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A COMPARISON OF LITERATURES

By the Same Author

TRAILS OF THE TROUBADOURS

SHORT HISTORY OF EUROPEAN LITERATURE

POETRY AND PLAIN SENSE

THREE LECTURES ON CHINESE FOLKLORE

A COMPARISON OF LITERATURES

By
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We compute nothing but our own phantasms

—*HOBBES.*

PREFACE

THE following pages offer a very tentative account of the effects which may follow in our understanding of the history of European literature, if we accept the principles of interpretation first advanced by Dr. I. A. Richards and Mr. C. K. Ogden in their *Meaning of Meaning*. The tentative character of the account must be insisted upon, completeness, even if desirable, will not be possible until many points have been investigated in detail. For the present, it seemed that a general statement in the form of a rapid survey might be of use. Although my indebtedness to Dr. Richards and Mr. Ogden must be evident on every page, my own errors in interpreting or in making application are, of course, not to be held to the account of these authors, who, though they have been most kind in giving assistance, have had no opportunity to read the manuscript, nor have I had the privilege of discussing the work with them as it progressed.

As the history of literature cannot be confined to the literature of any one European nation, the second aim of this account has been to survey the involutions of verbal imagination in the three European languages whose literatures have been most closely associated for the last thousand years. Because of lack of space Italian literature has been omitted. The great importance of Slavonic and Scandinavian literatures after the second third of the Nineteenth Century has made it advisable to terminate the account at about 1830.

No attempt has been made to introduce new material, both because the material which is generally known suffices and because I am at a great distance from an adequate library. I hope that the reader will show some indulgence for errors which may be due both to this difficulty and to the difficulty attendant on thinking about

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A. PRELIMINARY

CHAPTER I

THE COMPARISON OF LITERATURES

I

THE study of literature has undergone, during the last twenty years, changes as devastating and as revolutionary as the changes which, in the physical and biological sciences, have left the general public trembling with anticipation of still greater destruction to follow. Scholars who have followed the new methods and objectives in the study of literature and who have attempted to establish this study upon a new base now look back upon the foundation to which their discipline held so firmly for almost a century to discover that that foundation was composed of glittering sand. Very few of the principles we have been taught in the schools can still be accepted. With reference to our teachers and masters, we are in a position similar to that occupied in the Eighteenth Century by the generation which was then in opposition to the classical "rules" of literature. Lessing, attacking Gottsched, wrote quoting an English predecessor, "His comments are either falsehoods or obvious truths not worth mentioning."

The critical formulations of the general interpreters, the Arnolds, the Wordsworths, the Taines, the Diltheys, and the Brandes can no longer be regarded as having reference to differences of opinion in the description of some external and absolute reality, the corpus of literature, the same for all men in all times but, like the corpus of physical and chemical data, subject to variant interpretations. The statements of these our critical masters are not formulae, existing in space, timeless and eternal; they are, rather, complex gestures, emotional symbols which serve to reduce the fever consequent upon the experience of literature. The statements are not formula-

tions of thought, they are metaphors for feeling : useful in getting at the feeling of the critic, dangerous in interpreting the nature of poetry.

The work of the exegetes, except that it may be of use in illustrating the exegetical mettle, must also be discarded. As we have now come to see that words are symbols and that the meanings of these symbols have diverse factors which interlock in a manner excessively complex, inquiries into what are conventionally referred to as the " real " or " the certain " or the " clear ", the " essential " or the " author's " meaning must be treated with considerable circumspection and countered with an inquiry as to which of the factors of meaning the exegete is, at that particular moment and in that particular mood, concerned with anatomizing. And we must be on our guard against shifts in mood, for few scholars are as touchy as exegetes and few are as bland in their transition from an inquiry into meaning as intention to an inquiry into the meaning of the same passage regarded as tone. But we should have been warned. If after two hundred years of discussion the critics, men of at least average intelligence and probity, have offered us half a dozen different meanings of a given passage, each of which is the " real, true, and essential " meaning, we might give them the credit of admitting that these are the meanings they really found. We might have accepted meaning as multiform rather than uniform and we might have inquired before we were forced to do so by the demonstrations in Ogden and Richards' *Meaning of Meaning* into the cause of this welter of exegetical difference. As in the case of the general interpreters, this welter of difference will be of use to us in offering a rough sketch of the complexities of meaning.

The position of historical accounts of literature, even in those rare cases where the accounts are not involved with the evolutionary postulates and organized under such infectious though dangerous symbols as the " Growth of Literature ", is only little more advantageous than the positions discussed above. The chroniclers of literature who confine themselves to demonstrating with a clarity which could pass a court of probate, that document X

was composed by author Y and published in the year N by publisher Z, have established facts which only other chroniclers or advocates in probate are likely to destroy. When the chroniclers go further and attempt to demonstrate that the said document X fell into the hands of and was read by Messrs. A, B, and C, it becomes necessary to inquire the senses in which the term " was read " is to be taken. The chroniclers who attempt to do more than construct a chronicle—and which of them does not—must be accepted with great reserve, for at this point they make libertine uses of the errors of the general interpreters as well as those of the exegetes. The historians of national literatures who assume, for reasons not yet made clear, that political or even linguistic frontiers are barriers to phantasy must be regarded with even greater reserve.

It should become clear that the student of literature has before him a large and fascinating task: the reformulation of general interpretations in terms that will account for the differences and integrate them; the re-integration of exegeses in the process of charting multiform meanings of complex symbols; and, finally, the re-thinking of the history of literature. But as this task cannot be accomplished until a large number of painstaking investigations have been carried out on all the levels of literary activity from linguistics through high criticism, the task is as formidable as it is fascinating.

2

For most readers the experience of literature has to do with verbal symbols that stimulate imagination. For writers, literature is more complicated than this, but for them too, phantasy—or, if you prefer, day-dream, or autistic thinking, or imaginative structure, or feeling—is closely connected with verbal symbols. Although the difference is clear, it is still difficult to make an adequate logical distinction between the kind of phantasy that gets itself involved with words and those other kinds of phantasy that get themselves involved with colour or form or maps or machines or other forms of human activity that have to do, in ways that are still obscure,

with the emotions and that form a projection of the personality into the chaos of experience. Nor, despite various brilliant studies that have appeared during the last ten years, is it quite clear to us what are the connections between words and phantasy or the processes whereby written words can stimulate the imagination of the reader and produce in him a state of mind that gives him satisfaction.

If it be admitted that there are connections, a comparison of national literatures becomes a comparison of national imaginations. A comparison of English, French, German, and American literatures becomes a comparison of how the makers of these literatures have satisfied their temperamental needs and have, as a result of their conflict with the real world, produced, by means of their imagination, a world that is more adequate. As literary boundaries are not determined by international treaties, a comparison of literatures must take into account the many invasions of one literature into the territory of another and the processes whereby one nation adapts and domesticates the imaginative structures of its neighbours.

The pleasure of literature is a secret pleasure and the needs it satisfies are personal needs. Both are protected by a sentinel line of inhibitions and justified by these ethical irrelevances by which society protects itself against disruption. This is natural and should be expected. For those who are able in practical life to discharge the energies and emotions which get release when we read a book, books have no meaning. For them books are lies and all authors liars; and, if the rest of the world was not able to discharge those energies through reading, the social order would be in a worse state of disequilibrium than it now is. This is no apologia for literature. It is both an obvious fact and an overlooked factor in social life. The number of books, magazines, and newspapers published in any large nation in the course of a year is literally nameless; and if it could be computed it would appear as one of those numbers which can be manipulated only by professional mathematicians.

The production of books is an industry. The con-

version of the pine forest to the sheet of paper; the melting and refinement of the red ore until it becomes a silvery slug of type; the transformation of the author's idea into a row of orderly words and the bringing of all of these together from all parts of the world and the distributing of them require the attention of millions of men and women. These attentions are paid for. There are few households in England, France, America, or Germany, no matter how dire their economic necessities, that do not find means at some time of the day or night to give themselves the pleasure of permitting printed words to pass through consciousness.

These printed words may be stupid, perversive, silly, superficial or in themselves insignificant. The professors of the schools and the serious thinkers who have undertaken to supply us with the higher literature of the contemporary world, may refuse to regard these words as literature at all. No matter how superficial the words may be in themselves, our need of them is not superficial. The experience of the printed word, the visual symbol of ideas and emotions, appears to be an experience that is more necessary to all ranks of modern society than ever it has been before. The probability is that this necessity will increase. "General education", which had as its first objective the raising of all classes of society to a state of literacy, has been in operation for little more than forty years. Some of us—whether with joy or with mute terror—are just beginning to understand the scope of that objective and its possible consequences. Ability is the mother of desire. Increased ability to read brings an increased demand for reading matter.

Whether what is read is good or bad, noble or ignoble, literature or trash are questions of small importance to the moment. The fact remains that the western world is producing and consuming printed words in staggering quantities, and the first conclusion to be drawn from this fact is that literature brings some kind of satisfaction; that is, it satisfies some kind of a need. This need for having experiences with printed words is a fact of social and individual history as certain as the solar system and more real to most of us than a thunderbolt.

Because this need is both intimate and intransigent, it tends to disguise its nature. We keep in touch with the times and spend our pennies to read about the wedding of the beer baron's daughter or the divorce of the general's lady, facts which have as much and no less importance than the elopement of fair Helen with a pretty shepherd. Phantasy disguises itself as news and a band of men highly trained in their profession pick from the stream of actuality those elements of fact which satisfy this need. When we become self-conscious we divide our reading into two classes: fact and fiction, without being able to distinguish carefully the steps whereby fact becomes fiction, that is, satisfies the needs of phantasy, or without being able to control the ways in which fiction gets fixed in our minds and supplies standards of action and satisfies real desires that are still imperfectly understood.

No professional psychologist is needed to point out that these desires are personal and intimate. No great experience with human nature is necessary to explain why we like to describe our reading with large and generous phrases, or why we behave like neurotics when awkward critics attempt a particular analysis of the emotions which literature discharges and the mechanisms through which it operates. Were the emotions of literature less intimate and less important to us we could understand them more easily. It is because they are important to our balance and stability, because through them we get away at increasingly frequent intervals from the discipline of industrialism, that we are moved to protect them with so much peevishness. Criticism, which began as an attempt to help authors to write more effectively and is now coming to its end as a kind of metaphysic with neither postulates nor method, is under suspicion and not without reason. Too frequently critics have muddied the Pierian spring. Although the general reader will tolerate critics as long as they remain pleasantly vague and comforting, he hesitates to admit them into his corners of dream.

The professional view of literature as presented in our schools has become increasingly insular. We have treated

national literatures as though they were created in a vacuum. In a badly heated Roman hotel, Dostoievsky spelled out the pages of Dickens. Ibsen discoursed on Hebbel in a Münchner beer garden. Flaubert, broad beamed in white pantaloons, discussed naturalism with Turgenief. Voltaire, smarting with his humiliation at the hands of the Rohans, discovered English political liberty in England and brought it back to France. The young Milton, just down from the university, read Italian epics in Italy. Whether or not Chaucer had dinner with Boccaccio, he studied the *Decameron* with passionate interest. These facts are too important to be passed over with a phrase. If regarded as critical moments in the development of imagination, they are pregnant with meaning for all of us. They should give us a silhouette of national imagination and an understanding of the turns of genius.

The comparison of national literatures is, or should be, a charting of national imaginations and a navigation among national dreams. Only in this way may literary criticism become a criticism of life, not in the mean or academic sense of drawing the balance or looking steady to see the whole ; but in a more athletic sense. National phantasy courses ahead of the individual, raising horizons of action and dream that set for the poet or patron, maker or reader his function in that unstable equilibrium of matter, action and emotion that constitute the world as a whole.

Only a myopic science, short-sighted to blindness, will refuse to recognize the reality of the word as a verbal symbol of a mental process. In imaginative literature, and in much that is presented as literature of fact, the mental process is that of phantasy. If phantasy be treated, as some have attempted to treat it, as a symptom of mental disease, the interpreter of literature becomes a physician of the soul, administering a therapeutic which, though it will not purge us of our dreams, may help us to harness them to a more dynamic conception of their and our place in the universe. If, however, literary phantasy is assayed more soberly as a kind of mentation that drains off those reservoirs of energy that fail to find

adequate filtration through a highly disciplined social complex, the study of that phantasy and the apprehension of those symbols becomes the calculus of a world of meaning.

The processes of the human skull may be considered as real as the skull itself. The gestures of the thigh-bone—whether aggressive in battle or lascivious in the dance—are of as great importance as the articulations of the bone which made those gestures possible. If with these processes and gestures, the pots, the pans, the machines and the cloud-capped buildings, all constructed by small movements of the fingers, controlled by the precision of the eye, if these be considered to have value, reality and meaning in the interpretation of our own world and the multiform worlds which preceded us, so, too, must the highly co-ordinated gesture of lung, throat, tongue, and lips, producing words to relieve feelings and induce that strange experience we call the experience of literature, be invested with reality and importance.

The study of literature is not merely anthropology, sociology, psychology, history or aesthetics—whatever that science may have become in recent years—it is an exercise which gives to its participants, in making use of all these methods, a more complete picture than any of them of the relations between man, the most complex of anthropoids, and the abounding universe that surrounds him.

3

If taken in the sense of these references, a comparison of the literatures of England, France, Germany, and America must become an experiment in the assessing of tentative values which will break with one of the great academic traditions. The professors of this tradition, when they have not contented themselves with emotional expressions of pleasure or distaste or with individual judgments of great and small, have clothed their feelings in terms which appeared to be scientific because they took their terminology from their contemporaries, the scientists. A comparison of literatures, which is very different from emotionalizing about them, must make use

of postulates of analysis which are only now in the process of formation. It must follow many false trails in the hope of discovering one of the true ones. In its constructive activities, it must be content with fine analyses which it must recognize as being in no sense final.

The comparatist is beset on all sides by logical traps and emotional oppositions which are the more dangerous because they appear to be self-evident truths. For reasons mentioned above, the pleasures of poetry are popularly thought to be invested with sanctions which protect them from observation. We are apt to forget that the analysis of lovely emotions is not the vivisection of living bodies. The discovery of new meanings in the symbols which embody these emotions give to the emotions a new liveliness.

The comparatist must overcome two particular kinds of opposition: the first, that genius can never be understood and that therefore any attempt to understand the productions of the literary geniuses is futile; and the second, that literature, being of the nature of emotion, is not reasonable and therefore not a proper subject for reasonable contemplation. Although both of these restrictions appear to have their roots in human processes which lie beyond the scope of this paper, both are clearly confusions of values.

If it is true that genius will always escape analysis—a kind of prophecy unworthy the scientific citizens of a scientific community—it will still be true that the nature and behaviour of genius present spectacles which are worthy of our attention. Whether poets, to take only one kind of literary genius, be the leaders of mankind as our romantic masters once thought they were, witness the Olympianism of Goethe, Wordsworth, Hugo, or whether they offer consolations for our despair, intimate avenues for our escape, drain the muddle of emotion and release sober reason for the tasks which it has to perform, poets still would be worthy of observation. We are under no necessity of presenting a formula nor need we attempt to compress greatness into an equation. The statement that genius must always escape analysis is, whether or not it be true, an irrelevance which has been twisted to

mean that genius is unworthy of observation. It is an exclamation rather than a judgment; a perversion due to fear rather than a statement of a difficulty.

