index.

of his life, Mallarmé received an unending flow of books, novels, plays, and volumes of verse or slender *plaquettes* which, while often reflecting his own work in clumsy imitations, sometimes revealed a subtler assimilation of his themes, imagery, and technique. Mallarmé replied to virtually all of these gifts, and his comments, brief or more developed according to the relative value and importance of the works received, form a remarkable collection of aphorisms on the nature of poetry, expressed with wit, grace, elegance, and extraordinarily suggestive brevity.[86]

From the start, Mallarmé's circle of friends and literary acquaintances extended beyond the boundaries of France. Projected lecture tours in Denmark and in Holland were discussed with S. Prahl and Hein Boeken, respectively.[87] A number of Portuguese poets moved in literary circles in Paris and attended Mallarmé's *mardis*: Xavier de Carvalho, Antonio de Oliviera-Soares, and above all, Eugenio de Castro.[88] Mallarmé had episodic relations with the Peruvian poet Nicanor Della Rocca de Vergalo[89] and the Argentinian poet Leopoldo Diaz.[90] He corresponded extensively with the minor Italian novelist Luigi Gualdo[91] and the active critic Vittorio Pica of Naples, who did much to make Mallarmé known in Italy.[92] In Germany, Stefan George and the whole movement of *Die Blätter für die Kunst* looked to Mallarmé as an exemplary figure. Stefan George himself appeared at the *mardis*, exchanged letters with Mallarmé, and produced fine translations of some of his poems.[93] Mallarmé naturally had friends in French-speaking Switzerland[94] and, especially, in Belgium, where some of the major and minor "symbolist" poets emerged:[95] Verhaeren, Maeterlinck, Mockel, Elskamp, Fontainas, Valère Gille, Arnold Goffin, Albert Giraud, and others; Mallarmé was

[86] A preliminary selection of these was published by H. Mondor under the title *Stéphane Mallarmé, Propos sur la Poésie* (Monaco, 1945; rev. ed. 1952). See Alison Fairlie, "'Entre les lignes': Mallarmé's art of allusion in his thank-you letters", in the *Festschrift* quoted in n. 27 above, pp. 181–201.

[87] Details will be found in the relevant volumes of the *Correspondance*.

[88] See Denyse Chast, "Eugenio de Castro et Stéphane Mallarmé", *RLC*, XXI (1947), pp. 243–253. Denyse Chast names Fernando Pessoa as a contemporary Portuguese poet influenced by Mallarmé (p. 253). See, also, *Corr.* IV, p. 228, n.1 and 2, p. 229, n.1, and p.238, n. 2.

[89] *Corr.* II, p. 195 and n. 1, IV, p. 470, n. 2.

[90] See Leopoldo Diaz, "*La Silva de los sueños*", *Rivista de America* 2 (September, 1913), p. 1, and John Inglekirk, *Edgar Allan Poe in Hispanic Literature* (New York, 1934), which reproduces a letter from Mallarmé to Diaz, 17 August 1898. (Information kindly supplied by W. T. Bandy).

[91] See *Correspondance*. passim, and C. P. Barbier, *Documents Stéphane Mallarmé*, I (Paris, 1968), pp. 99–107.

[92] *Corr.* III, p. 73 and n. 1, p. 83; IV, p. 206, n. 4. See Olga Ragusa, *Mallarmé in Italy. Literary Influence and Critical Response* (New York, 1957), pp. 58–77.

[93] *Corr.* IV, pp. 203–204. and notes; VI, pp. 44, n. 3. Mallarmé's correspondence with Stefan George has been published in full by Robert Boehringer, *Mein Bild von Stefan George* (Düsseldorf, 1967), pp. 202–206. See, above all, Énid Lowrie Duthie, *L'Influence du Symbolisme français dans le renouveau poétique de l'Allemagne. Les Blätter für die Kunst de 1892 à 1900* (Paris, 1933).

[94] See Philippe M. Monnier, "Mallarmé et ses amis genevois", *RHLF*, LXVIII (1968), pp. 36–44 who publishes letters from Mallarmé to Mathias Morhardt, Daniel Baud-Bovy, Louis Duchosal, and William Vogt. The letters are reproduced and annotated in *Corr.* IV and following volumes (see tables).

[95] See Herman Braet, *L'Accueil fait au Symbolisme en Belgique 1985–1900* (Brussels, 1967). This is, of course, mainly concerned with critical responses. See, also, *Actes du second congrès national de la Société française de Littérature comparée: Les Flandres dans les mouvements romantique et symboliste* (Paris, 1958); *Le mouvement symboliste en littérature, Actes du Colloque international tenu à Bruxelles les 3,4 et 5 mai 1973, Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles*, 1974/3–4.

invited by Octave Maus and Edmond Picard of the "Cercle des XX" to lecture in 1890 on Villiers de l'Isle-Adam.[96]

But it was with the English-speaking world that Mallarmé felt the greatest affinities and had the most extensive relations. His passion for Edgar Allan Poe brought him into contact with John Ingram, the English Poe scholar and editor, and with Poe circles in America, which included Sarah Helen Whitman, Louise Chandler Moulton, and Sara Sigourney Rice.[97] He later corresponded with the eccentric Germano-Japanese American writer and art critic Sadakichi Hartmann, with Richard Hovey, and with Harrison Rhodes, editor of the avant-garde periodical *The Chap Book;* Mallarmé published his first postal quatrains in this magazine under the title *Les Loisirs de la poste*, as well as his remarkable letter on Rimbaud.[98] Mallarmé exchanged letters with a number of English poets, including Richard Hengist Horne, John Payne, Arthur O'Shaughnessy and, above all, Swinburne, who held him in high regard.[99] He had an extensive correspondence with the picturesque figure, the Chavelier de Chatelain, exiled in England, to whom Mallarmé revealed Baudelaire's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's tales and who sent Baudelaire his translations of two of Poe's poems.[100] Mallarmé was in contact with Edmund Gosse,[101] with George Moore,[102] and with Oscar Wilde.[103] He collaborated anonymously with the London *Athenœum* during the winter of 1875–1876, sending a number of brief notes on literature, drama, and painting, which were translated and abridged for insertion by O'Shaughnessy.[104] Later, in 1892–1893, Mallarmé (through the good offices of the painter J. McNeill Whistler and the critic Charles Whibley) published a series of articles in French in William Ernest Henley's journal *The National Observer*.[105] The culmination of Mallarmé's relations with England came in 1894, when he delivered, first in Oxford, then in Cambridge, his lecture on

[96] See *Corr*, III, IV, and later volumes for details of Mallarmé's relations with the Belgian poets. For the lecture-tour, see *Corr*. IV, pp. 25, 34, 36, 42, 44–45, 47–62, and notes.

[97] See *Corr*. II, III, IV and later volumes.

[98] See *OC*, pp. 512–519, 1503, 1587. *The Sadakichi Hartmann Newsletter*, published by Harry Lawton and George Knox since 1970, has thrown much light on this curious figure. Lawton and Knox published his three "prophetic plays", *Buddha, Confucius, Christ* (New York, 1971), with a useful introduction. See, also, Elizabeth S. Blake, "Un correspondant américain de Mallarmé", *RHLF*, LXVIII (1968), pp. 26–35.

[99] Mallarmé's letters, to Horne, O'Shaughnessy, and Swinburne are in *Corr*. II. Letters to Payne are in *Corr*. II, III, IV and later volumes. See, also, Mariana Ryan, "John Payne et Mallarmé", *RLC*, XXXII (1958), pp. 377–389. In 1892, Swinburne praised Mallarmé in an interview with Gabriel Mourey ("C'est le plus admirable artiste que je connaisse . . . ").

[100] See *Corr*. I, p. 114; *Corr*. IV, passim. See, also, *Lettres à Charles Baudelaire*, publiées par Claude Puchois avec la collaboration de Vincenette Pichois (Neuchâtel, 1973), pp. 90–96.

[101] See Roger Lhombreaud, "Deux lettres de Mallarmé à Edmund Gosse", *RLC*, XXV (1951), pp. 355–362; "Une lettre inédite de Mallarmé en anglais", *RLC*, XXVI (1952), pp. 249–254; for Gosse's reply, see Mariana Ryan, "John Payne et Mallarmé", p. 380. See, also, *Corr*. II, p. 69 and n. 1; *Corr*. V, and Ruth Temple, *The Critic's Alchemy* (New York, 1953), pp. 185–228 (an admirably balanced judgment on Gosse as a critic of French Symbolism).

[102] No letters have been recovered; but see Jean Noel, "George Moore et Mallarmé", *RLC*, XXXII (1958), pp. 363–76; G.-P. Collet, *George Moore et la France* (Genève, 1957); and, again, Ruth Temple, *The Critic's Alchemy*, pp. 231–271.

[103] See *Corr*. IV, pp. 202–203, 323, n. 2, pp. 327–328. (Mallarmé's letter concerning *The Picture of Dorian Gray*). p. 355, n. 1; VI, p. 60 (on Salomé).

[104] See *Les "gossips" de Mallarmé, "Athenœum", 1875–1876*, ed. H. Mondor and L. J. Austin (Paris, 1962); also, *Corr*. II, passim.

[105] See the original texts in Norman Paxton, *The Development of Mallarmé's Prose Style* (Genève, 1968), pp. 137–165.

"La Musique et les Lettres".[106] Another journey to England was planned for 1896 but did not take place.

The impact of Mallarmé's work on his contemporaries and successors in France and abroad cannot yet be assessed. Many writers of importance have acknowledged a sense of obligation to his work, his ideas, and above all, his example. This kind of homage has been paid to Mallarmé by Gide, Proust, Claudel, and especially by Paul Valéry.[107] The leading English poets of the earlier half of the twentieth century, T. S. Eliot (who knew French) and W. B. Yeats (who knew none), both directly and through intermediaries such as Arthur Symons, came to know and esteem Mallarmé's work, and underwent his influence to an as yet undefined extent.[108] James Joyce carried experiments with language to extremes undreamt of by Mallarmé himself.[109] The first poet of the English-speaking world to have a profound knowledge of Mallarmé's work and to be deeply influenced by it was the Australian poet Christopher Brennan.[110] Much work remains to be done on Mallarmé's impact on Spanish and Portuguese literature in the Peninsula and in Latin America.[111] Useful monographs have been devoted to the influence of French Symbolism in Germany,[112] in the United States,[113] and in Russia;[114] they naturally give prominence to the role of Mallarmé. But no

[106] *Corr.* V contains the annotated correspondence relating this visit, pp. 226–241.

[107] See *Corr.* IV, p. 152, n. 3 (Valéry), p. 174, n. 1 (Claudel), p. 191, n. 1 (Gide): for Proust, see R. G. Cohn, "Proust and Mallarmé", *FS*, XXIV (1970), pp. 262–275, and L. J. Austin, "Proust et la poétique de la réminiscence", *Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Marcel Proust et des Amis de Combray*, no. 22 (1972), pp. 1338–1345.

[108] It is doubtful whether either poet was deeply influenced by Mallarmé. Eliot owed far more to Laforgue and to Baudelaire, although a few echoes from Mallarmé occur. Yeats called at Mallarmé's flat in Paris in February, 1894, when Mallarmé was in England, Geneviève Mallarmé described to her father the comic efforts she and her mother had to make in order to convey this fact in sign language to Yeats (see Yeats' letter to Mallarmé, published by Eileen Souffrin, *TLS*, 26 November 1954, and Geneviève's letter to Mallarmé of 26 February, 1894, in C. P. Barbier, *Documents Stéphane Mallarmé*, III, p. 235, but with no indication that the passage concerns Yeats). These texts appear with commentaries in *Corr.* VI, p. 223, n. 3. See, also, R. Lhombreaud. "Arthur Symons Renderings of Mallarmé", *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, XX (1959), pp. 89–102. See the well-known passage by Yeats on Symons and Mallarmé in *Autobiographies* (London, 1955), pp. 320–321.