The second restriction, that literature being of the nature of emotion is not the proper subject for reasonable contemplation, is a similar confusion. Although little progress has yet been made in the study of those verbal symbols which are connected with the experience of literature, various slight advances are discernible. The simple recognition, for example, that words stimulate emotions at the same time that they symbolize ideas; that they are gestures having their being in time rather than in space; that the meanings they convey are complex; and that the modulation of these complex meanings is, in some way, closely associated with the release of feelings, are steps which may take us a considerable distance. The researches of those men who have concerned themselves with abnormal psychology—Freud and Jung are perhaps the best known—have helped to show us how the meanings of a symbol may spread and involve other meanings. Anthropologists by the study of savage and illiterate communities are coming to a better understanding than they have hitherto had of the uses of ritual, gesture and symbol in everyday communication, and in the maintenance of the physical and mental forces of the social complex in a condition of dynamic equilibrium. An examination of popular tales having variants in all parts of the world, suggests that human phantasy whether savage, literate, or illiterate, is closely associated with human emotion and that the structure of phantasy and its relations to other forms of human activity may be approached by a comparison of literatures.

A perception of this structure need not destroy it. The energy of the imagination is, in a very real sense, a vital energy. It is, in some way, connected with the energy of nerve centres. It is stimulated or depressed by chemical secretions. It is a refraction of the stresses set up by the constant shifting of equilibrium in the social complex. It expresses itself in dances, in moulded stone, and in those cries and murmurs of exaltation and

despair which we call literature. Human imagination replies to necessities so vital that we may examine its structures in England, France, Germany, and America without fear that our examination will destroy it.

Other difficulties must be admitted into the list of those already presented. The most serious of these is the logical confusion involved in the term " literatures " with reference to England, France, Germany, and America. Europe, it may be urged, has a literature but no literatures. The culture of Europe is singularly one, a uniform culture descending in a great tradition from the Graeco-Roman achievements of pre-Christian antiquity to our own day, with various minor currents and eddies in the various areas it has covered. The languages of Western Europe when compared with the languages of the Orient or the languages of Africa constitute two large families of dialects : the Germanic and the Latin. The speaker of a dialect in either of these families can make himself reasonably familiar with any of the other dialects in the space of a few weeks and our educational system is so arranged that we are all urged to make ourselves somewhat familiar with at least one dialect in a family not our own and to do this at an early age. Each of the linguistic areas of Europe has been in intimate communication with one or more of the others more often than it has been separated from them, and this has continued since the linguistic areas were in the process of formation. We have good reason to believe that from the earliest times poems and tales have been indifferent to linguistic barriers and have wandered from one area to another.

The linguistic differences in European areas are superficial and are not correlated with race. The " races " of modern Europe and even more definitely of America are anthropological mongrels. Defoe suffered the pillory for explaining to his countrymen the probable ancestry of the " True-Born Englishman ". The names " England ", " France ", and " Germany "—at one time less different than they are now—refer to tribes that occupied the special areas these nations now hold. The physical differentia of race, the sizes of skulls, the heights of bodies

and the like, have not yet been shown to have any clear connection with temperamental differentia. Any superficial reading of history must demonstrate that citizens of two different nations living in the same historical period have more in common with each other than citizens of the same nation living at different historical periods. An Englishman and a Frenchman living in the Sixteenth Century understood each other better than an Englishman of the Nineteenth Century understood his forbears of the Fifteenth.

4

THE difficulty is real. Either the term " literatures " is inaccurate, or this conception of the unity of European culture contains a hidden trap, or both are incomplete. Certainly the term " literatures ", as currently employed, suggests that there are greater differences between German and English or German and French than actually exist. A unilingual person is apt to conclude that the differences between German and English literatures are as great as differences which appear to exist between the German and the English languages. How erroneous this view is may appear if these pages are read to their conclusion. Not only will the directions of the three European and the one American literature under consideration seem to have been but slightly influenced by linguistic differences ; but the very languages in which these literatures are expressed will be seen to have been themselves the products of national need.

Yet in answer it may be urged that if we examine the unity of European culture more closely, that unity will be seen to have undergone transformations. The romanticism which characterized the closing years of the Eighteenth and the opening years of the Nineteenth Centuries did not arise simultaneously in England, France, Germany, and America. It can be shown to have had its beginnings in England. It was transformed in France and after further transformations blossomed in Germany whence it returned again to England and France in the French " school " and the English " group ". Nor are the French " school " and the English " group ",

if regarded as instruments through which imagination manifested itself and got itself accepted, without meaning in their various operations on the national spirit.

Throughout the Sixteenth Century the imagination of northern Europe was being greatly changed by ideas and phantasies brought in from Italy or through Italy from Greece and Rome. During this century Englishmen, Frenchmen and Germans behaved differently. The imagination of each group attempted to describe a different kind of universe. Luther's God, Calvin's God and the God of Hooker as He emerges through the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*; Rabelais' universe of ideas symbolized by grotesque men and Montaigne's universe of queer men, when contrasted with Spenserian Platonism and Shakespearean conflicts, present forms of behaviour which are apprehended as national at the same time that they represent particular responses to the driving force of a single great idea. Whether the compositions of these men are an attempt to grasp a reality that manifests itself only partially to human vision; or whether they are attempts to make the world these writers inhabited more relevant to their needs; or whether they were attempts of individuals to insulate themselves against the shocks of the very rapid changes that were occurring in the no-osphere, they are not only great phantasies but national phantasies.

This kind of difference in uniformity appears even during the ages when the literary traditions were in the process of formation. Before the Tenth Century, that is before the groups who inhabited the areas that were to become England and Germany had moulded their languages, Beowulf and Siegfried, the Heliand and Cædmon appear as members of the same family. In France, at this time, the dominance of Latin appears to have annihilated whatever there may have been of individual achievement. During the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries when the French imagination began to function effectively, the English language had disappeared. Yet even then, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chrestien de Troye, though both served the same family

and each handled somewhat the same material, illustrate characteristic differences and these differences were emphasized when Wolfram of Eschenbach treated these same themes some fifty years later. If contemporaneity be ignored for the moment, the Christian epic of France and the pagan epic of the Teutons present differences which appear to be national. In the England of the Fourteenth Century, Chaucer and Gower present us with those modulations of English temperament which Langland, the sturdy Anglo-Saxon ploughman, would have nothing to do with. The German Volkslied, the English ballad, and the French compliments of the sophisticated Machault, a wreath of flowers to a lady, carry the national streams in clear and full tide.

5

THOUGH it always escapes us, there appears to be a quality of national character in the literary productions of each nation. From Chrestien de Troye to André Gide, the French have been concerned with problems of behaviour. Though the world pays homage to the intellectual ability of the French, a homage which the French are glad to pay to themselves, and although the Frenchman has been well described as a thoughtful man, it is equally true that the Frenchman dreams of action within a frame of words. His literature becomes most brilliant when it concerns itself with an observation of manners and an analysis of the reasons for those manners, the rightness that underlies them and the implications of further actions that are implied in them. In his tragedies and his novels the Frenchman loves to ask: "If you were confronted with this situation what would you do? What would you say? Why would you do it or say it?" Zola's naturalism was an overcompensation for this tendency which failed to compensate because it failed to understand itself. Hugo's *Légende des Siècles* is at its best a series of situations requiring action drawn from what Hugo thought was history and Hugo's imaginative resolutions of these situations. When Jean de Meung and Guillaume de Lorris produced the *Roman de la Rose* in the mid-Thirteenth Century, they produced a model

of behaviour and a handbook of conversation which for three hundred years remained the standard of all Europe. Rabelais and Montaigne studied their contemporaries in the clear-obscure light they derived from antiquity; Corneille and Racine in the light they derived from Descartes. The better novelists of the Eighteenth Century are still unsurpassed in their ability to use gesture as a symbol for mood. Voltaire's histories and satires are spectacles of human behaviour enriched by historical perspective and realistic description.

As the French dream about action, so the Germans dream about God and the mystery of a universe whose strange forces and mysterious impulsions must be made concrete. Walther von der Vogelweide sat upon a stone, crossed his legs, cupped his chin in his hand, and thought it all over in the Thirteenth Century. At the same time, or a little earlier, Parzival, who was to become the best knight in the world, wandered, during his period of waiting, through adventures which neither he nor his creator could understand except in terms of a universe that was strange and mysterious. His attempt was to ask the proper questions of the proper persons at the proper place. If he could only find the words and the persons and the place, the world would become real again. When, seeing the red blood on the white snow, he is reminded of his mistress whom he had strangely forgotten, we know that he could not have been reminded without his predecessors the French troubadours; nor could Parzival himself have come into being without the French polite novelists and the English romantic historians; but though all this be granted, it must also be granted that the poem of Parzival could have been produced in its magnificent entirety by none but a German. If this is true of Wolfram of Eschenbach it is also true of the later mystics, of the novel *Simplizissimus*, which was a modernization of Parzival; it was true of Luther, whose too frequent asseveration that God was a firm castle betrays his sense that God works in mysterious ways. This sense of mystery, this determination to apprehend it through the imagination and give it concrete form in words is shared by Klopstock, Herder, Schiller,

Goethe, Nietzsche. Each is puzzled by a mystery. Their poems are figments of their agitation.

When England was not German it became French. The English literary imagination is less preoccupied in its manner of expression than either the French or the German. The Englishman's dreams, though they have an inner connection, appear to have a wider scope. The Englishman dreams of things he can handle, a landscape through which he can ride ; he is somewhat agitated about the ethics of behaviour ; more frequently than the Frenchman or the German he can contemplate his universe with a pleasant humour for he is more aware of his and its limitations than they are.

Even the productions of the Anglo-French show a split in feeling and an uncertainty of tone which in the Fourteenth Century manifested itself in the poetry of Chaucer and Gower as opposed to that of Langland. The former were in the manner of France and the latter was in the manner of our Germanic heritage ; yet in all three, there is a common quality of imagination, a common preoccupation with landscape, a joy in things which, though sophisticated in both instances, separates them from their non-English contemporaries. Through the storms of the Classical Renaissance, the confusions of the civil wars and the gropings of the new citizens of the Eighteenth Century towards a manner and a matter which will give them satisfaction, these preoccupations remain. Spenser's mystic Platonism did not distract his attention from the details of the cave of Morpheus nor did Milton's blindness cut him off from the light and joy of growing things. And when poetry went indoors for a few years with Pope, it did not lose its pleasure in the small bibelots and the fat-bottomed cupids of Lucinda's bedroom. Even in the attempt to think poetically about ethics rather than practically about action—an attempt which when made consciously has always been something of a burden to Englishmen—English authors (Young at the time of Pope ; Wordsworth half a century later) found sermons in streams and books in running brooks. Whatever ethical intentions the English poets may have had and whether or not they wore the robes of Nature's

priest or the motley of a clown, the passages in poetry which are most English are the streams, the fields, the running brooks; the things. They describe a universe that one can see and smell and feel and handle. Beowulf's joy when he finds a good blade in his hand has echoed through English poetry for more than a thousand years. Tennyson's preoccupation with the breaking of the waves on the shore and the sensations that sound aroused, caused him to confuse these sensations with thoughts. He was unable to utter the thoughts that arose within him, because they were not thoughts but feelings. It is perhaps not surprising that the English philosophers of the Eighteenth Century should have erected sensation into a structure that their followers mistook for metaphysic.

The pleasures of sensation, though they stimulate the imaginations of the poets, are not sufficient for the English novelists. The author of *Beowulf* lays what appears to be undue stress on the fact that his heroes know how to behave properly in the presence of kings and that his kings know how to behave in the presence of heroes. Soon this English preoccupation with correct action will need to be distinguished from the French preoccupation with imagined action. Yet, without an appreciation of the imaginative significance of this distress about correct behaviour, the English novel, from Richardson through Austen to Mrs. Woolf, will lose large lumps of meaning. This apparent duality in English phantasy may be no more than the expression of a single dominant character. If the Englishman is a man of action in a world of things, it may be that he dreams best about the things through which he acts; and, acting by impulse, he dreams of acting on principle.

America presents a special case in which all of these characters are merged and confused. Until recently literature has been alien to the American cultural complex. There were too many things to be done, the actual conditions of living were too arduous to permit any except very practical kinds of phantasy. Franklin's *Autobiography*, which might have been given the subtitle, "How I became a successful man and practical tips

on how you may follow my example ", is here significant. However, the significance of this and the host of other autobiographies written on the same formula, is less in the answers it proposes to the central question of how to become successful, than in the quality of phantasy it manifests: a phantasy which is concerned with the possibilities of action in a real world (English); with the mysterious impulsions of a universe that is dominated by God (German); and with the theoretical problem of action in the manner of the French. Cooper's stories of flight from or pursuit of hordes of savages who appear and disappear as mysteriously as the characters in a German mediaeval poem; Bret Harte's romantic heroes of the West, whose hairy, manly bosoms disguise but do not destroy the instincts of a gentleman, and Poe's interest in the technique of writing, may be considered complex expressions of European characters transported to a new soil. But other characters were brought out by the rose tints of Rousseauism which inspired American men of letters: Whitman and his praise—or should one say love?—of the common man and his confusions between halitosis and the perfumes of Araby; Hawthorne, speculating on the relations between moral law and American lawlessness, and Emerson's British bewilderment before German metaphysics, are characters that permit the further analysis of national imagination.

6

THUS far, I have attempted to propose, though tentatively and with reservation, qualities of imagination that appear to be characteristic of the French, the German and the English peoples and to suggest that these qualities became confused in the literature of the United States. Obviously none of these qualities is pure. If we regard the history of literature as the history of imagination, we can observe that at any moment in the history of European imagination, the literature of any nation has been more or less influenced by the literatures of the others, or, as in the case of the Classical Renaissance, has been influenced by other or earlier literatures. In each of the greater literary periods, the characteristic literary pre-

occupations, that is, the phantasies of one or more nations, have impinged upon the characteristic literary phantasies of one or more of the others in such a way as to produce significant changes in the manipulation of subject-matter, literary genre, tone, or direction. National imaginations have passed through so many conflicts, distractions and temptations that at any given moment we must expect to find them in adulterous *flagrante delicto*, in the embrace of this or that strange fiction.

The problem of the Classical Renaissance is characteristic. The difference between Chaucer and Langland, mentioned above as differences between the French and the English phantasies, may, for the moment, be pushed further and set tentatively as differences between the Middle Ages and what was to become the new Classical Renaissance when men began to clothe their dreams with a different substance ; began to speak more softly and to arrange their ideas in a more logical form. The outer world became filled with things and men rather than with the allegorical projection of emotions and impulses. In this new world tendencies in the French character that had been only partially liberated through the *Roman de la Rose* were given a new scope. It is no accident that the Neo-Classical movement in Europe is derived from French Neo-Classicism.

The effects of these new ideas in England and Germany are no less real ; but they are very different. Between Brant's satirical *Narrenshiff* and Grimmelshausen's mystico-satirical *Simplizissimus* the Germans were taken up with bitter controversies about the nature of God in a changed and changing world. Whereas the French Calvin attempted to create a reasonable commonwealth in which the possibilities of action were foreseen, the German Luther was perplexed by a mysterious God who should have been, but obviously was not, reasonable. In the Seventeenth and the early Eighteenth Century, France, having adapted herself more rapidly to these new possibilities of action, came into Germany. She was introduced by Opitz, febrilly wooed by Gottshed, and was shattered into glistening fragments by Bodmer and Breitinger. But though shattered and broken, the light

from French Neo-Classicism will illuminate many a German poem from the mid-Eighteenth to the early Nineteenth Centuries.