[109] See Marshall McLuhan, "Joyce, Mallarmé, and the Press" (n. 40, above). See, also David Hayman, *Joyce et Mallarmé*, I: *Stylistique de la suggestion*; II. *Les éléments mallarméens dans l'œuvre de Joyce* (Paris, 1956).

[110] See *Corr.* VI, p. 203, n. 1 and A. R. Chisholm, *A Study of Christopher Brennan's "The Forest of Night"* (Melbourne, 1970) and many earlier writings listed in "A. R. Chisholm: A Short Bibliography", *Studies in Honour of A. R. Chisholm*, ed. Wallace Kirsop (Melbourne, 1969); special number of *Australian Journal of French Studies*. VI, nos. 2–3, which also includes "New Light on Brennan and Mallarmé", by L. J. Austin). The text of a letter from Mallarmé to Brennan (16 September 1897) was discovered and published in *Southerly*, XXXI (1971), pp. 131–132, by Robin B. Marsden, See, also, *Meanjin Quarterly*, XXIX, 1970, which contains articles by A. R. Chisholm, "Brennan, poet and scholar. A centenary assessment", pp. 277–280, and Wallace Kirsop, " 'The greatest renewal, the greatest revelation. Brennan's commentary on Mallarmé", pp. 303–311, *Quadrant* (Sydney), November, 1977; above all, John Foulkes, "Mallarmé and Brennan", *French Studies*, XXXII (1978), pp. 34–45. See, also, n. 3. above.

[111] See, inter alia, Alfonso Reyes, *Mallarmé entre nosotros* (Mexico, 1955, new edn.), and French version in *RLC*, XII (1932), pp. 546–568 (translated by Mathilde Pomès). See, in this volume, chapters by Claudio Guillén.

[112] See Enid Lowrie Duthie, n. 93 above.

[113] See René Taupin, *L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine* (de 1910 à 1920) (Paris, 1929).

[114] See Georgette Douchin, *The Influence of French Symbolism on Russian Poetry* (The Hague, 1958).

detailed study has been devoted to Mallarmé's impact on any country (including France) except Italy.[115] From this example, it seems reasonable to assume that future studies will furnish further evidence of widespread interest if not of verifiable influence. If properly conducted, such studies would also produce evidence of the extreme difficulties of interpretation, which may give rise to many misunderstandings, ones that are perhaps creative, but misunderstandings none the less.

The same comment would apply to the history of critical response to Mallarmé in France and abroad, both in his lifetime and since his death. Here again the fundamental work remains to be done. A "*Mallarmé devant ses contemporains*" would be the obvious starting point, followed by a "*Mallarmé devant le postérité*". A significant fact already apparent is that, while from the start, as is right, French critics such as Albert Thibaudet[116] and biographers such as Henri Mondor[117] have done fundamental work, Mallarmé has also attracted much critical attention outside France. His first biographer was the Belgian Albert Mockel.[118] The first really penetrating study of his work as a whole was written in 1904 by the Australian poet Christopher Brennan,[119] whom I have quoted frequently in this paper. The first large-scale account of Mallarmé's life and work was published in 1938 by a German, Kurt Wais[120] (who had had distinguished precursors in the study of Mallarmé among his compatriots, including Franz Rauhut,[121] Franz Nobiling[122] and Walter Naumann).[123] The first comprehensive (and highly illuminating) thesis in French on Mallarmé's poetry was published in 1940 by a Belgian, Émilie Noulet.[124] Meanwhile, a disciple of Christopher Brennan, A. R. Chisholm, had been lecturing on Mallarmé for many years in Melbourne; and his *Towards Hérodiade*, published in 1934, was the first of many books and articles on Mallarmé written by A. R. Chisholm or by his pupils.[125] Mallarmé has had a number of fervent

[115] See n. 92 above. For England, see G. Ross Roy, "A Bibliography of French Symbolism in English-language publications to 1910", *RLC*, XXXIV (1960), pp. 645–659. See, also, Ruth Temple, *The Critic's Alchemy* (quoted n. 101, above), and her excellent article, "Aldous Huxley et la littérature française", *RLC*, XIX (1939), pp. 65–110.

[116] *La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé* (Paris, 1912; new edn. 1926).

[117] *Vie de Mallarmé* (Paris, 1941–1942); H. Mondor published some fifteen other books on Mallarmé, each including new documents.

[118] *Stéphane Mallarmé, un héros* (Paris, 1899), reprinted in Albert Mockel, *Esthétique du Symbolisme*, ed. Michel Otten (Brussels, 1962).

[119] See n. 3 and n. 110, above.

[120] *Mallarmé. Ein Dichter des Jahrhundert-Endes* (Munich, 1938); *Mallarmé. Dichtung. Weisheit. Haltung* (Munich, 1952). See L. J. Austin, "Mallarmé et son critique allemand", *RHLF*, LIV (1954), pp. 184–194. Kurt Wais has also published many separate studies, collected in two volumes; *Französische Marksteine* and *An den Grenzen der National-Literaturen* (Berlin, 1958).

[121] *Das Romantische und Musikalische in der Lyrik Stéphane Mallarmés* (Marburg, 1926).

[122] Franz Nobiling published a series of translations and commentaries on Mallarmé's poems in various German periodicals between 1929 and 1933, and a collected volume of translations in 1938. There have been, of course, numerous other translations of Mallarmé into German. See Ulrich K. Goldsmith, "On translating Mallarmé into German", *RLC*, XXXV (1961), pp. 474–486.

[123] *Der Sprachgebrauch Mallarmés* (Marburg, 1936). A valuable recent study in German is that of Gerhard Regn, *Konflikt der Interpretationen* (Munich, 1978; Romanica Monacensia, 13).

[124] *L'Œuvre poétique de Stéphane Mallarmé* (Paris, 1940). A selection of exegeses from this excellent study was published under the title *Dix poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé* (Lille-Geneva, 1948), as well as an enlarged edition, *Vingt poèmes, . . .* (Paris–Geneva, 1967).

[125] A. R. Chisholm, *Mallarmé's "L'Après-midi d'un faune"* (Melbourne, 1958); *Mallarmé's "Grand Œuvre"* (Manchester, 1961); numerous articles in *AUMLA*, *AJFS*, *EFL*, *RLC*, and *FS*. For Gardner Davies, see notes 16, 59, 62, 80, above. See, also James R. Lawler, *The Language of French Symbolism* (Princeton, 1969). I. am myself proud to be considered a disciple of A. R. Chisholm, who initiated me into Mallarmé's work nearly fifty years ago.

commentators in the United States, notably H. A. Grubbs,[126] Wallace Fowlie[127] and R. G. Cohn;[128] in Great Britain, his critics include Austin Gill,[129] C. A. Chadwick,[130] C.-P. Barbier,[131] M. M. Bowie,[132] and Eileen Souffrin—Le Breton;[133] in Italy, he has been studied by de Nardis and others.[134] There have, no doubt, been studies in other countries not mentioned here. The field is vast. In France itself, after important studies by scholars such as J. Scherer[135] and Léon Cellier,[136] Mallarmé received immediate official recognition by the university and illumination by new critical methods in Jean-Pierre Richard's thesis of 1961, *L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé*.[137] In the last decade, whether on the basis of real insights or *contresens créateurs*, Mallarmé is increasingly invoked as the patron saint of the most recent schools of criticism, whose attention, if not always comprehension, he commands.[138] In the field of creative writing, a recent anthology entitled *New French Poetry* affirms: "It can no longer be said that the most important part of contemporary French poetry is Baudelairian. The 'lignes de force'... have changed; and the fertilizing influence of *Les Fleurs du mal* has been replaced by Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés* and *Divagations*".[139] It is perhaps significant that Mallarmé's poems are not mentioned here. We may be sure that if poetry as such survives the present age, Mallarmé's poems will once more come into their own.

[126] See his "Mallarmé's Ptyx Sonnet: An Analytical and Critical Study", *PMLA* (1950), pp. 75–89.

[127] *Mallarmé* (Chicago, 1953).

[128] *L'Œuvre de Mallarmé. Un coup de dés* (Paris, 1951); *Toward the Poems of Mallarmé* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965); *Mallarmé's Masterwork. New Findings* (The Hague, 1966), the latter two reviewed by L. J. Austin, *FS*, XXIII (1969), pp. 194–197.

[129] Numerous articles from 1955 onwards, dealing with many aspects of Mallarmé's poetry and thought; monograph on *Mallarmé's Poem "La chevelure vol d'une flamme . . . "* (Glasgow, 1971).

[130] *Mallarmé, sa pensée dans sa poésie* (Paris, 1962), and several articles.

[131] Edition of *Correspondance Mallarmé-Whistler* (Paris, 1964), and *Documents Stéphane Mallarmé* (4 vols. to date, Paris 1968–1973).

[132] See n. 80. above.

[133] Numerous articles, a forthcoming monograph on Mallarmé, and edition of the *Poésies* for the Athlone Poets series (London).

[134] *Impressionismo di Mallarmé* (Caltanissetta-Roma, 1957); *L'Ironia di Mallarmé* (ibid., 1962, containing (pp. 243–290) a bibliography of Mallarmé studies in Italy from 1885–1961 (363 items).

[135] *L'Expression littéraire dans l'œuvre de Mallarmé* (Paris, 1947); *Le "Livre" de Mallarmé* (Paris, 1957), reviewed by L. J. Austin, *RHLF*, LIX (1959), pp. 409–412.

[136] *Mallarmé et la morte qui parle* (Paris, 1959), reviewed by L. J. Austin, "Two Mallarmé Studies" (see n. 59 above).

[137] Paris, 1961. Reviewed by L. J. Austin, *RHLF*, LXIII (1963), pp. 493–497. See, specially, Gérard Genette, "Bonheur de Mallarmé", *Figures* (Paris, 1966), pp. 91–100. J. P. Richard's book contains an admirably comprehensive bibliography, and the notes to the chapters discuss, in detail, earlier works.

[138] A much-quoted example is Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris, 1974).

[139] C. A. Hackett, *New French Poetry* (Oxford, 1973), p. XXIII; cf. P. XXX; "The course has been changed, and the essential bearings are being taken from Mallarmé"; See also C. A. Hackett's article, "Mallarmé and modern French poetry", in the *Festschrift* quoted in n. 27 above, pp. 242–258.

PART II
THE FRENCH CÉNACLE

Robert Jouanny

THE BACKGROUND OF FRENCH SYMBOLISM

Accounting for French Symbolism historically poses many problems, and the dates generally accepted are largely arbitrary. The records left by the many obliging chroniclers of *la mêlée symboliste* and the reviews, manifestos and lampoons that blossomed towards 1880, if not major works, encouraged historians to place the movement roughly between 1880 and 1900. But French Symbolism fails to match the historians' facts, even so. By 1880, the chief work had been done; Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and even Verlaine had all published or at least written the works now regarded as their most significant. And at the latter end, roundabout or just after the turn of the century, the most representative works of another generation of men, Claudel, Valéry, Milosz and Saint-Pol-Roux, had begun to appear, after a patient and often frustrating wait. The over-simplified view may be convenient for histories of literature, even if it is something of a caricature, but I feel it would be more accurate to say that, between these two extremes, French Symbolism went through two separate stages, both equally disappointing.