England, a nation with its own sources of action and secret springs of desire which become immediately translated into achievement, is a country notoriously impatient of discipline imposed from without. The large development of new traditions was less important than the particular achievements of individuals. Spenser adorned a mediaeval imagination with classical jewels. Shakespeare's apparent interest in the forms of tragedy (literary form in this instance might be considered as a " neat way of doing the job ") complements, but does not explain, his fresh humour and his green fields. The early, Italianate-Latin phase of the Renaissance was never naturalized in England. Although Ascham exulted that many Englishmen now wrote better Latin than Cicero, English Latinity was acquired rather than native. Although this impulse fomented new tendencies and stimulated English imagination as it has never been stimulated before or since, these tendencies were not integrated in a great achievement of the imagination until Milton produced his Anglo-classical epic—significantly after the ferments of the civil wars.

7

THUS far the words " phantasy ", " imagination ", and " dream " have been used loosely and vaguely as though everyone understood them and attached the same meanings to them, as though they referred, that is, to things as easily placed as one of the fixed stars. The history of literary controversy shows that this is not the case. Although thus far in the discussion these words may dispose of almost any meaning providing they retain their connection with mentation and are not too strictly limited to purposive thinking, it will be desirable to set a few restrictions which may help to identify them. Unfortunately the psychological and the literary notations of emotional states and processes are extremely vague. Consequently it becomes necessary to offer the limitations in negative rather than positive terms.

Most persons will agree, for example, that poems, plays and novels have something to do with the " imagination ". In general, these are distinguished from other verbal compositions by some such term as " work of the imagination " or " imaginative literature ". The distinction is useful and will be retained to distinguish between the two kinds of composition. It should not, however, be twisted to imply that the terms " imagination " or " phantasy " refer to a particular function of the mind separable from all others. Until we have more information than is now available about the states of mind that precede the production of literature and the processes whereby the mind makes use of words, the attempt to restrict some state which may be referred to by the word " phantasy " or some process which may be called " imagination " exclusively to literature is to introduce distinctions which are, and are apt to remain, largely verbal.

The terms " phantasy " and " imagination ", then, are to be used in these pages as a convenient shorthand. They will take the place of the somewhat clumsy periphrasis, " the state of mind which precedes the composition of a poem or similar work and the processes whereby a poem or similar work is put together ". As words, they tell us nothing more than we already may know or think we know about the state of mind or process. They do not, as has been suggested, separate one function from all other possible functions of the mind, nor do they by a kind of negative corollary make the assertion that this state of mind and these processes are made use of only and exclusively in the writing of poems, novels and plays : in general, imaginative literature. Such phrases as " mathematical imagination ", for example, may or may not be metaphorical. As metaphors they may or may not be applicable. The frequency with which terms of this kind turn up must warn us that whether or not they offer accounts of the mental processes of mathematicians, they serve some, as yet uncertain, purpose in general discussion. In view of this situation and in consideration of the suggestions made above with reference to the increasing need of

numbers of people to put themselves in touch with written words which would seem to serve no immediate need, an attempt to restrict the terms " phantasy " or " imagination " to states of mind or processes connected with literature and only with literature would be to deny that this state with its processes is operative in any other kind of experience.

Yet another restriction is necessary. Terms like " national imagination " need not involve any postulates which might lead to some such conclusion as : " national imaginations are the expressions of national character ", or " the differences between English, French and German imagination are the effects of racial differences ". It should be possible to think about the differences between the four literatures here under discussion without diving into a metaphysical maelstrom. It should be possible to sketch the developments of these differences from the time when the English, French, and Germans were not nations but a congeries of tribes speaking much the same language to the times when they find themselves opposed in almost all their activities without asserting or denying that these differences which are of interest were or were not caused by biological or generic differences in the body cells of the Germans, French, English, or American who produced the literature and who find it satisfactory. The term " French imagination " may thus, without committing itself to anything more, be used to refer to the mental state or processes which are connected with literature produced in the French language. Various problems will be seen to raise their heads when this literature is either in fact or in effect a translation from another language. It may be of interest in the general discussion to inquire what kinds of books are translated and what needs the books satisfy.

The fact that the kinds of phantasy here under discussion make use of words raises difficulties of still another order. Only because so many people persist in ignoring or in tacitly denying it, do I venture to set down the somewhat obvious proposition that the effects of poetry are in some ways connected with the meanings of words. The art-for-art's-sakers and the poetry-purists

have been much concerned of late with assuring us that the satisfactions they derive from poetry are not to be connected with the statements poets make now and again about the world poets live in. They have asseverated with a disarming naïvety that the poet's idea is of no importance to them even when poets have themselves said that ideas are of the greatest possible importance. They have insisted that poets and readers who have thought that the experience of literature had anything to do with the statements made in poetry were entirely mistaken and that the effects of literature are now and always have been beyond or above meanings. The Germans have been saying this for more than a century. The French are characteristically puzzled about it and the English as characteristically indifferent.

The attempt to deny that the effects of poetry have anything to do with the meanings of words may be due to an arbitrary restriction of the term " meaning ", or to an over-compensation by the romantic generation, or it may be a gesture of despair in the face of the complexities which face us in an attempt to get clear about meaning. We might urge in reply, that the persistent attempt of writers to make poetry by means of words rather than by means of other sounds which their voices produce or can be made to produce might indicate that there is a relation between words and the experience of literature which is worthy of investigation ; and that this relation is more immediate than the relation between vocal sounds and the experience of literature.

Some meditation may lead us to the conclusion that the meaning which enters into the experience of literature is a complex and not a simple unit. The particular satisfaction we get from the line :

That time of year thou may'st in me behold

is not due to the account which the poet gives us of time or to his account of the seasons or to his account of perception (what one can or cannot see), yet if without these referents the experience of literature we derive from the line would clearly differ from the one we actually do derive, it may follow from this that one of the meanings

which is of secondary importance in the experience of poetry for English people is meaning as an account of external reality (time, year, behold). Yet we may at the same time admit that, however interesting Shakespeare's accounts of time, meteorology, or psychology may be, he is not read because of his accounts of these matters, but rather because he makes these accounts useful. It is obvious that many of the accounts offered to us by poets are truisms or nonsense, when they are not based on imperfect understanding of the accounts offered to us by specialists in the various fields of human activity. Yet as words in language most frequently do point at things, it is difficult for the poet, even though he were attempting to get an effect which is the result only of music, to make use of words as though they pointed at nothing. Whatever the relative weights may be in the experience of literature of the referent of the word and of the sound of the word, the referent enters into the account. Clearly this is more true of some poets than of others. It is more true of Keats who at times was so unfortunate as to think he was writing philosophy, or of Shelley who fancied himself as a sociologist; it is less true of Lucretius, of Dante or at times of Milton. It may follow that one of the uses of words is to stand for the things they refer to, to symbolize their referents and that one of the processes of language is the ordering and support of these referents, and the communication of this order and this support. Similarly, another use of words is for emotional stimulus or emotional projection. The one is expository, the other exclamatory, and in extreme cases the two can be distinguished with clarity. For the last hundred and fifty years there has been little doubt that the expository use of words, the use which communicates statements about things, is of less weight in the experience of literature than the other exclamatory or emotive use.

But these two uses are seldom as clearly distinguishable in discussion or in the experience of literature as they may be seen to be in theory. The German Stormers and Stressers of the 1770's or an occasional romantic cry of the Nineteenth Century are, perhaps, emotive and entirely

devoid of symbolistic significance. Large sections of other poetry are communicative, Hesiod, Lucretius, the metrical paraphrases come to mind. When they are not as clearly distinguished as the theorist might wish, that is throughout the greater part of literature, one, two, or three situations appear: first, the statements themselves are about things, or, second, the statements are about ideas, or, third, the statements are statements about feelings—in literature all made for the purpose of stimulating or projecting feelings.

The first situation introduces complexities of several kinds. Interest may, in statements about things, be only in the things the words are referring to. The words are taken in the place of the things and have no value except in so far as they stand for the thing. Again, the order in which the things are presented may produce a feeling. Not only are most narratives of fiction or fact of this kind, but much more poetry than is generally recognized. Or, finally, the feeling determines the order in which the things are presented. These last two situations, variously arranged and blended with each other, may help to explain both such popular phrases as " scientific imagination " or " nothing is beautiful but the true ".

The second situation is perhaps not greatly different from the first, but it has introduced so much confusion in the history of literature that it needs to be examined. The statements may be statements about ideas rather than statements about things that can be seen, touched or measured. When statements of this kind are examined in detail problems of definition arise that need not for the moment concern us. As there are many simple cases, we need not, for example, pause to inquire at which point a statement about a thing is our idea of it or whether the order in which things are presented is our idea of " relation " and the like. It will be sufficient if we keep clear that throughout the history of literature and literary theory a word like " nature " is used in a great variety of senses, referring now and again to the laws of science, to landscape, to " God ", to an emotion, to a state of mind which is different from the state of mind which results in the ordering of things or making statements

about them, to that which continues to exist by its own force, to the differences between human beings and animals. It may also be used to refer to a large number of other referents, some of them as things, some of them ideas about things and some of them feelings. Statements in which this word is used are more frequently than not accepted by critics and authors as accounts of a situation. The words are thought to be used in their symbolistic function, to explain a situation. Although no nation is consistent in this kind of usage, it will be seen that the French, English, and German poets differ greatly in their referents for this and for other fictions, such as art, beauty, reason, God, and the like.

The third situation is a further development of the second. Here, too, words come to us in the form of a statement. The statement refers in this case, not to a thing or to an idea about a thing, but to an emotion. When the German poet tells us that he is so sad he doesn't know what he wants to do and that an old story comes into his mind, his statement about the condition of his emotions is, as a statement, as valid as a scientist's statement about something else. Very often statements of this kind enter into experiences of literature directly. The quotation marks are omitted and the first person singular with which the poet is operating is not communication between poet and reader, but a statement of the reader's feelings (" transfer "). In this case the statement *about* feeling becomes a statement *of* feeling, generates feeling and performs its emotive function. In other cases the situation is obscure and the statement points in two directions, first as a generator of feeling, but, second, and almost as important, as an account of a situation necessary to an understanding of the events which are to follow.

Yet one other difficulty must be mentioned. Whether the words themselves refer to things, to ideas or to feelings these references, of whatever order they may be, themselves participate in the experience of literature. Not only are words ambiguous and not only do words themselves arouse feeling, but the things they refer to arouse feeling. We shall see that some nations and some writers

are characteristically concerned with the things themselves, satisfied that by a manipulation of words they are symbolically manipulating things and getting the satisfaction of literature from this manipulation. Still others may be concerned with the qualities of things in terms of colour or form. Others, again, are interested in the ordering of things which in literature becomes the ordering of words, and finally—for a complete list is impossible here—some nations and authors are concerned with the feelings which things arouse in them and the things are of value only as stimuli to the feelings.

When a composition is regarded as a whole, it contains a fiction. The account is of a series of events, presented as though it were historically true. This introduces still a further difficulty. What holds the events together? or, more clearly perhaps, which of the events that might have occurred are the ones chosen by the author? Even in historical writing the problem arises and biographies are currently described as political biographies, psychological biographies, and the like. The events in the account and their arrangements can be made subordinate to particular interests; the events themselves and the words which communicate them become symbols which refer to particular kinds of experience. *They derive their coherence from the kind of experience which makes them of use.* A very different kind of events is included in a biography which traces the progress of a career from the kind which is included in a biography tracing the history of a mind. It is here that national phantasies demonstrate their greatest differences. All, inasmuch as they make use of words, present accounts of events, actually, or as fictions. The events chosen by the Germans refer or tend to refer to feeling, those chosen by the English, refer or tend to refer to action and movement, those chosen by the French refer or tend to refer to a pattern which is consistent within itself in terms of cause and effect, as a limit beyond which we are unable to proceed.

If this rough account of meaning is acceptable, the comparison of literatures will become the comparison of the several kinds of meaning which the Germans, French, English, and American peoples seek to elicit by the use

of words. As it is to confine itself to vernacular literature, the historical account falls into two parts: first, a rapid survey of the qualities of literature before the Classical Renaissance, and, second, literatures after the Renaissance.

Throughout the account it will appear that the French imagination finds its satisfaction in the symbolizing, the ordering, and the supporting of references, and that through this it gets relief and release. The Germans, more concerned than the others with the emotive uses of language, get themselves sadly confused by the need for exploiting the peripheral and emotive meanings which grow either directly out of the words, or indirectly out of the things symbolized. As the uses and nature of language have at all times been sadly misunderstood, German poets and critics have turned to religion and have confused the experience of literature with the experience of God. For the English, words are action. The limitation of words or the limitation of action are both repugnant. The historical interplay of these tendencies is the history of national imagination.

CHAPTER II

LANGUAGE

IF, then, we should set up the qualities I have just mentioned as the possible—or perhaps only the plausible—qualities of national phantasy, we would have, despite many initial doubts and hesitancies, a list which would appear something like this :

In France we should have the sense that men are dreaming about action in a social world where action is frustrated either by the conventions of a strong social structure, or by timidity, or by natural indolence. The much prized " reason " of France is not the logic of action, but rather the action of logic in a universe where other kinds of action are either prohibited or dangerous, the attempt to find a way out, not by the flagrant compromise of the English but by the assertion that if we look at a situation long enough there is really no need to be worried by it.

In Germany we should have the sense that everything that is done comes out wrong. The world is not what it seems and never was. Luther and Faust stood between God and the devil, bewildered by both. In Germany the actor is shattered by a mysterious reality which teases his imagination.

In England, with a persistence that at times appears morbid, imagination dwells on the sensations of remembered action in a world of real things. Poetry is an emotion recollected in tranquillity. Gesture is immediate and becomes poetry only after it has been completed. Because of this strong impulse to do, actions in England have their clear etiquette, their list of proscriptions.

The history of national cultures demonstrates clearly the attempts nations have made to satisfy these needs. Where the cultural structures have shown themselves to be inadequate, literature has been a resort. Words which stand for things have been made use of in place of things.

On cultural levels which showed some literacy words interposed themselves between people and things, producing by a kind of multiple refraction transformations which gave satisfaction. On lower levels words cleverly put together were magic. On both, the functions of words as symbolic gestures were extremely complex. In time the precision of the gesture got itself sharpened. National languages developed which themselves modified these needs and satisfied them.

I

DIRECTIONS of imagination began to get themselves expressed in the court of Charlemagne, but they did not get themselves clarified until the complexities of Germanic dialect, which spread like moss over northern and central Europe, became the languages we now know: that is, English, German and French. How and why these languages separated sufficiently to develop grammars and rhetorics, canons of correctness and neologisms are matters for speculation. Although the speed at which languages have had change in illiterate communities is sometimes surprising, we may assume that the emergence of these three languages did not occur in the lifetime of any one man, nor could it have occurred at equal rates throughout these three linguistic areas.