From 1880 to 1890, the younger generation showed a growing consciousness of a specific poetics after its initial groping and an often contradictory search for the ideal it wanted to reach expressed mainly through hopes, idle endeavours and hazarded theories.

Then 1891 introduced a period of disillusionment during which the inconsistencies and limitations of the movement became very glaring. Symbolism was made to fit all claims and ambitions, yet no one wished to recognize that it had reached a crisis, that early hopes had proved short-lived and each writer was resuming his old road in search of an identity and of a real world too long forgotten.

Between these two periods of conscription and demobilization, so to speak, one event stood out as a turning-point: the celebration on February 2, 1891 which assembled "toute une jeunesse aurorale et quelques ancêtres" — Mallarmé's toast — round Jean Moréas, one might almost have said in answer to Gauguin's exhortation in the famous January edition of *La Plume* (1891) devoted to the "symbolisme de Jean Moréas": "Soyez symboliste". The occasion proved ineffectual because the illusion of triumph was followed almost immediately by doubt as to the importance of the particular work praised and the questioning of Symbolism as such by its late zealots, the hero of yesterday's feast at their head.

Suggesting that French Symbolism had no more than one luminous day of life, like a May-fly, and after its slow birth came the beginning of slow decay, however, would

be denying the movement all meaning. Obviously, such a straightforward pattern can provide only a superficial approach. It would not explain the ferment of ideas and events, coincident and conflicting, that lent a unity of tone to these two decades, making it legitimate to speak of a collective enterprise, however, hard to define. I shall consequently take the chronology, context and general climate of the period in turn, in an attempt to convey more of its vivid reality.

1) LES DATES ET LES ŒUVRES

In *Les Dates et les Œuvres*, written in 1923, René Ghil, both as a witness and participant, gives the beginning of the history of the movement as roundabout 1883 or 1884. Not going back to Baudelaire and Gautier, as one should, I would nevertheless be tempted to set the early subterranean murmurings of the protohistory closer to 1875 when the signs of the new awareness were beginning to take shape. It was in 1873, after all, that Rimbaud published *Une Saison en Enfer*, in 1874 that the first Impressionist exhibition was held, in 1875 that Verlaine and Mallarmé failed to be included in the third *Parnasse contemporain* and in 1877 that Mallarmé brought out his *Poésies complètes*. Parnassus had obviously had its day. Though Banville, Leconte de Lisle, Mendès and Coppée had kept their reputation owing to their personal merit and their helpfulness to some rather than their literary achievement the success of newcomers like Richepin and Rollinat pointed to a renewal of poetic forms and ideals. At the same time, the style of literary circles began to change, with cabarets tending to replace the fashionable *salons*. The founding of the *Hydropathes* circle in 1878 can be regarded as a literary event in this respect, because the artful Goudeau, with his *Fleurs de Bitume*, had taken advantage of the new *mal de siècle*, shortly to be qualified as decadent:

> Tous mes rêves d'azur s'en sont allés au gouffre
> Je sais qu'il faut blaguer à Paris et je souffre
> D'avoir tué mes dieux naturalistement.
>
> (All my azure dreams have gone to the abyss
> In Paris you must joke, I know, but I sorrow
> For having killed my gods naturalistically.)

The spread of juvenile literary circles in the next few years was a more significant phenomenon than the fugitive fashions noisily professed by one or other of the small groups in the cabarets on the Left Bank. The *Zutistes*, *Jemenfoutistes* and *Hirsutes*, all "regulars" at the "Chat Noir", would have deserved no more mention in anecdotes than as signs of the new effervescence if, while they intoxicated a few young enthusiasts from the provinces with dreams of fame — and spirits — they had not allowed one or two ephemeral publications to see the day. The *Chat Noir* (1882–1897), during the early years of its over-long life, combined the poetic yearnings of a handful of young people with the interests of the poet café-owner, R. Salis. And it was not long before a more important review, the *Nouvelle Rive Gauche*, founded in 1882, but renamed *Lutèce* in 1883, left its initial political and social concerns behind for specifically literary aims. This journal must be credited with having gathered together a number of writers who,

though they were still unkown at the time, were shortly to acquire a fair reputation (Caze, Moréas, Tailhade, Vignier, Ajalbert, Raynaud, Vielé-Griffin, Régnier and others), with instilling a group consciousness with a sometimes deliberately mystifying solemnity — wanting to be 'fumiste' (fraudulent) — and with bringing out works which were to leave their mark: Verlaine's *Poètes Maudits* (1883), most of *Les Syrtes* (Moréas) and the *Complaintes* of Laforgue.

Alongside these fairly spontaneous collective publications, some writings of another kind also helped to crystallize uncertain ambitions and hasten the new sense of purpose. It would be hard to say which of these contributions had the greatest effect: the *Poètes Maudits* in which Verlaine, making a skillful literary *rentrée* (come-back), linked his favorites by an adjective, apparently offering an example to a great many young writers who had not yet found their true way; the *Essais de Psychologie contemporaine*[1] where Bourget gave a new dimension to contemporary unease by associating it with a literary and psychological tradition, finding material for *théorie* in *décadence*; or the *Déliquescences d'Adoré Floupette, poète décadent* (1885) which let Beauclair and Vicaire have some fun, gave many naive journalists cause for indignations and allowed poets on the look-out for decadence to find, if not solace, at least an outlet in literature, even at the price of a hoax. Lastly, there was Huysmans's novel, *A Rebours* (1884), where Des Esseintes, a character perhaps conceived as a caricature, concentrated the longings, disenchantment and world-weariness of the generation he in a sense guaranteed.