The formation of Old English and Old High German was not the emergence of something surprisingly new, as a rabbit emerging from the hat of an astonished old lady; nor was it the increasing respect paid to a single dialect due to the power of its king, the energy of its merchants or the beauty of its women, or any of the other causes which might be thought to make one dialect preferred above another. It was, rather, the pooling of dialectical differences. In England it was the flowing together of many Saxonic dialects to form West Saxon, soon to become more vigorous and more apt in the expression of action than the softer Saxon speech of the Continent. By a somewhat similar process Old High German is a compromise, in which dialectical differences tend to disappear, tend, but never do entirely fade out, for there remain always in the manuscripts traces, called scribal errors, errors

of spelling or pronunciation or grammar, which, taking the language as a whole, or even the manuscript as a whole, one would not expect to see. A poem spoken in one dialect is put into writing by a man who is in the habit of using another. The differences between the two dialects are slight and an alien ending or a wrong accent slips in unobserved. At other times, the scribe, nodding over his table on a warm summer day with a smell of apples in his nostrils, or standing cold in the grey light of winter, slips back to the speech of his boyhood. Carelessly he puts down a word alien to the common speech of his fellows, but still so near a neighbour to their words that the error is not detected—may even be accepted as an improvement. In France the process was much more radical, for here the conquering Germans partially learned a new language. But it was not until the Eleventh Century that this language became sufficiently intimate to them to be useful for imaginative expression.

Philologers have been pleased to speak of the growth or the evolution of languages. Historians speak of the growth or evolution of cultures. The impression given is of something small and simple becoming large and powerful. The analogy leads to error. A national language is an infinitely complicated set of gestures. By means of symbols nations manipulate a universe, and at the same time relieve and stimulate emotions. The gestures which we refer to as the English Language are not an evolution from a parent dialect (Mercian in the case of modern English, West Saxon in the case of Old English), or even a " get " due to the intercourse of two dialects, Mercian and Norman-English. In the babble of tongues at the time when Middle English was coming into being each dialect had influence on the others. Not only were new gestures introduced into Mercian, but old gestures (the articulated sounds of the old language, the words) were given new senses. At times the meanings remained the same but the sounds changed : a new word was introduced. At times the sounds remained the same but the meaning was changed.

To speak of the growth of a language or of a literature as we speak of the growth of an oak from the acorn, taking

nourishment from the soil and the air but with its character determined by the nature of the germ, is to introduce error of another kind. In the articulated sounds which we call spoken words, in the meanings attached to them and in the feelings which they stimulate or relieve, one tendency which at times takes hold of an entire nation, is to restrict one spoken word to a particular sense and to a particular emotion. Words become precise and emotions stereotyped. But this tendency itself is frequently accompanied by another, namely the tendency for a language to spread into new linguistic areas and as it spreads to enlarge itself. Aliens introduce new words or new meanings or new emotions at first regarded as barbarisms and later accepted. Normally these two tendencies create a balance ; purists, schoolmasters and dictionary makers attempt to establish the sense, the tone and the feeling of a symbol ; the populace, using language as a necessity rather than as a vice, keeps the purists busy. At times of national stress emotions ululate into new sounds. After a successful invasion the language of a conquered nation is frequently affected by the speech of the conqueror : at times, it is because the conqueror *will* use his own language " and be damned to you " ; but at other times victory acts so powerfully on the emotions that unless the arrogance is such that it generates hate and the native language becomes a symbol of national character, the only remaining good, the language of the victor casts a glamour and this light brings a change in linguistic habits. To speak of these changes as a growth is to misconceive the matter and the process.

But there is still another linguistic habit which helps to clarify the beginnings of national differences in the Dark Ages. Then, as now, symbols were a kind of magic. To name an object is to get power over it. In some very complicated savage societies to know a person's name is to be in a position to control him. In present-day society it can be of little real importance to learn that the tall gentleman in the tweed suit and the silly smile is Mr. Smith. Yet the name brings us into touch, establishes a relation, creates a community of interest.

This community of interest, feeling, taste or under-

standing is maintained in a national language by the tendencies of contraction and expansion of meaning which create a balance. The meanings of a word in any language may and do fluctuate, but the range of meaning is fixed by communal use. When we are at home in England we may be " chez nous " in France, but the range of meanings covered by " Home sweet home " is not touched by

Tu revois ta jeunesse et ta chere villa.

It is specifically through these differences that the word " national temperament " is given its first uses. The fact that the French people lack the verbal symbol which is appropriate to certain situations for which the Germans and the English have several symbols may mean that the French have never met that situation, or that, having met the situation they were blind to it. This fact is of capital importance in the interpretation of national differences. The establishment in a community of a range of sense, feeling, tone and intention for the words of its language serves to bring into view some aspects of its behaviour and to hide others. Indeed, so great is the power of words that actually they may develop one set of emotions at the expense of another. At times an alien theme put into a French dress becomes French because of the exigencies of the language. If there are no words for the fringes of the phantasy and no gesture that will point at the heart of it, the fringe and the heart disappear. The King Arthur who appears in England and France and Germany is not the same man; nor is the French Saint Nicholas more than a very distant connection of the German, or of the American Santa Claus.

Before we spoke English and German and French, at a time when all cats were grey, we all spoke German together and before we attempt to estimate how multicolour we are now, it will be well to get clear about how grey we once were. Our language was a complex of dialects with sufficient similarity both in the large sense in which I have been discussing language and in the smaller sense of the structure of the verbal symbol so that we could understand each other sufficiently well to make war, love and treaties without the need of interpreters. Although we were

ignorant of rhetoric and careless of human life, there were amongst our numbers gentlemen and scholars, great ladies and jurists of more than a little penetration. Our literature had its own refinement which, when we got to know a little about the things done in Rome and Athens, we fell ignorant of and then came to despise. It is difficult to translate the terms of one culture into the terms of another and it is well to remember that the general darkness of the Dark Ages is due largely to the obscurity of our own intelligence.

In the beginning, as now, peoples fumbled over the means of expression and communication, for the influence of language over the thoughts and feelings of man is wide and mysterious. Differences in languages, like differences in phantasy, literary or other—may not in themselves be differences in ways of thinking and feeling ; but they refer to, explain and point at these differences. If phantasy is regarded as a movement of the emotions which makes itself concrete through movements of the vocal organs, it may be seen that the kinds of speech we are in the habit of using have been chosen and developed by the people of our race because they are in some ways more useful to the excretion and relief of phantasy than another kind of speech.

Thus, before there could be national literatures, there had to be national languages. Before the Francs, Lombards, Saxons, Angles, and Jutes could become Frenchmen, northern Italians, Germans, or Englishmen, they were under the necessity of coming to terms with the languages used in the territories into which they were forcing themselves.

At a time when this examination must begin—a time when there were only tribes or " folk " (*liudes*)—our forbears were expressing such emotions as they had about the country into which they had wandered in dialects which, if they were not identical, were so similar in quality and structure that the differences which we are later to see flourishing were still hardly noticed, or seen only through a drawn mist, uncertain in quality and capable of taking any direction for the future. They were still so German or English that Paris—though a German city—was for

them, as it is not for the modern Frenchman, a city of dissipation. When Dagobert, the faineant king, went to Paris in 629 his character changed, he fell into vice and dissipation and lost the respect of his retainers.[1]

2

THE Germanic Franks admired not the grandeur of Rome, for that had passed generations ago to be remembered only by a few effeminate singers, nor the greatness of Rome, for any Frank was a match for dozens of his Roman contemporaries in any of the exercises which were important, but rather that peculiar efficiency in effect, that quality which made Rome significant in despite of the decadence of its life and institutions—that quality which we are told once caused the conversion of a Jew who thought that only the true religion could maintain itself in face of the corruption of its ministers. Language was not unimportant in awakening this admiration. Even decadent Rome was probably more literate than any other nation of the western world of that or any past time. The Roman language was, to be sure, no longer the pure tongue of a Vergil. The endings were becoming blurred—too many foreigners had tried to adapt its limpid purity to their rough tongues and gargled its delicate aspirates in their hoarse throats—the cases were becoming indistinct, the logic of the Roman imperia had become impaired by a strange new and Germanic logic. Yet Cicero had not died in vain. His labours to translate into the Latin tongue the treatises of the Greeks, his innovations in diction and his stylistic distinctions remained a part of the language and thought of the Romans and these were peculiarly adapted to the needs of the Germanic race which was sturdiest in its demands and most apt in its ability to learn. The Franks accepted the language and the institutions—at first only on formal occasions—

[1] Agrarian peoples frequently imagine that strange, immoral and beautiful things happen in cities—witness the clear disapproval of the migrant Hebrews when they came to the cities of the plain. This helps to account for the emotional friction between farmer and city dweller. It must be admitted that the farmers are right in imagining a somewhat greater opportunity for vice in the city—though this opportunity is greatly enlarged by the imagination.

Charlemagne wore Roman dress only on his rare visits to the sacred city and Charlemagne was the Emperor of Rome. For centuries they retained their own laws and their own institutions. In disputes the Franks were tried by their code and the Romans by theirs. Nor could this strange situation whereby a man of one race would be found guilty by his laws for doing a thing that men of another race could do with impunity [1] be changed until memories of racial provenance were wiped out by intermarriage. Yet even here the legal division may be seen in the authority of the Roman ecclesiastical courts which was a constant cause of friction between the Church and the State.

If judgments of the right and the wrong of actions were maintained in this uncertain and confused condition, the directions of phantasy, as carried by language, were still more confused. Whatever flights of the imagination there were in the Gaul of the Seventh Century were in German and not in Latin. Yet when these flights were performed by literate monkish minds they were directed by who knows what habits of late Roman idiom, those of Jerome's *Vulgate* certainly, and the measured periods of Statius, already confused by those other German habits of the drum-beat rhythm. The measured quantity of classical Latin in its alternation of long and short syllables, preserved the short syllables as foils to the long ones and made necessary a scrupulous enunciation, clear, sonorous and unhurried. The German periods were judged not by the lengths of the sounds but by intensities, not by the length of time it took to speak the syllable, but by the loudness of the speech. The murmur of the Latin, floating calmly into the air, preserving the short sounds to give greater strength to the long ones, was in the ears of these early Frankish dreamers mingled with the shriek of the German, discordant and omitting the short altogether, as silence is the best contrast with noise.

[1] Although even here the confusion may have been no greater than it is now under the American divorce laws where, if a couple marry too soon after the divorce the husband may be committing adultery in one state, the wife in another, both in a third, neither in others, depending on the sections of the country the train will pass whilst taking them on their honeymoon.

This change in accent which produces so important a change in expression began early in Rome and continued for the same reasons that it began. It came when Rome, having accomplished all that it could as a republic, became an imperium and, as Vergil saw it, made ready to shed the blessings of civilization on the untrained barbarians of the outer darkness. At this time, when Rome ceased to be conscious of its separateness from the rest of the world and mingled with it, the vowels lost their quantities and the syllables their dignity. No longer was there measured deliberation in the market-place, but a shouting and shrieking in the courts of the effeminate Caesars. By the abrasion of Latin against the other tongues, by the change in the rate of social living and its purposes, by a change even in the nervous energy of the speakers (the energy which before had been spent toward a given purpose, the destruction of Carthage and the conquering of the world, but was now transformed to the chatter of the courtiers, smart talk about the art of love—so much more amusing than the art of agriculture), by these was the transformation wrought in language which produced suddenly a transformation in thought.

Much of the analytical quality of the French " temperament " may very well be the effect of this kind of accident of language. An inflected language is awkward in analysis. The word tied fast to its ending, refers to an object (referent) and is, literally, in a case. The position of a word in a universe of words and consequently the position of its referent in the universe, is fixed by the inflectional ending. In uninflected languages this position in the universe must be indicated by the use of prepositions or post-positions, generally by directives. It is these directives which make an analysis of relation necessary. As the inflectional endings weaken, the scope and force of the directives increase and with this comes an increase of the analytic habit. When Rome became the imperium of the western world and barbarians speaking all the languages of Babel flooded her streets and filled her schools, the cases which had somewhat imperfectly distinguished between the Latin declensions were weakened. The nouns of the fourth and fifth declension were assimi-

lated into the third and there was a levelling of endings. During and after the Germanic invasions this tendency proceeded with increasing rapidity, particularly in the north and those other areas where the Latin language was, even during the pride of Rome, insecurely fixed. The greater energy of German enunciation brought changes in both vowels and consonants. The piling up of energy on the stem of the word blurred the ending ; and indifference or ignorance as to which ending these Romans would use in such a position killed it. Old Provençal sounds like bad Latin and Old French sounds even worse. They were, it is true, languages spoken and imperfectly mastered by " barbarians " ; but as these " barbarians " made them their familiar language, as the language got to be used for the more precise distinction of position and relation, analysis became obligatory. The floating particles, the directives, were made use of. The relation between one thing and another came to be made clear by the position of the referring symbol in a sentence. New distinctions became possible and with them the habit of analysis increased. In these circumstances, reason and analysis become a modality of language. And so they remain, linguistic in character, a reasoning about words rather than a reasoning about things. The honour of the Cid is resolved by words. If it was dishonourable of him to love the daughter of the man he killed, it was equally dishonourable of him to have killed the father of the girl he loved. The conjugation of honour flows on through splendid conversation, until, as is frequently the case, we become almost convinced that the word is a real thing and not a fiction. The accident that the Germanic Franks learned Latin imperfectly and, rejecting the modes of Latin communication, were forced to get sharpness through other means helps to clarify aspects of French reason.

The loss and blurring of inflection brought with it other changes already referred to : changes noticeable in the *Glosses of Reichenau* at the time of Charlemagne, became better and better established through the *Serments de Strassbourg* (824) and triumphed in the *Life of Saint Alexis* (circa 1040). It could be of only slight importance to

Paula, the maiden, whether we said in Latin, " Paulam amat Petrus " or " Petrus amat Paulam ", but without the inflections, the difference between " Paula loves Peter " and " Peter loves Paula " might cause considerable perturbation to the parties concerned. The emphasis and selection implied in the other alternatives, " Paulam Petrus amat " or " Petrus Paulam amat " (" Paula, Peter loves," or " Peter, Paula loves "), might be equally disturbing to Daphnis or Chloe, ardent candidates, perhaps, for the love of either of our characters. Whereas in inflected languages word order is largely a function of the feeling of emphasis, word order becomes in uninflected languages an instrument in the analysis of a situation. To be sure, violent perversions of word order will still convey feeling in general ; but variations of word order are also of use in the raising of subtleties of analysis which are difficult in inflection. Is the sentence " Paula, Peter loves ", to be interpreted by some such periphrasis as " (It is) Paula (and none other whom) Peter loves " or by " (My dear) Paula (do you not understand that our hard-hearted and indifferent) Peter (actually) loves " ?

But the change in the Latin language as it became transformed in Frankish throats at the court of Charlemagne was not the only influence which gave direction to the thinking and feeling that are later to be recognizably " French " as opposed to " English " and " German ". The Franks took up their abode amongst a people that had been made aware by the Romans of the refinements of social and other intercourse. The luxurious and soft way of Roman living, as it was understood by the somewhat simple-minded Franks, was that a great lord, having come to his inheritance, was at liberty to go to the devil as rapidly and effectively as possible. Monkish chroniclers blush and are silent when they come to a discussion of the number of women Charlemagne, sturdy and something of a puritan, bedded down in his palace ; nor has his reputation ever been cleared from the imputation, due no doubt to his great affection for his daughters whom he refused to give in marriage, that, on occasion, incest did not arouse in him the emotions of horror which we could hope it might. The birth of Charlemagne himself was announced

by an embarrassed messenger to Pippin whilst the latter was amusing himself with his secondary wife Alphaida. Dagobert, whose unfortunate fall from virtue has been referred to, engaged in a war with a commercial traveller called Samo, a valiant and potent gentleman who had twelve wives and thirty-seven children. Clovis II (638–57) who died, no doubt, before his character was formed, " was given up to every kind of filthy conversation, a fornicator and a deceiver of women, happy in his gluttony and drunkenness ".

Whether these noble gentlemen are more to be pitied than blamed is a question which, fortunately, does not arise here. It is clear from the satirists and chroniclers of pagan Rome that the professors of love conducted eager research for strange delights. The current term " Gaul-loiserie " serves as a reminder that the discussion of these matters was frequently in terms that were crude and improper : whilst the traditional preoccupation of French writers with problems of love in their more physical aspects, got recorded in the Twelfth Century (troubadours and *fabliaux*), and goes back to the first enthusiasm of the Franks for new and strange sensations. Frenchmen of to-day, though they are probably no more libidinous than gentlemen of other nations, like to give the impression that they will not be accountable for their conversation or conduct if left alone in a room with a woman, and even the most chaste blush like naughty schoolboys if one expresses the opinion that they have never been unfaithful to their wives. These queer habits of conversation and behaviour are given clarification if examined in the light of the situation the Franks met when they moved into Romanized Gaul.

To understand the situation we need not assume that fornication was unknown to the Franks. Amongst them it seems to have been practised more as a habit than as a vice, taken soberly, simply and chastely for granted. The conflict that arose when a man ceased visiting his wife in the Frankish fashion and began visiting other women in the Roman fashion burst into wordy discussion—burst but was not resolved. The conflict remained. The French have never got into the clear with it. Prudery in

action is accompanied by liberty in discussion, and the discussion is directed toward getting the thing clear, making it reasonable.

This need for clarity, for unambiguous expression, may be seen to have operated in two directions: first in a simplification of referent and second in the complication of verbal conjugation. If we are to make use of words for the purpose of getting clear about the direction of action, its intention or its tone, it becomes necessary to tie each word fast to a single referent. Two gestures in the same general field of experience which have points of great similarity but significant differences, must be distinguished by two words of which each refers to a particular gesture. Peripheral referents are deleted and in particular those complex referents of feeling which appear when the reader or writer is uncertain as to which of the gestures he is actually referring to. It is not strange that the French should point with pride to the achievements of their Seventeenth Century, Maleherbe, the Dictionary, mathematics. The complication of verbal conjugations is no less illustrative. To an Englishman the precise differences between French tenses appear to be mere academic foolery. Forms which are to be used in writing but not in talking are irritants to the impetuous Englishman, concerned with action as action rather than with distinctions between acts, or to the German, concerned with feeling rather than with plain sense and precise reference. To the Frenchman they satisfied and continue to satisfy intransigent needs, the frustrations of action and the explanation of these frustrations.

The authority of a highly socialized system of living impressed itself in still other ways upon the warlike and crude Franks. The snobbery of social living heaps ridicule upon the yokel, uncertain in his behaviour. The brave bold Frank was overawed by the smart superiority of the Romans. He knew that his language was crude and harsh and not adequate to the subtleties of the Latin he heard about him. He was uncertain in his conduct. The imperfect mastery of the Latin language which produced Old French was one result. The other was a further frustration in action. In the case of love, we have

seen a tendency to behave in the Roman way inhibited by the old Frankish customs : so in other spheres there may well have been the desire to behave in the Frankish way, inhibited by shyness before the strange and new Roman customs. Precipitate action was discouraged. Although there was violence in plenty in the Middle Ages, the modes of the drawing-room tend to deflect violence into words and words get mixed up with ideas. As adultery was discussed as well as committed in this new and flexible society, so too were other kinds of action topics for discussion. Gossip and anecdotes became popular. The questions of what did he in fact do in that situation and what should he have done exercised a fascination amongst the inhibited people which they did not find elsewhere.

The direction of French phantasy which I ventured to mention in the first paragraph of this section, namely that the French are dreaming of action in a world where action is inhibited and that the interest in conduct and reason may be understood in these rough terms, is seen to have been influenced by the conditions under which the French people got their start. The destruction of Latin inflections, due to the difficulties which the learning of them presented, brought a new language in which the analysis of relations between verbal referents was not only easier than it had been in either the Latin or the Frankish languages, but in which this kind of analysis was necessary for any communication, whilst the conflicts between the Latin and Frankish methods of behaviour gave encouragement and justification to verbal discussions.

3

THE Angles and the Saxons and the Jutes, who came into England about the time the Romans left, faced a different kind of a situation. England had been exploited by Rome, it had not been Romanized. The Roman remains that still stand give an impression of the kind of Occidental life we see in the outposts of China rather than of the home life of a well-developed culture. When the Romans left they were forgotten. The conflict here, though bitter, was between the Germanic conquerors and the indigenes, largely Celtic. The linguistic advantage lay with the con-

querors. Their language was structurally simpler, and although a tendency towards further simplification is noticeable near the end of the Old English period, due, perhaps, to the Danish invasions, the simplifications that may have occurred in the early Old English period, in so far as they were due to linguistic conflict, were slight. The language was inflected and remained so until Norman French demonstrated the advantages of simplicity ; but the fact that when Old English was written it was written by clerics who had learned how to write by learning Latin, tended to restrain any inclination towards further flectional complexity. In most instances the nominative and accusative have the same form and in others the process of levelling is noticeable. There was no great reason for hurrying the process.

Although the sound of the language underwent a change, this change was not different in quality from the changes that had been going on for centuries. The language, could we have heard it through several centuries, would give the impression of becoming smoother. The tendency to tie the accent fast to the main syllable of a word remained, with consequent loss of the unaccented syllables. Frequently this caused a piling up of consonants which were then separated by new and obscure vowels ; or it caused, particularly in Wessex, the kingdom of Alfred, a breaking of a single vowel into a diphthong. The reasons for this are not without relevance. Accented speech is energetic speech. The piling up of the accent on the main or stem syllable of a word will cause first the loss of the lesser syllables, and, if the energy is still strong, a lengthening of the stem vowel. If one vowel is not enough it will cause a breaking into diphthongs. " Hardus " becomes " hearde ", " haldan " becomes " healdan ". This tendency towards energetic accent which was first seen in Wessex, but not in the Midlands, from which modern English has developed, has since spread throughout the country. The Late Latin " dictionarius " becomes " dict'n'ry " ; the Late Latin " laboratorium " becomes " lab'rat'ry ". By excess of energy, the gracious phrase, " How do you do " gets to be felt as a single gesture, " howdodo ", and that word then, shorn of

its duplicating " do's ", with emphasis piled up on the essential " how " becomes " howdy ". And in a similar manner that other phrase " how are you ", which has no consonantal stops to protect the vowels, gets blurred into a simple " harye ". In the London dialect, this excess of energy labouring on the essential sounds only, has succeeded in demolishing them. Cockney is a series of grunts separated by emphatic glottal stops.

When the Angles and the Saxons and the Jutes crossed the North Sea to England, they left a country that was hard and harsh for one that was smiling and soft. Then, as now, the Gulf Stream laved the white chalk cliffs and then, as now, the downs rolled gloriously towards the sea. The Romans had left, but they had left streets and castles, villas with adequate toilet facilities—not that the invaders cared much for the latter—and the instruments of luxurious living. These were first misused and then unused. But as it is easier to move into a furnished house than it is to clear the land, build the house and its contents, so it was easier for them to move into a country where the streets had been made and the castles had been built. The energy that caused them to leave their native land and make the unpleasant crossing in the cockle-shells of those days was devoted to conquest of the Celtic inhabitants and a determination that this land should remain theirs.

The quality of life there was healthy and hearty. From the time of their first arrival the invaders met the Irish missionaries,[1] who were labouring to convert the Celts to the Irish Church. At the end of the Sixth Century Augustine began his labours for Rome, and by the end of the Seventh Century the authority of Roman, as compared to Irish, Catholicism was generally recognized. This brought a knowledge of Latin, and with it a florescence of Latin writing. But the Germanic poems were not forgotten, pagan though they were. In the evenings, in the beer halls the harp or " glee-wood " was passed around.

[1] Throughout the Middle Ages there was a bitter struggle between the Irish and the Roman bishops. The organization of the Irish Church was probably at an earlier date than the Church we now know as Roman Catholic.

The old songs which everybody knew were sung and at the same time, perhaps, new songs on Christian themes put into the Old English dialect so that everyone could understand them. The glee-men, wandering minstrels, the joy bringers, entered the monasteries and there adapted new Christian stories to the old language.

These adaptations are significant. The story of the Vulgate comes to us dressed in the rich phrases of Germanic epic. Battle and landscape, the action of men in a world of things are the recurrent themes. Genesis xiv. is thus transcribed :

> Then hard was the play,
> The change and clangor of clashing death-spears,
> A scream of warring, a cry loud of battle.
> With hands they drew, the warriors dread,
> From shining sheaths their swords ring-hilted,
> Of edges doughty

The simplicity of Genesis i., ii., iii., is transformed.

> Yet was the earth
> Not green with grass, the ocean was grim.
> In dreary darkness, the dusky waves
> In eternal night, the far and the near.
> Then swift with speed the guardian spirit
> Of heaven was borne, all glory beaming,
> Athwart the waters, the swarthy waste . . .

And this is taken from :

> And the earth was without form, and void ; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

But this interest in energetic movement does not inhibit a joy in the out-of-doors. Poems about landscape, which our French contemporaries profess to be unable to understand, made their appearance in the earliest writings in England : Deor has been dreaming of happy days that are fled :

> Then awakens again the friendless wanderer,
> Sees before him the fallow waves,
> The sea-birds bathe and spread their feathers ;
> Sees fall the snow and frost rime mingled with hail.
> Then are to him harsher the wounds of his heart.

But this is preceded by memories of the good old days :

> He dreams he clasps and kisses his lord,
> And lays his hand and head upon his knee
> As when he whilom enjoyed the gift stool.

Writing had a greater and earlier popularity in England than it did in France. The French had to adapt themselves and their linguistic habits to a culture which was in many ways superior and had to weld their habits of speech into forms that were greatly different. The English, facing no such problem, kept their language ; they were sufficiently in touch with Frankish and Latin culture to prevent further linguistic complication, they had also leisure and an excess of energy. The wildness of the Old German poetry which they brought with them was somewhat modified both in presentation (the meter, for example, is smoother in Old English than in Old German) and in sound. The interest in actual and remembered action through a world of things is given expression. The direction of phantasy which may have been a part of the unwritten and lost Old German poems, here, and at an early date, established a tradition. When the time came in France for the forming of this tradition, a new language was being spoken. The old words were no longer there to call up the old feelings. The direction of phantasy was changed.

B. THE MIDDLE AGES

To think of national imagination in terms of the Middle Ages is dangerous because the nations had not yet established themselves and those differences which can be taken note of in terms of language and imaginative objective were still unclear. Yet even at the court of Charlemagne elements appear which are to become important. The levels of imagination were so various at that time that now, looking back, we are surprised that they became fixed as definitely as they did a few hundred years later. We are apt to forget, for example, that the wordsmiths of the Middle Ages were gentlemen and scholars and that the literary corpus which they handled, whether Latin or Old German (read, perhaps, Germanic), had been highly refined by centuries of labour. Allegory was already a finished art although it had not yet been adapted, as the French with their interest in putting verbal limits to action were later to adapt it, to the needs of polite society. For all classes at the court of Charlemagne, words still exercised their magical function, more openly then than they did later. In the Germanic epics, *Hildebrant* and *Beowulf*, qualities appear which are later to become French and English and in the Christian epics new materials were treated in an old way.

The historical period known as the Mediaeval Renaissance, which began a few years before and ended a few years after the Twelfth Century, is highly inflamed. Western Europe was being partitioned by a crew of merry, rapacious, pious and incontinent monarchs. The Church with unprecedented fecundity produced saints whom it established in high political positions. Literature flourished as it had not flourished for 800 years. The *Chanson de Roland* which the French have accepted as a national epic was produced by the objurgated politically minded. Normans with curiosity, energy and high spirits established literature, science and good government wherever they went. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* as well as his *Prophecies* are political tracts and whatever there was in them of Old Irish traditions has been given more importance by the new Irish than it is worth. Geoffrey's material was taken over and enlarged by Chrestien de Troye, who had little or nothing to do with the Isle de France and whose patroness was the daughter of an English queen, and was further enlarged by Wolfram the German. The German *Nibelungenlied* which dates

too from this century is a refaction of an old German epic in the manner of the new times, definitely and obviously impressed by the polite novels of western France.

The comparative material presented by these nodal points in imaginative energy is excessively complex and is made more so by the fact that the languages as literary media were still too new, too unformed, too much despised in comparison with the polite and serious Latin, to have reached even that small degree of self-consciousness which they were later to acquire. Latin was written with care, the vernacular with abandon. In so far as it is possible to observe qualities of national imagination at this time, these qualities must be sought for under the surface. Geoffrey of Monmouth gave England a legend, Wolfram and the unknown author of the *Nibelungenlied* recorded the German sense of wonder at the mysteries of the universe and Chrestien, the Frenchman, defined and ticketed behaviour, explored propriety and put words to the state of mind of people in love.

In the Fourteenth Century, French literature suffered an eclipse, the Germans occupied themselves with mysticism and folksongs and the English had a revival of enthusiasm. The French determination to get each word tied fast to a single meaning had been crowned, a few years before, by the *Roman de la Rose* in which allegory is not, as it was with Dante, a desire to get as much meaning as possible into a single statement, but a stubborn determination that each meaning must be given a name. English phantasy overleapt all bonds : the Francophile Chaucer and Gower treated continental as well as insular matters in the English language modified by French practice, whereas Langland treated Christian allegory in Old English measures. They combine qualities of the Mediaeval Renaissance with anticipations of the Classical Renaissance. German and French symbols are of equal value to them. They enjoy a hilarious verbosity. They are, in brief, English.

CHAPTER III

THE MIXED COURT OF CHARLEMAGNE

I

BEFORE, through and after the Middle Ages, verbal phantasy in Europe operated on several levels and in many languages. The distinction which the Classical Renaissance attempted to make between Mediaeval and Classical has tended to separate more than should be separated the processes whereby literature is experienced. During the early Renaissance men were in the habit of looking at the Latin of the Middle Ages, which was very different from the Latin of Cicero, and of saying that it was therefore bad Latin written by ignorant men and on dull subjects. The tendency amongst historians has been to focus attention on lay literature, the epics, lyrics, romances and stories written in the vulgar tongues. Lay literature, indeed, constitutes one of the levels of Mediaeval imagination, and for a later and sceptical if not unchristian era this may be the level which is of the greatest importance. For the Middle Ages it was not. There were others more highly prized, which, if they do not exert an immediate and direct influence upon the literature of the last hundred years, are none the less of importance for an interpretation of the reasons why the more recent literatures which are of special concern to us are in restricted imaginative areas. In order to follow the processes of national imaginations we must somewhat enlarge our views to include these other levels of the Middle Ages.

These levels of imagination are not to be clearly separated. One of them which we shall have occasion to examine in detail is the tradition of vulgar literature, written for the most part in the vulgar tongue and distinguished from the others largely by its tone and inten-

tion—or lack of serious intention. A second is classical literature, whether that be imitations of the classical poets and historians or free invention. A third is religious literature, which may or may not be written in a classical language, but is distinguished, when distinction is necessary, from classical literature by its intention and particularly by the symbols it chooses, which are from religious experience; and finally, allegory, opposed to these three because it is a form of writing rather than a theme, and appears in all languages and makes use of all symbols, religious and classical, as well as lay.