Towards 1885, literature progressed from random uninhibitedness to would-be doctrines as if the death of Victor Hugo — *enfin!* — made it possible to conceive of a new art which might be more than just degenerate Romanticism, amended by Baudelaire, Parnassus and even Naturalism. The reproving interest the press displayed in the hoaxes and excesses of a few no doubt had something to do with the urge of young writers to define their movement or perhaps simply to take themselves seriously. It was true that there was a new note. Some believed that if a word were found to designate their aims, it could be relied upon to engender a doctrine; they gave pride of place to *l'éternel Symbole* and its derivates. Moréas was among this number, offering a few considerations on the search for a pure concept and "le Beau — seul domaine légitime de la Poésie" and other such commonplaces in an article published on August 11, 1885 in the *XIXème siècle*.[2] His "Manifeste", which appeared in the *Figaro* on September 18, 1886, was couched in the same vein and he seemed incapable of setting out rules that were not ones he would use himself. A mere poet, his thought was singularly lacking in breadth and he remained content with remarks on free verse, language, and the symbolist novel to come. The expatiations and flourishes of a man like Baju were just as highsounding but less significant. A Bard of Decadence and author of manifestos and lampoons of this order his activity alone justified Verlaine's caution in flatly refusing to become involved in the puerile squabbles between Symbolists and Decadents.

[1] Published between 1881 and 1883 in La Nouvelle *Revue*. Collected in book form in 1883 and 1885.

[2] In this connection, see the excellent critical edition of the "Premières armes du Symbolisme" (ed. M. Pakenham, *Textes littéraires*, VIII, University of Exeter, 1973) p. 120 for Moréas's theoretical writings.

The contributions from a few theorists of the new esthetic were more original, but often fragmentary. Wyzewa, for instance, wished to base art on suggestion, linking poetry with initiatory mysticism and, with *Valbert*, attempting a Symbolist novel (1881). Dujardin helped to spread the thesis of total art, uniting poetry, music and dance and returning to myth as the universal mode of expression, in the *Revue Wagnérienne* (1885–1888). Fénéon, who published the *Illuminations* in 1886, discovered Symbolism gradually with the *Revue Indépendante* (1884–1885), writing art criticism which brought out the Correspondences between painting and poetry (*Les Impressionnistes*, 1886).[3] Charles Henry wrote an "Introduction à une Esthétique scientifique" in the *Revue Contemporaine* in 1885 with which it is legitimate to associate René Ghil's theories on *poésie scientifique*. Then there was Ghil's *Traité du Verbe* (1886), a genuine though premature *manifeste du Symbolisme*, championed by Mallarmé's remarkable "Avant-dire." In 1889 Vanor's *Art symboliste* came out, then Charles Morice's *La Littérature de tout à l'heure*, already showing signs of impatience with the evident sterility of the new school. Lastly, there was Moréas's letter to Vanier in *Les Premières Armes du Symbolisme*. The battles Kahn fought to popularize free verse and the work of Laforgue must also be mentioned, the writings of Aurier, who discovered Gauguin and Van Gogh, the first novels of the *Culte du Moi* (*Sous l'œil des barbares*, 1888; *Un homme libre*, 1889) which made Barrès a brief marginal theorist of Symbolist idealism, coming after *Les Taches d'encre* (1884–1885), and even the *Petit glossaire pour servir à l'intelligence des auteurs décadents et symbolistes* (1888) where Jacques Plowert (alias Paul Adam), aided and abetted by Fénéon, Kahn and Moréas, went beyond a mere inventory of words to glimpse the real value of symbolist writing.

The teachings professed by Mallarmé at the *mardis*, rue de Rome, provided a sort of common denominator for the welter of interests attracting these theorists. Since 1885, Mallarmé had been a true mentor, whose prestige far outshone Verlaine's, with his facile allurements, and Villiers (who died in 1889), while the works of Rimbaud, Laforgue (who died in 1887) and of Lautréamont were almost unknown. Just a few foreign names were acknowledged, Wagner first, then Schopenhauer, Carlyle, the Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne, Whitman and so on, but their actual influence remained slight, confined rather to providing a backdrop for the movement. The question was whether anyone could be regarded as a serious rival to these representatives from another generation, and as capable of bridging the gap. Certainly not Moréas with his *Cantilènes* (1887), Kahn with his *Palais Nomades* (1887), Vielé-Griffin with *Cueille d'avril* (1886), Merill with *Gammes* (1887), nor Maeterlinck with *Serres chaudes* (1889). The other beginners, Quillard, Retté, Dujardin, Fontaine and Raynaud, to mention the least obscure, are scarcely remembered today. Works were not lacking, but none stood out. It is significant that nowadays we have begun to look for the essentials of Symbolism in the host of minor reviews (which I shall return to later) rather than in individual productions. It was a sign of a collective quest, but also displayed the

[3] For Fénéon, whose role is still insufficiently known today, see *Œuvres plus que complètes*, texts collected and introduced by Joan U. Halperin, 2 vols, (Geneva–Paris, 1970); for the *Revue Indépendante*, see the thesis by J. Monférier (Sorbonne, 1972) still unpublished.

sterilizing discontent of writers who were sufficiently aware of artistic realities to see that the exotic boudoirs, unattainable princesses, sensual exacerbations and moral intricacies, all artifices handed down from Baudelaire through the hyperbole of decadence whereby some critics wished to hamstring the contributions of the younger generation, were no more than literary tricks, unfit to convey the true nature of the movement. For want of a clear workable framework for their esthetic creed, writers used the reviews as a means of investigation, perhaps vaguely hoping they might acquire a knowledge of Symbolism through practice.

The diverse attitudes toward art fostered by these reviews answered a conscious need to open up new paths in literature. The same spirit was expressed more coherently in a number of attempts to repudiate the outside world, to escape the laws of the present through a peregrination in time and space, and to arrive at eternal truths. There was the novel, uninspired and unsuccessful, in which writers attempted an ironical coming to terms with naturalism (P. Adam and J. Moréas, *Les Demoiselles Goubert*, 1886); there was language, which had donned medieval adornments well before the extravagances of the *Ecole romane*; and there was the theatre, which rediscovered puppets (Bouchor, 1888) in its ponderings over dramatic art, the timeless ritual of Shakespeare and Wagner (Maeterlinck, *La Princesse Maleine*, 1889), and tragic mystery with *Axel* by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. (1890).

The pace quickened after 1891, though the banquet held in honor of Moréas was obviously not the immediate cause of likely developments. But the attempt to annex and reshape Symbolism along the lines which best suited the poet and had been implicit in his earlier writings may have helped to strengthen position which till then had been somewhat vague. It was enough to see how vehemently Verlaine reacted to this skilfully orchestrated profession of faith.[4] The next months proved propitious for adopting attitudes to emphasize splits and hasten new ventures. The inquiry made by Jules Huret, the journalist, in the *Echo de Paris* (March 3 — July 5, 1891 and reprinted in book form almost at once) acted as a kind of signal. New names emerged. Gide published his *Traité de Narcisse* and the *Cahiers d'André Walter*; between 1890 and 1893, Claudel wrote *Tête d'Or*, *La Ville* and *La Jeune Fille Violaine*, and in March 1891 Valéry published "Narcisse parle". Paul Fort had founded the Théâtre d'Art in 1890, staging Maeterlinck's *L'Intruse*, then Verlaine, with *Les Uns et les Autres* in May, 1891. In July of the same year, while the one-time upholders of Symbolism were after one another's blood, Maurras attacked the movement from a new angle, setting the Mediterranean tradition against Anglo-Saxon barbarity. There were quarrels between Ghil and Moréas, then Moréas broke with Verlaine and Mallarmé in the name of the *romane* ideal proclaimed in 1891. The *Revue Indépendante* resumed its naturalist socializing tradition while Saint-Pol-Roux advocated his *magnificisme* (1893). Even the apparent allegiance of the *Mercure de France* and *La Plume* to at least the externals of Symbolism proved powerless to stem the vernal infidelity. It is scarcely surprising that from that moment on, so many young poets should have turned their backs on the fauns and boudoirs of the day before and tried to open windows on to the world of real life. Gide's itinerary

[4] See my "Jean Moréas, écrivain français," *Lettres modernes* (Paris, 1969).

was one of the most significant. Having found out the futility of the Narcissan symbol he turned to raillery in 1892, *Le Voyage d'Urien* suggesting a voyage which led only to introverted happiness in closed isolated regions, a semblance of joy in a world of appearances. The explosion of *Les Nourritures terrestres* sprang mainly from Gide's personal conflict, but it was no less symptomatic of the crisis, at first latent, then finally acknowledged; as indeed was the appearance within a short space of time, of Maurice Le Blond's *Naturisme* (1895), Paul Fort's *Ballades* (from 1895), Verhaeren's *Heures claires* (1896), the first poems by Jammes (*Vers*, 1894; *De l'Angélus de l'Aube à l'Angélus du Soir*, 1898) and of all those who — though only on the very intellectual plane of *manifestes* — wanted to join Bouhélier in proclaiming "la mort de Narcisse" (1895) and the advent of life.

From 1895 onwards, though there was still some skirmishing by a few sharpshooters, Symbolism was commonly accepted as having triumphed, yet the label as such seemed to have no more meaning. "Mettons que symbolisme ait surtout voulu dire à un certain moment antinaturalisme, antiprosaïsme de la poésie, recherche de la liberté dans les efforts d'art, en réaction contre l'enrégimentation parnassienne et naturaliste" (let us say there was a moment when Symbolism above all meant antinaturalism, anti-prosaism in poetry and a search for freedom in artistic striving, as a reaction to Parnassian and Naturalist regimentation), admitted G. Kahn.[5] Dreams of timelessness and hazy yearnings for a life where sensibility often outweighed a taste for action were found side by side, and sometimes in the work of the same poet. The titles bearing witness to this somewhat faded plethora scarcely need quoting. On the one hand, there were *Les Jeux rustiques et divins* (1897) and *Les Médailles d'argile* (1900) by Régnier, *Πάλαι* (1894) by Vielé-Griffin, *Aux flancs du vase* (1898) by Samain, *Eriphyle* (1894) by Moréas, *Mimes* (1894) by Schwob and *Les Chansons de Bilitis* (1894) by Pierre Louÿs, which pointed to a Greek and especially Alexandrine revival; on the other, we find *Les Villes tentaculaires* (1895) by Verhaeren, *La Clarté de Vie* (1897) by Vielé-Griffin, *La Chanson des Hommes* (1898), and *La Louange de la Vie* (1898) by Elskamp, *La Beauté de vivre* (1900) by Gregh and, in a different spirit, *Stances* (1899–1901) by Moréas and *Le Cœur Solitaire* (1898) by Charles Guérin. Together, they show that moral and purely emotional interests, in their veiled Romanticism, tended to steal a march on the esthetic, philosophical and linguistic investigation that had given Symbolism its originality. As early as 1891, vociferating against "l'esprit vain (. . . .) l'ostentation", Verlaine proposed a form of art that would allow the poet "d'être absolument soi-même".[6] The evolution of poetry in the following years made this injunction seem like a premonition, though, for the aging faun that Verlaine had become, it was actually hard to distinguish from the lure of facility. Asking no more of the movement henceforth than the justification of their personal preferences, in the last years of the century, writers found themselves paying attention to the most varied conceptions of art and thought. Neo-classicism with Parnassian overtones, tame Romanticism, unyielding individualism, compliant estheticism, openhearted socialism

[5] "La Société nouvelle", April 1894. Quoted by M. Décaudin, *La Crise des Valeurs symbolistes* (Toulouse, 1960), p. 15.

[6] *Bonheur*, XVIII, "J'ai dit à l'esprit vain . . . "

ignorant of true social problems, provincialism claiming to be "décentralisateur", and "le glorieux entêtement qui nous fit chercher la beauté en cent voies diverses" (the glorious obstinacy that made us seek beauty along a hundred different paths) which Retté praised so highly[7] made up the embarrassed eclecticism of a generation that had found no more than fleeting inspiration in Symbolism.