If allegory is in need of defence before the tribunal of modern taste, it is even more in need of understanding. Yet the condescension with which this dignified literary form is treated by men who should know better, makes both defence and explanation difficult. Two facts may be adduced to illustrate its importance. Not only is allegory the form in which Dante wrote his *Comedy*, certainly one of the best books of the Middle Ages, and the form in which Jean de Meung and Guillaume de Lorris wrote their *Roman de la Rose*, one of the most popular books of the Middle Ages; but it was the accepted literary form to which any author, who pretended to be writing more than improper stories for the entertainment of idle women, turned. It *may* be possible to grasp the allegory of the *Comedy* and still to remain ignorant of the quantity of allegorical literature which defined the tradition in which Dante wrote; but it is certainly an impertinence to praise Dante as the noblest poet of Europe and then to regret his use of allegory as an unfortunate vice which must be forgiven a man who is otherwise respectable.

The second consideration may have even more potency. An analysis of the purpose and function of allegory takes us back to the very postulates of the literary process. Those postulates are, that no verbal symbol has ever been or can ever be restricted to one meaning and one meaning only. The allegorical mode in literature is an acceptance of this postulate and an attempt to make sophisticated use of it. To assert that the real meaning of art is spiritual or, more accurately perhaps, that what

remains after an intense experience of literature is something more than physical relaxation, is, no doubt, to repeat a truism. The purpose of allegory, both in those periods when it was conscientiously pursued and in these later periods when it slipped in unaware, has been an attempt to give greater power to this spirituality or end product of literary experience. Many allegorists were very awkward and a great many of these awkward ones restricted their imaginations to the doctrines of the Church which are now less familiar than they once were. Yet the general theory of literature which is involved in allegory was sound, and the symbols which the mediaeval allegorists used were, if one cares to analyse them, powerful.

The allegorical form was particularly apt for the mediaeval state of mind. This state of mind accepted Christianity largely because the symbols, chiefly literary, which Christianity offered were peculiarly suitable for the kind of phantasy which was beginning to grow up long before Christianity became a power. The directions of this phantasy can be seen in Juvenal and Persius, in Plutarch, Marcus Aurelius, Lucian and Apuleius. These prepared the way for the Church Fathers. The satirists were judging the world they lived in by standards which Christianity was later to capitalize. Apuleius was only one of the many who were being fascinated by the possibilities of the occult, by the fact that things had hidden meanings, which, with right arrangement, could be made subject to man's power. Plutarch, like Tacitus, and like the Christians who came later, was concerned with seeing what could be seen about mental processes, the flare of an emotion made concrete by a deed, the character of man. Marcus Aurelius made note, for his own purposes and under the most unpropitious circumstances, of how he came to think what he thought. The tendency of the three hundred years before Augustine had been to turn away from what are popularly supposed to have been the cold and hard outlines of objective reality to the shadows of inner reality. It was an attempt to increase the meaning of things, give this meaning a greater range and, in particular, to bring to the front of consciousness

that factor of meaning which for want of better terms is described as " moral ", " the good ", " the noble ", " the elevated ", and is connected with appropriate feelings.

Christian literature, with its great use of figurative language, contributed greatly to this. The Son of Man founded the Kingdom of God by explicit allegory. When so much of the Christian canon had two meanings, it was easy to give many meanings to everything. In this, both the Christians and the students of the classical tradition were encouraged by the example of earlier exegesis through a tradition which in Greece went back to early times and amongst the Jews may have been present at the very beginning of writing.[1] The attempts of the Greek stoics to preserve the epics, both as historical accounts and as reservoirs of moral and aesthetic power, led them at a very early date to assert that the literal referents of the words which constituted the story or the plain sense of the epic, were an inconsiderable fraction of their meaning. This meaning must be found by careful analysis and the analysis must be made by persons who, trained in the manipulation of words, are peculiarly fitted to this kind of work. Some of us are sufficiently literate to follow the plain sense of a poem, the particular account it gives of things or ideas or emotions.[2] Yet a poet like Homer is more important as a poet than as an historian of the Trojan War. His account of the war may or may not be an arrangement of the events which is consistent with other arrangements brought into view by archaeology. The account of the war which Homer presents has other meanings, vaguely referred to in modern criticism as " aesthetic " or " poetic ". A large number of readers need help in apprehending these meanings. Some of them have to do with the states of mind which we refer to with approval or disapproval by the terms " good " or " bad ", and

[1] Allegory has always been a problem for ethnographers. The early logomants liked to insist that a written word has not only a literal reference, but one or more secret meanings, which only the learned logomant can decipher. The arrogance of poets has not only a psychological explanation.

[2] Fewer, as Dr. Richards has shown in *Practical Criticism*, are able to do this than would, at first sight, appear.

with actions either individual or complex which produce these states of mind. The states of mind themselves are complex, tonic or atonic and confused to a greater or less degree by emotional surge. The stoic philosophers who observed that the account which a poet offers of a situation is but one factor in the meaning of a poem were saying no more than any critic of to-day might venture if he thought the statement worth while. It was when the critics attempted to identify these peripheral meanings that they aroused the anger of common men who saw nothing in the compositions save the plain sense of simple story. The methods of the classical allegorists were ready to the hands of the early Christians, and the educated laymen.

The mediaeval attitude toward language was only slightly more naïve than the attitude in the schools of to-day. In the Middle Ages, when words were thought of at all, they were thought of as the qualities of things, parts of the thing, as the soul may be a part of the body. The confusion as to the meaning of things (i.e., the universe is the handiwork of God, with moral senses in each phenomenon) was increased by the added confusion as to the meaning of words, and these, working together, helped to produce the literature of the Middle Ages. This interaction of systematic ambiguities is not only in the intentional allegories of Dante or Latini, where each detail is worked out with the greatest care; but in the very structure of mediaeval narrative which makes use of the unclear, inharmonious symbols of dream to create the effect of dream. In these narratives the ordering of events, the structure according to possibility and probability, is of less weight than the meanings of the events. The author's statement that these events took place is of slight importance because all the world knew that they did not. Forgery was an elaborate art in the Middle Ages, but its purposes were different from the purposes of forgery in modern times. Defoe succeeded in making his readers believe that the events he described actually occurred at a certain time in a certain place; but the literary forgeries of the Middle Ages were for the purpose of attaching a story to a great name. The meanings of

the words used by the story teller were less in the account these words offered in terms of history than in the accounts they offered in terms of other meaning. The incoherence and aimlessness of mediaeval narrative disappears if, instead of regarding the progress of the story as existing in the order of events presented, we regard it as in other factors of meaning which will come up for discussion in a moment. Allegory is implicit even in the logomantic practices of the primitive Germans, in so far as they can be traced ; in the Christian attacks on literature of the unconverted Germany which still exercised magic and throughout the theoretical discussions of the scholars of the Dark Ages.

The literary levels, then, through which the imaginations of the English, French and Germans expressed themselves during the Middle Ages were : Christian literature which was taken as allegorical or was allegorized ; profane literature in one or the other of the vernaculars, which frequently and consciously either made use of allegory or followed the allegorical process ; and pagan Germanic literature which had been allegorized and may still have retained a part of its allegorical power. These levels were constant, but not exclusive. Clerks of those days did not ask only " What is the plain sense of this passage ? " They asked, " What does the plain sense mean ? " In the varieties of meaning that they discovered lies the problem of literary interpretation. Their attempts to bring these varieties into a system have led to the rejection not only of the system they used, but of the idea that peripheral meanings exist. This wholesale rejection occurred in the Classical Renaissance. Literature since that date is the attempt of each nation to re-discover, not the system, but its own particular kinds of meaning.

These observations must be kept in mind if the phantastic complexities of the court of Charlemagne are to be understood.

2

THE use of words is infectious and the mixed court of Charlemagne was one of the centres from which the

infection known as literature was spread. If literature may be thought of for a moment as the suppuration of a mental state, a pimple on the clear surface of the mind, it becomes necessary in giving an account of national imaginations (not indeed their beginnings, for those are lost, but their condition at a given moment in time) to get some idea of the kinds of mind which, in the courts of the time of Charlemagne, were in agitation.

The infection is due not only to the fact that cunning wordsmiths can bring others to the point of doing things and thinking thoughts that they had never had any intention of doing or thinking, but, also, because the appropriate casting of a phrase gives to the maker intense satisfactions which will be examined later. The " I-says-to-him-and-he-says-to-me " level of conversation is of less value as an attempt to give an account of a situation (for it really is not) than as the vaunt of the speaker a proof of his superiority. As Wordsworth attempted to write poetry in the language actually used by men in a state of emotion, so, too, do the modern immortals, Sam Hellman and P. G. Wodehouse[1]; Wordsworth in the language you and I would like to use, Hellman and Wodehouse in the language we probably do use. Wordsmiths in any community are meretricious only in so far as they misapply solid qualities and talent. He who has a " line " and is a " good talker " is also a " fast worker ", although he do nothing but make use of words.

One distinction between social complexes might very well be made by the standard of vocalism. Energetic use of language is not, as might appear from a simple reading of the psychologists, a compensation for restricted spheres of practical action ; the energetic use of language appears together with the energetic use of war, the energetic expansion of society, and the energetic development of ideas. Fifth-Century Greece and the court of Charlemagne were highly vocal. In Fourth-Century Greece and in Tenth-Century France vocalism had given way

[1] Two popular writers in the second and third decades of the Twentieth Century.

to theories about vocalism, and "high literature" appeared.

At the court of Charlemagne, modern European literatures had their beginning. There were other spots in the Middle Ages where literature was pursued, more or less effectively (Bordeaux, for example, at the time of Ausonius, York in the days of Alcuin, Liudger and Sigibod of Utrecht, Worcester and Winchester in the days of Milret and Cynehard), but in no other spot in Western Europe was there so quick a sense of the significance of words, so immediate a response, so much playing with effective phrase. Although the court was vocal, only a part of the court and none of the populace was literate. Literacy in general, and effective phrase in particular, were given a position difficult for us to understand. Literary symbols had not yet absorbed into themselves, in many cases, the power which they now have. Consequently symbolic gesture of various kinds was general; yet the possibilities of language were felt, rather than understood. Learned men exercised a power which, to the modern mind, appears excessive.

When we remember that wisdom in those days meant book learning, the story told by the Monk of St. Gaul, though it is probably not true in the sense of reference to events in space and time, has a considerable significance. The Monk, who, like a true historian, described events that might have happened, reports that one day two Scottish monks from Ireland joined a band of traders and landed on the coast of Gaul. As they had nothing to sell, and merchants without merchandise were looked upon askance, they are supposed to have said, "Let him who desires wisdom come to us and take it from us as we have it for sale." Charles is reported to have heard of them and to have asked them how much they wanted for their wisdom; and they to have replied, only a place to live, responsive spirits and food and clothing. News of this event reached the ears of Alcuin, then in York. He took a trip to France to see Charlemagne and made his fortune.[1]

Politicians and presidents who surround themselves

[1] As a matter of fact, he did not; he had seen Charlemagne before.

with scholars and find ways of getting on with these difficult creatures arouse the wonder, if not always the admiration, of hard-headed business men. Maecenas, the friend of the poets, is the only millionaire of ancient Rome whose name is generally remembered and Charlemagne, whose scholarship was the despair of his teachers, became a hero of history, less because of his own solid virtues than because of the men whom he cultivated. Had Charlemagne been less successful as a man of affairs he would not have had the power to attract men of letters ; had he been less vocal he would not have had the interest. His court was a literary medley. Irish monks were there who were not unaware of the stories of Cuchulain and Deirdre, although they may have considered them low stuff, vulgar and tending toward immorality ; the Anglo-Saxons, fresh from the Latin renaissance of the Seventh Century which produced Cædmon and not, perhaps, in spirit antagonistic to the writing of noble tales in the vulgar language spoken by the populace ; Germanic poets " rim ram ruffing " of Hildebrant and his son Hadubrant. These were on the left hand, representatives of the new cultural mixture, at times disputatious, somewhat ashamed of their past ; at other times, when its sweetness overcame them (as old familiar words and never forgotten accents are returned to us by the magic of the poets to work a release), they were so arrogant and sure of themselves that Charlemagne ordered the old Germanic heroic songs to be recorded.

On the right hand of the court were the Latins. Not, to be sure, the real Romans, but bastards of Roman fathers and barbarian mothers or Roman mothers and barbarian fathers. They knew something of the Latin poets, but were not in their own minds sure of the transcription of Latin : grammar distressed them, their spelling was vague. They had read Vergil (whose name they spelled, in honour of the Virgin, with an " i ", V-I-R-G-I-L), thought that his Fourth *Eclogue* was a prophecy, thought too that his poems were rich in meaning and mistook the magic of his language for divine inspiration.

3

IN those days, at the end of the Eighth Century and the beginning of the Ninth, Aachen was the smartest court in Europe, if not smarter in its combination of the new and the old than even the courts which the T'ang Emperors in China, then at the height of their power, were maintaining. The palace and the church were joined together in imitation of Ravenna by a noble colonnade. Master Odo was the architect. Ancient columns and marble tablets had been transported with great labour from Rome and other places, mosaics from Theodoric. "Near the palace was a wide-stretching forest surrounded with walls, full of game, resounding with the song of birds and watered by the little stream of the Worm." In 807 Haroun-al-Raschid sent Charles an impressive elephant and its keeper, Isaac the Jew. He had also sent valuable silk mantles, perfumes, salves and balsams, a magnificent tent and a water clock. The curtains of the pavilion were made of gay cotton and, according to a later reporter, "the tent was so high that not even the strongest bowman could shoot an arrow over it. It was divided into many gorgeous chambers so that one could think he was living in a palace. The water clock had twelve balls, twelve riders and twelve windows. Each hour a ball fell on a gong and a horseman leapt out of a window which closed after him."

The simplicity of the annalist's wonder should not mislead us into imagining that the court was a simple court. It had learned men from all parts of the earth, and was on friendly terms with the most powerful princes of the West. It was proud and powerful and polyglot. Central problems of literature and philosophy were debated with enthusiasm; schools were established, in part to give the Emperor a supply of Churchmen who might be expected to be somewhat more loyal to him than to the Pope, but in part, too, because learning, and particularly book learning, the book learning of the Romans, was magic. It was in its own strange way Christian. Charlemagne, not being able to capture Widukind, a rebel leader, but finding that 4,500 of Widukind's followers had fallen into

his hands, could, it is true, behead them all in the course of one day and proceed to the Villa of the Odo there to celebrate " the birth of our Lord and there also the festival of Easter according to his wonted custom ". These were not the acts of simplicity or folly, for Charlemagne was cursed with neither quality. Symbolic gestures of that kind are most frequent in communities where literacy is not general.

Some fifty years earlier Pope Stephen had paid a visit to Charles' father Pippin, who—

> hearing of the pope's arrival, went with great speed to meet him, together with his wife, his sons, and his chief nobles. For which purpose also he directed his son, named Carolus, to meet that quasi-angelic pope, together with some of his nobles. Then he himself, starting from his palace at Ponticum (Ponthieu), dismounted from his horse, and going three miles to meet him with great humility prostrated himself before him on the ground, and so, together with his wife, sons and nobles, received that most holy pope, to whom also he served the offices of a groom, running for some distance by his stirrup. Then the aforesaid health-bringing man, with all his train, in a loud voice giving glory and ceaseless praises to Almighty God, marched to the palace, together with the king, with hymns and spiritual songs. This befell on the 6th day of January (754), on the most holy festival of the Epiphany.
>
> The pope appeared, together with his clerical companions, in the presence of Pippin. Clothed in sackcloth, and with ashes on his head, he cast himself on the ground, and besought the king, by the mercies of Almighty God, and by the merits of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, that he would free himself and the Roman people from the hand of the Lombards, and from slavery to the proud king Aistulf; nor would he arise until King Pippin, together with him sons and nobles of the Franks, stretched forth their hands and lifted him from the ground as a sign of their future support and a pledge of his liberation.