Another feature of these years was the disappearance of the leading actors, all at about the same time, as if to make room for an *esprit nouveau*; Verlaine died in 1896, and Mallarmé, who might have slowed up the necessary evolution, in 1898. A large number of *seconds rôles* were also removed: by death (Rodenbach in 1898, Samain, Signoret in 1900); by solitude or voluntary estrangement (Moréas, Gourmont, Jammes, Kahn, Saint-Pol-Roux); or by interests, political (the Dreyfus Affair), spiritual or merely wordly (Dujardin, Fénéon, Retté, Wyzewa, Barrès, Régnier, and so on). Others again, like Valéry, chose silence. Roundabout 1900, the field was more or less clear. There was nothing to indicate the future impact of the works Claudel, Péguy, Jarry, Proust, Gi le, and then Apollinaire brought out or were preparing, yet in varying degrees and by divergent paths, all derived from Symbolism, illustrating it, at a distance, in different keys.

2) THE CONTEXT

The next question to consider is to what extent the peculiar situation of Symbolism at the end of the nineteenth century was responsible for its elusive, composite nature and the comparative failure of its works. It could certainly be seen as the completion of one stage and the beginning of a transition period. The complexity of the movement and the fact it was marking time, so to speak, would then be explained by its being a focus for converging sensibilities, as typical as they were various, complementary and yet conflicting to the point of destroying one another and provoking a state of muddled negativeness. It was not idly that Italo Siciliano and Raymond Pouilliart decided to turn *fin-de-siècle* literature into the prolongation of Romanticism;[8] nor should we forget that Parnassus lingered on at its most romantic in Mallarmé and Verlaine and the artistic consciousness of the school that followed. But literary continuity and successive modes are not enough to account for the originality of the phenomenon, let alone for the self-awareness which gave a moral unity to these twenty years, one which was almost independent of the works: "le sentiment d'appartenir à une communauté triomphante", to quote Michel Décaudin's pleasing expression.[9] Once the principle of a Romantic legacy handed down through Parnassus and Baudelaire is admitted (and how could it not be?), it becomes perfectly plain that an acquaintance with Symbolism must be based on more than an analysis of its literary sources. Sociological, ideological and moral factors must also be noted, because their confluence or their crossing more often than not within a specific literary context helped to produce

[7] Quoted by R. Pouilliart, *Le Romantisme III* (Paris, 1968), p. 176 (judgement made in 1896).
[8] Pouilliart, op. cit.; Italo Siciliano, *Romanticismo francese* (La Goliardica, Venice, 1955).
[9] Op. cit., p. 17.

the outlook and way of behaving that was peculiarly Symbolist. But as these aspects were by no means limited to the movement and sometimes failed altogether to affect it doctrinally, overlapping, rather, into areas not directly connected with art, they naturally increased the ambiguousness of the intellectual trends as a whole.

Rejecting the world was one of the features. Twenty years separated Mallarmé's "Ici-bas a une odeur de cuisine" and the "O ne pas vivre" by Moréas. The examples of Schopenhauer, of Hartmann in the *Philosophie de l'inconscient*, the experience of the 1870 war and the Commune, and the undisguised opportunism of the new ruling classes urged most artists to deny in theory all compromise with a society in which they were outsiders. They felt close to Flaubert, whom they rejected, Maupassant, whom they despised, and Zola, whom they could not help admiring, and went on in every possible fashion to assert their desire to be other than what they were, to live otherwise, in other places and at other times.

The *Dandyism* of Des Esseintes, Du Plessys, Fénéon, Tailhade and Barrès, Verlaine's self-advertisement, Gourmont's shyness, the recourse to alcohol by many and to drugs by a few were all part of the same need.

Resorting to dreams also belonged to the quest, and though Jules Tellier — so hostile to the Symbolists while being so close to them in his heightened sensibility — warned: "qui se donne au rève (est) perdu pour la vie", most of his contemporaries, on the contrary, saw this as the only means of turning their backs on a reality that had become too harsh. Reconciliation with the world was accomplished in a beyond, which was generally more of an escape than an intellectual edifice, as in Mallarmé. There was a return to a story-book Middle Ages that found its immediate fountain in the heavy humour of R. Salis and the renewal of medieval studies; to Byzantine orientalism (Verlaine's *l'Empire à la fin de la Décadence*), which was also expressed in the art of Gustave Moreau; and there was definitely unexpected return to Hellenism, and the calling up of Nordic mists and legends under the influence of the Belgian poets and so on. Anticipation, on the other hand, was rarely thought of (*L'Eve future*, 1886, by Villiers was an exception) or was used for comic and satirical purposes (Allais, Jarry), as if by adhering to scientism and the illusion of progress, it implied the acceptance of nineteenth-century myths. The escape was preferably to be made into the remote, comforting past. The attitude explains the poetry of the *Ecole romane* and more generally, the importance attached to historical and political subjects, in Laforgue's *Moralités légendaires* (1887), Paul Fort's *Ballades françaises*, and the paradoxical predominance of archaisms over neologisms in contemporary language.

Revolt was another way of rejecting the world as such, first of all through verbal provocation, endowing language with coruscating brilliance ('coruscant' was the adjective in fashion); in the form of lavish sarcasm in Laforgue, of heavy insistence in the later Verlaine, of outrage in Tailhade and Retté and of *absconces pages* (Fénéon) in the great majority. At another level, revolt became readily political and social, but amounted to a temperamental rather than objective reaction to social, political and consequently, economic facts. The encounter between genuine anarchist militants (Zo d'Axa, with *En dehors*, was perhaps one of the best known) and sympathizers like Mirbeau, Fénéon and Tailhade brought a kind of literary recuperation to the movement. Even