In view of the fact that ceremonies of this sort are not frequent nor necessary in our own time, we may inquire why Pippin, who had well begun the carving of that great empire which Charles was to increase, could not, by quiet conversation, have made clear to Stephen his desires and hopes and why Stephen could not have gained

his point in other ways than prostration. A variety of reasons may be adduced, but one reason was that verbal symbols were clearly insufficient to achieve the desired effect and this effect was plainly an emotion rather than an effect of reason. Men persuaded with their bodies as well as with their tongues. Conditioning the reflex which we call language so that it operates largely through the vocal chords is a long and tedious process in which Charlemagne made great progress. It is for this reason, still obscurely seen, that literacy is considered one standard of civilization, that the literate man has less need than his illiterate brother of symbolic gesture with his limbs.

Because of these considerations it is difficult to get quite clear about the mixture of thoughts and feelings at this court where all the languages of Europe were in constant use. It was a smart court and thought of itself as modern to the minute. It was capable of brutality. It made large and frequent use of symbolic gesture where we would now be content with conversation or impassioned appeals. It was polyglot. It was learned.

4

WHAT little knowledge we now have of the literature of the old Germans we have through records made at that court. The evidence, though slight, gives a picture which is important for the further development of the discussion. At the outset it is necessary to lay stress on the fact that our records are few and that the opinions they contain are distorted by various influences. Too, the Old German way of living is, in its cultural intention, tone and feeling, even more difficult to understand than that of the Carolingian Franks. The latter are, after all, in view of the fact that they left records, subject to our interpretations ; the former, because they left no records save the impressions they made on travellers or on enemies, are beyond us. Only one small fragment of old Germanic epic song is preserved. It is the song of Hildebrand's conflict with his son Hadubrand which was probably put into writing at the court of Charlemagne, and may well have been one of the Germanic songs sung

to the Emperor while at lunch. This, together with the impressions of Tacitus recorded some seven hundred years earlier and with inferences, sometimes rather sketchy, taken from the monkish chronicles which *may* contain Latin transcriptions of Old Germanic literature, and with other inferences taken from the Old English and the Old Norse literatures, which were certainly put into the written form we now have several centuries later and were recorded (and transformed) by men who were acquainted with the Vergilian epics, give us what little information we have on the subject. Yet, when these records have been sifted three qualities persist: first that this literature was to a certain extent magical, second that it was highly sophisticated in its style, written by rules which, if they were not explicit, were implicit in the ears that caught it and made judgments on it, and finally that it contained the elements which we are later to see appearing in the literatures of Germany, England and France.

The magical or quasi-magical function of the songs is well indicated by Tacitus in the *History* (2, 22, 18) where we read, " They also have other songs, through the performance of which—they call it Barditus—they raise their spirits. These same songs are auguries of the fortune of the fight . . . it is rather an expression of the fighting spirit than of the voice." The augury had to do with the singing against the shield and with whether the sound broke and echoed deeply and fully. And in the *Annals* we are told (IV, XLVII) that the Germans indulged before battle in the warlike songs and dances that were customary to them. A similar custom is mentioned in the Hávamál (" undir randir ek gel bezeugt "). Before the battle they sang to give themselves courage and knowledge of the result and after the battle they raised their voices in " cantu et clamore " (Tacitus, *Annals*, I, 65). After the battle in the Teutoberger forest, neither side could rest. Amongst the barbarians, joyous feast, gay songs and frightful cries filled the valleys and made the hills re-echo. And the dejected Romans lay about the camp unable to rouse themselves.

To compare these vocal expressions to the war cries of the American Indians gets us little further. It is no longer of any use to make gestures about cultures and to define them in terms of good and bad. What is of use, is to get some clear notion as to the relative complexities of cultures and in particular of the functions of literary expression. Whether, reasonably, we speak of the poet as madman or, while under his spell, refer to him as master, we are giving recognition to the fact that he does something to us, he performs a magic. The scope of this magic is dependent on various factors. And whether it will ever again be as great as it once was, amongst the barbaric Germans, for example, remains to be seen. I. A. Richards in his *Science and Poetry* has shown reasons why it may and something of its possibilities will appear if these pages are read to their conclusion.

Whatever we may think of the magical function of these compositions, their literary sophistication is striking. The people and the themes may appear barbarous in the sense that they were not canalized and restricted according to our modern conventions; but the literary form, in so far as we can judge it, was subjected to rigid conventions which the poets, in those rare instances when they were masters, were able to infuse with the general kind of magic we now refer to as great writing. The epic epithets differed from the Greek in that they were epithets of movement, rather than of colour or form, but they were used with no less effect. A poetic diction was built up that is comparable to-day only with the clichées of the sporting page. There was a need amongst them, as there is amongst our sporting writers, of grand words to describe grand emotions. But there the effect was watched with a keener eye than it is now, there were quicker ears to catch innovations and a quicker response to nobility in phrase or rhetoric than there is now. The question of poetic diction will arise again, for the present let it suffice that the diction of these old poems, in so far as we can recapture it, was the diction of an illiterate people. This people had the habit of hearing songs and singing them, had literary tact, had little knowledge of

art but " knew what it liked ", and had been in the habit of knowing what it liked for several centuries.

The *Song of Hildebrant*—only a fragment is preserved—tells of the conflict between a father and his son. Hildebrant has left the service of his king and has left his wife and child in order to take service with the Huns. Many years later, after the son is grown, the warrior returns at the head of an army. Completely hidden by his armour he meets the leader of the enemy forces in individual combat. He is the elder and, according to etiquette, demands the name of his opponent for, he says, he knows all the folk hereabouts. The young man tells of a father who preferred the wandering life of a warrior to sitting at home with his wife and child, a father who left the country thirty years ago, whom he has been led to emulate. Hildebrant realized it is his own son who confronts him. He makes the announcement, but the son refuses to believe him. The old man's evident prosperity gives lie to the fact that he has taken service with the Huns, for clearly he has a good master. Hildebrant tears a gold ring from his arm and offers it to his son in token of his friendship ; but instead of offering it on the point of the spear as etiquette required, in his eagerness he offered it in his hand. This is either inexcusable rudeness or a ruse intended to throw the complacent youngster off his guard. The latter taunts the old man with the fact. The old man now begins to realize that he must kill his own son. He calls God to witness that the outcome of the battle will demonstrate the truth of his statement. By this cry he dooms his son to death for his hearers knew that this appeal, though the old man in his agitation may not have understood it, was final. God is swayed more by truth than by sentiment. The challenge is hurled and the fight is on, and the fragment breaks off.

The song of *Hildebrant* was not the only Germanic poem sung while Charlemagne was at meat although, historically, it is difficult to conjecture what the other poems were. Apart from the fact that a poem which is in as definitely a " literary tone " as *Hildebrant* could not have arisen by itself and could not have been the

only one of its kind in existence, Professor Chadwick has given reason for the conclusion, from bits of internal evidence, that this song was much influenced by earlier versions; and finally the references to Theodoric give it a place with other poems of the same cycle. Here we are almost brought to a stop. The other Germanic poems that have been preserved for us, although they deal with much the same kind of material, being poeticized and for the most part quite unhistorical accounts of events supposed to have taken place amongst the Goths and Burgundians, were put into writing at a date so much later that they cannot be taken into consideration.

One other poem there was of this general type which, part of the same cycle, though it deals with only a minor aspect of it, was certainly in writing at about the time of Charlemagne. This is the Old English epic, *Beowulf*. Whether or not this actually was sung at the court of Charles, it might have been sung there and although much less is known about this poem than we could wish might be known, the fact of rough contemporaneity and thematic relationship may justify a glance at it.

The only version of *Beowulf* that has been preserved for us is in the Old English language, and yet there is not in the poem any mention of England or of the English scene. Perhaps it was put together in the Fifth or Sixth Centuries. The locale is Seeland and the country of the Geats. The theme is the fight under water between the hero Beowulf and a monster Grendel and a second underwater fight with an even worse monster, Grendel's mother, and finally, years later, Beowulf's fight with a dragon and his death. Beowulf may have been the hero who distinguished himself in the battle between the Franks and the Geats (512) or the warrior may have been named after the epic hero. Historical fact and imaginary flight have been known to confuse themselves even in the studies of sober modern historians who make careful distinctions between the two and the needs which history satisfies among most of us are not vastly different from the needs of story. Whoever the hero may have been, and whatever may be the provenance of the myth (the story of underwater fighting with monsters

is not unknown to the Finno-Ougrians or, strangely enough, to the Kamtschdals and it appears to be a construction of the northern rather than the southern peoples) the fact remains that some hundred years or so after it got its rough shape, it was modernized by a Christian who threw a veil of Christian terminology over the pagan heart of it. What other changes he or his successors made can be distinguished only with difficulty. Was it he who put into it the reminiscences of Vergil, or was it some classical enthusiast of that Latin renaissance of the English Eighth Century who polished what he may have considered to have been the rough poetry of his boyhood, bending it more to the refined taste of the Augustans and introducing in more than one place that careful artistry and pruning, the substitution of a phrase, the strengthening of an epithet, the omission of an incident, which gives Beowulf a poem, in but not about, England, its English tone: action in the open spaces remembered and sung about in the beer halls.

The poem glories in action:

> . . . ye enfolded the ocean currents with your arms, buffetted the water with your hands, gliding over the deep. The ocean was tossing with waves, a winter's sea. Seven nights ye toiled in the power of the waters; and he overcame thee in the match for he had greater strength . . . (515–20).
>
> Light came from the east, the bright beacon of the Lord; the waves were stilled, and I could descry the sea headlands, those windswept walls . . .

Or again:

> They dwell in the hidden land amid wolf-haunted slopes and savage fen-paths; nigh the wind-swept cliffs where the mountain-stream falleth, shrouded in the mist of the headlands, its flood flowing underground. It is not far thence in measurement of miles that the mere lieth. Over it hang groves in hoary whiteness; a forest with fixed roots bendeth over the waters. There in the night-tide is a dread wonder seen—a fire on the flood: There is none of the children of men so wise that he knoweth the depths thereof. Although hard pressed by hounds, the heath-ranging stag, with mighty horns, may seek out that forest, driven from afar, yet sooner will he yield up life and breath upon the bank than hide his head

within its waters. Cheerless is the place. Thence the surge riseth unto the clouds, when the wind stir up foul weather till the air thickens and the heavens weep (1,350 ff.).

But the action has its etiquette. Hrothgar sitting amidst his men on the mead bench of his ancestral hall, Heorot, rejoices in song and dispenses gifts to men. For well did he understand the proprieties that attach to chieftainship. His men speak in turn and Beowulf, that stout fellow, famed for his prowess in swimming, his bravery and manliness, knows, no less than the courtiers, what is becoming in an address to the chief. Action in the open air, contests and games, clean fighting, these constitute the earliest records of literary imagination in England. When in his cups, Unferth casts aspersions on Beowulf's prowess, Beowulf rebukes him, but with dignity: "Well! my friend Unferth, being drunken, thou has said a deal about Breca. . . . The truth now I tell." Boasting has gone out of fashion and gossip columns have come in. But the dignity and sportsmanship of Beowulf is seen no less in his treatment of the intoxicated Unferth than in his treatment of his companions or his chief.

Beowulf and Hildebrant, the one English of the Angles and the other German and a favourite of the greatest of the French kings, belong to the same type of writing. Although it is difficult to suppress the thought that the historian Widukind of Corvey was making use of epic song in his accounts, evidence is lacking. In one passage he reports (Lib. I, cap. 13), Iring, a courtier is persuaded by rich gifts to murder his master as the latter is kneeling before the victorious Theoderich. Iring has no sooner done so than he remembers his duty as a vassal to demand vengeance for his sworn lord and murders the victor. He places one body over the other and hews his way to freedom. Whether or not the incident was historical, it was selected from a mass of other incidents and preserved. It presents a flight of the imagination and thus may be taken, with many reservations, as relevant to the theme.

It will be seen at once that in Hildebrant and Iring—or, if Iring is rejected, in Hildebrant alone—we have a social

situation, whereas in Beowulf we have action. The mortal combat between father and son, the brashness of the young man, the despairing cry of the old warrior, " May God be my witness," which dooms the son to death, these are the stuff of French tragedy ; not action, but social situation, niceties carefully worked out, psychology well observed. What would you do in a similar situation ? Where is the blame to be attached ? The anecdote of Iring is even more relevant. How can duties be reconciled ? Where is honour and how is it to be satisfied ? These are the themes that tug at the strings of interest in the literature of France. The English strings are tied in a different knot. The artistry in *Beowulf* is no less carefully hidden than in *Hildebrant*—the rich literary references, for example, that set the poem afloat on a sea of allusion, compactness, and careful preparation. But the questions are not questions of honour or duty, nor is the interest of the reader in the resolution of these. The interest is in the actions, the landscape, the sea streets and the wind-swept hills.

5

BUT another kind of literary imagination at work in the court of Charlemagne, clothing itself in somewhat incorrect Latin, was to cause a further restriction of action and a new blossoming of the poetry that was to come later. Though Charlemagne was not able to write, he could, no doubt, read and speak Latin and the scholars at his court amused themselves and pleased him by the composition for each other and for the emperor of Latin eulogies, epigrams and epistles.

For the present there was little thought of bringing the Latin and the German themes together, nor was it until about fifty years later that the German *Heliand* appeared, in part as an echo of the English *Cædmon* and in part as a new attempt. But the *Heliand* comes not from the district of Charlemagne. Its sources are much more English than Frankish. The taste of the court appears to have made the attempt to keep the Latin and the German apart, and this is the more surprising because Alcuin and his friends, the close advisers of the emperor,

were brought up in the Latin Renaissance of the English Eighth Century. During this renaissance the attempt appears to have been made to supply that English love of singing songs of an evening with songs on sacred themes, to compete in a sense with the pagan songs of their un-Christian past. If Charlemagne had to send out an edict to his nuns forbidding them to send to each other popular songs in the vulgar tongue, he was replying to a situation that must have been widespread through Europe. The old songs in the old words pull on the old memories. The vision of the White Christ becomes dim; the steam of battle and the stench of blood penetrates the grey walls of the monastery. It would be well if they would read only Latin. Aeneid, though dangerous, is less immediate in his interest than Beowulf or Hildebrant. But as they *will* sing in their own tongue, it would be good to give them poems about Christian subjects.

The transition between Christian and pagan is not without skill. God, on His gift stool, is the great prince and the devil is the faithless vassal. Christ has His twelve heroes, " their strength that did not yield when they hewed in battle on helmet crest ". The language and the feeling are English and epic; the intention and the sense are Christian.

The English Cædmon was part of the transition. Bede's account of Cædmon's beginnings may be the application of a legend to an historical figure, or it may be merely historical absurdity. Cædmon, it will be remembered, was ashamed because when it was his turn to sing a song at the banquet hall, he was unable to do so for the gift of song was denied him. One night he left and went to sleep in the ox-stall which was in his charge. He heard God command him to sing and he did. Not only was he able hereafter to hold up his head amongst his companions, but by one of the major miracles he was enabled to compose his verses according to the metrical formulae of heroic poetry, no mean accomplishment for a poet of training, but of extreme difficulty for an untutored oxherd. It follows that he made his fortune. A hundred years later the same story is told

among the Saxons about the author of the *Heliand*, which too, is an account of the Scriptures rendered in the vernacular by an unlearned man. It is a good story and the monks hold to it, and it was even better in the old days when knowledge of reading and writing was, by a society that had little of it, considered in itself magical.

The directions of imagination in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries are thus seen to be various. The learned Vergil with his plangent Latin, the emulation and despair of those who, giving in to their taste for profane literature, were not unaware of classic sweetness and light, led men into the fields and fed them on asphodel. Most persons of all classes must have known something of the poetry of the vulgar tongue, whether of Beowulf the sportsman or of Hildebrant and the conjugations of honour. Beside these were the Christian songs, created to stand beside the songs of the populace and to emulate the greater epics, to encourage the faithful and to check the backsliders.

But the stream of imagination flows underground. It is difficult to assign values to its occasional eruption into literature or to make tallies of the slow conditioning of reflexes which, draining the streams of pomp and formality described above, restricted suasive action and the stimulation of feeling to the uses of words and the tones of the voice. Four hundred years later, at the court of Marie de France, we will see it again in characteristic action, changing the present to make it more like our heart's desire.

CHAPTER IV

THE TWELFTH CENTURY

THE Europe which during half a century witnessed the rise and fall of Henry II demonstrated an extraordinary busyness, not only in its wars and imperial ambitions, but also in its imaginative projections. The men with whom Henry was in intimate contact probably knew their Ovid, Vergil, Statius, and Aristotle, as well as the men who have surrounded any British monarch since. That is not to assert, in the case of either group, that they knew them well, or that their views of the classics were as accurate even as the somewhat inadequate views of a Gladstone. Yet, taken as a group, they appear to have paid more attention to the classics; and in general literary people appear to have enjoyed a greater dignity in the court of Henry than is the case in most subsequent courts of England. Learned monks who had studied in the Arab's universities of Spain, scientists, theologians, Provençal poets, Norman poets, authors with Anglo-Saxon, Dutch and Celtic names, men of unknown origin—many of whom were no doubt cross-breeds produced by the mingling of the various ethnical groups—were brought together under Henry's rule. The dialect of the Isle de France which was to become the ancestor of modern French had not yet begun to assert its supremacy, nor was it to do so until after the fall of Henry II. To write, as the francophile M. Legouis has written, that the Normans who came into England in 1066 singing the *Chanson de Roland* were already "very French" is to write tautologically. A better account of the facts would be that by the end of the Twelfth Century, the Parisians had been culturally Normanized. Henry, the King of England, swore, when he remembered that he was also Duke of Normandy, fealty to the King of France; but when the Duke of

Normandy remembered that he was King of England, he made war on this same King of France and did so with singular effectiveness. The languages in which the enduring literatures of that part of the world were inscribed were three : Provençal for love songs, Norman-French for histories, chronicles and novels, and Latin for serious compositions. So much for traditional accounts. The polyglot of those days, however, would have added others. He would not have been ignorant of the Celtic poems which just in those centuries were being put into written form, nor would he, particularly if he were one of the many wandering poets, have been unaware of the fact that the Icelandic sagas were being put into writing and that the Germans, or more correctly, perhaps, the Austrians, were enjoying between 1150 and 1200 a literary expansion which was to continue with considerable effect for still another fifty years.

Three cycles of story were familiar to all who made or enjoyed literature. These are conventionally referred to as the " Matter of France ", the " Matter of Britain ", and the " Matter of Antiquity ", a somewhat awkward and inaccurate terminology made by one of the novelists. We have little evidence on which to judge as to whether this division was made for personal use or was widely and generally accepted. The " Matter of France " referred to the Carolingian stories, the " Matter of Britain " to the Arthurian, and the " Matter of Antiquity " to the Trojan and Alexander cycles, which were being re-worked in Christian form for the smart taste of the court of those days. In Germany, the Nibelungen material was lifted from its pagan setting and modernized by a poet who was clearly aware of the fashions in England and Normandy. If this material penetrated into Germany, we may also raise the possibility, in view of the interrelations of the courts, that German materials were not entirely unknown in the west. In the north-west, in what is now Holland and Belgium, the hearty, vulgar satiric epic of *Renard* enjoyed popularity, particularly among the wealthy bourgeoisie, which, because of the prosperity of trade and the increase of city life, was coming into importance. If *Renard* was known in

Hainault, he must also have been known elsewhere. As opposed to the hearty *Renard* and the even more hearty *Fabliaux*, troubadourism, which appears to have come from the south, not entirely uninfluenced by the traditions of the Arabs, exercised a constant pressure on the etiquette, the poetic manner and the imagination of the time. Of all this material, the three groups of story which, because of earlier history, later fortune and subject-matter, appear to be closest to the purposes of this inquiry are the Germanic *Nibelungen*, the French *Chanson du Geste* and the English Arthur.

I

Of these narratives, the *Chanson de Roland*, because it is the simplest, may be taken as a starting-point. To come from *Beowulf* or *Hildebrant* to *Roland* is to come from an old literary culture to a new one which draws its emotional energy from different sources and projects its imagination into new direction. The most authentic version of *Roland* is written in Norman-French which, when the poem was composed, was a very new language, and the *Chanson* is the first composition of any importance preserved for us in that dialect. It is preceded historically by a few saints' lives ; but in view of the excellence of the *Chanson de Roland*, it is difficult to reject the thought that the unknown author of it had associates who had tried their hands at this language before. In any case, the rise of the language to literary excellence was sudden.

The author of the poem was probably an original creator, and drew his materials less from tradition, as was assumed by the scholars of the Nineteenth Century, than from hints given him in the monkish chronicles of the Eleventh Century. When Taillefer sang it, if he sang it, riding before the army of the conquering William in 1066, the *Chanson de Roland* was undoubtedly a young poem, not much more than forty years old, which was very young indeed in an age when poems were distributed by word of mouth rather than by the printing press.

Even in the Twelfth Century the language in which it was written was still young. This language, now known as Franco-Norman, had got so far away from the Roman

dialects considered above that it was actually a different language. The Latin renaissance, the new interest in classical literature and the development of the schools had refurbished the Roman language on Ciceronian models, further increasing the distance between what must now be referred to as the " spoken " and the " written " languages.

The qualities of imagination displayed by the poem lend support to Professor Bedier's suggestion that it was actually composed, as the oldest manuscript (Oxford) asserts, by Turoldus, a *clerc-jongleur* and a Norman. Nor is it surprising that the Normans, the civilizers of modern Europe, should have contributed to the imaginative treasures of both England and France before they were absorbed by England and France. In England they transformed the Arthurian material and in France they produced the most French of all early French poems, the *Song of Roland.* When we allow for the fact that the *Song of Roland* is a poem written in a new language without a literary tradition to control its structure, without stock epithets or poetic diction, when we have accustomed ourselves to the jongleur's delight in the elementary colours, red, green and blue, " red blood on the green grass ", to his delight in gold and silk and spice, and finally, when we remember that it is a plain poem, singularly without art, deriving its power, when it has power, from the directness and forthrightness of its phantasy, the quality of that phantasy emerges more clearly.

Four aspects of this phantasy are of importance to these speculations: first, the interest in the fighting which occupies some two-thirds of the entire poem; second, the somewhat crude accounts of the states of the minds of Roland, Olivier and Ganelon; third, the Christian tone; and, finally, the emphasis on the duties of a vassal.

From the point of view of the relations between literature and the social order, nothing is more surprising in the *Chanson de Roland* than the dogmatic precepts for the proper behaviour of the feudal Christian knight. Any brief examination of the throat-cutting, hoodlum

and gangsterism of that age of chivalry will make it quite clear that Roland's frequent assertion concerning the duties of a vassal, to the effect that the good knight must sacrifice his hair, skin and bones for his lord, is a hopeful precept rather than an account of a situation. Nothing was less common in those days than the idealistic sacrifice of a vassal to his master—if ideal be defined in terms of duty. The accounts of these relations in the poem, are, in truth, a holding of the mirror up to nature, in that they present us with an inverted picture of actuality. If the *Chanson de Roland* was, as Professor Bedier has maintained with a brilliant dialectic, an attempt of the monks on the route between France and Spain to tell amusing stories to the young bloods of France who were hoping to win fame and were determined to win fortune by tilting with the Moors, these monks were themselves either feudal overlords, somewhat doubtful of the constancy of their subordinates, or they were—and this is the more likely—telling the tales to the lords themselves with the idea that these lords would be pleased by a few copy-book maxims which might be disseminated amongst the lesser nobility.

This insistence on the loyalty between lord and vassal is often accounted for in terms of a transfer of similar sentiments from the tradition of the Germanic epic and, although the connection is somewhat far-fetched, it is the only connection which is conventionally made between the *Chanson de Roland* and the Germanic poetry. The connection is plausible. It is almost impossible to determine how much Germanic epic the Normans still knew. That the English Layamon 150 years later was strongly influenced by Germanic epic, is, in view of the different linguistic traditions between the island where Layamon lived and the continent where the *Chanson de Roland* was composed, somewhat irrelevant. Inasmuch as the Normans had held Normandy for not more than two hundred years when the *Chanson de Roland* was composed, it is at least possible, in view of their vivacious interest in literature, that the Germanic epic had not entirely disappeared amongst them, and equally possible that they regarded it as German immigrants in other countries

have been known to regard their cultural tradition, as old-fashioned and unworthy of record. In matters of this kind, three moments must be distinguished clearly: first, what stories are being told; second, which of these stories are being put into writing; and, third, in which language they are being written. Inasmuch as the distinction needs to be made to-day—witness the tremors of horror which crept up and down our backs when a smoking-room story like *Lady Chatterley* got put into print, it may very well have been true nine hundred years ago.[1]

Perhaps the assumption is not necessary that the Germanic epic had persisted in Normandy and had communicated to the composer of the *Chanson de Roland* its traditions of comradeship in arms and feudal loyalty, traditions which will appear later in a somewhat different form with the rise of the German people to a position of a world power. More frequently than not, in the earlier Germanic literature, the ideal of loyalty was an ideal of loyalty between equals, the relation of Roland and Olivier, for example, rather than the feudal relation of the subordinate sacrificing himself for the honour of his lord. A more complete explanation, though it must be presented in very tentative terms, is that this theory of the sacrifice by the subordinate for the honour of the master is a theory which was a part of the newly established feudality. The inter-ethnical pressure of the Eleventh Century was very great. The individualism of the earlier Middle Ages was giving way before a better military and political organization. It may have been felt, though not clearly understood, that social agglutinization was increasingly necessary, and this feeling, all for one, though not by any means one for all, got itself expressed by the wordsmiths whose business it is, after all, to get the right words in the right places, and to help

[1] Excellent illustrative material on this point seems to be found in contemporary Chinese scholarship. Although young Chinese scholars are in many instances well trained in the technique of Occidental research, they are still blind to large numbers of original investigations which are open to them. With the advance of Occidental technology the world's richest store of popular tales and ballads is being forgotten as the Chinese singers and tellers are being crowded out by the cinema.

to clarify, though not necessarily to rationalize, our perceptions of what, in the circumstances, it is necessary to do.

The newest and brightest contribution of the *Chanson de Roland* is its Christianity. To be sure, a great many Christian poems had already been written in the vulgar tongue. When the churchmen in the past had been irritated because their congregations, standing in the shade of trees in the sunny churchyard, had preferred listening to pagan tales to attending the sermons of their spiritual leaders, they had either written themselves, or had encouraged others to write, Biblical history in the epic style. From this irritation, implemented by the enthusiasm for classicism which spread through Europe, came the *Heliand* and the poems of Cædmon. But these were Christian themes in pagan dress, a kind of new wine in old bottles which turns the proverb upside down, because the bottles, the rich Germanic literary tradition almost decadent in its literary sophistication, robbed—or so it seems to the Twentieth Century—the new stories of their fresh flavour. The *Chanson de Roland* did the opposite. Here we have the old story, the fighting hero, but the form which holds it is new, the phrase is Christian. No knight could be quite as bloody or as Christian or as stupid as Roland. There is nothing that he is unwilling to do to the pagans or to say about them, but when Olivier suggests that Ganelon has betrayed them, Roland is offended by the very words, though he is perfectly aware of Ganelon's hatred and though he himself, in an earlier portion of the poem, was willing to send Ganelon to what appeared to be certain death, namely, to treat with the pagan king, Marsile. Nor are the Christian precepts in this poem empty maxims, as they are, for example, in the *Beowulf*, inserted by a later hand, extraneous to the flow of thought. They are essential to it. As *Beowulf* is, in one of its senses, an account of how the *pagan* knight should behave in the presence of his king, his enemy or his companion, so *Roland* is an account of how the *Christian* knight should behave under similar circumstances. This was a new idea in the telling of stories, and an idea that the church could accept, and

may have been the reason why it got reported. There should, however, be no doubt in our minds that this idea, while it adds charm, the charm of something new and simple and naïve, is also the source of weakness. A new language was needed and one was at hand, the Franco-Norman dialect, untried in literature, refreshing as a mountain stream, and as lacking in taste. A new form was needed and one was either discovered or created, the short eight-syllable lines with assonance breathing through repetitions of the same vowel sound, modulated perhaps more frequently for the hearers to whom the Franco-Norman pronunciation had greater dialectical variation than it has for us, who enjoy excellent chrestomathies. The enthusiasm with which the narrator made application of this new use of Christianity in the telling of a wild and bloody tale, the freshness of the language and the simplicity of the style has had particular charm for those to whom enthusiasm, freshness and simplicity are virtues. Nor is it particularly fair to note that a great many Germanic poems must have been current which were written in a richer literary tradition. The recording of the Christian *Chanson de Roland* was a beginning from which greater things were to come. The fact that an heroic poem could be written with Christian machinery was to arouse enthusiasm for many centuries.

The heroism of Roland and his companions is formidable. It may be significant also that this heroism should contain more than a touch of that vainglory which the French, when they become self-conscious, refer to as Gauloiserie, and the rest of the world in moments of irritation thinks of as French complacency. The original of that charming story which Anatole France modernized as the *Seven Boasts of Charlemagne* was put into writing by a Norman (*Pelerinage de Charlemagne*) not many years later. It will be recalled that Charlemagne and his peers, having gone to Constantinople, were being entertained by the Grand Turk. The peers were all put to sleep in the same room, but before retiring each had to make, in good French fashion, a boast of his prowess, whereupon the Grand Turk insisted that each make good his boast or lose his head.

When Roland realizes that he has been betrayed and that with his ten thousand he must meet countless pagans, he is urged by Olivier, the more sensible of the two young men, to sound his horn and call Charlemagne and his army back. Roland refuses three times. On the fourth occasion he says, " May it not please God that it should be said by any living man that I ever sounded my horn on account of the heathen . . . when I am in the thick of the battle I shall strike a thousand and seven blows and you shall see the steel of Durendal stained with blood." On the fifth occasion he says, " May it not please God nor His angels that France ever lose her worth on my account, I would rather die than be overtaken by dishonour, the better we strike, the more the Emperor will love us." And on the sixth occasion he says, " Cursed be the heart which quakes within the breast." It is hardly necessary to add that with every blow another pagan bit the dust. But twenty stanzas later, in a breathing spell between two attacks, Roland repents of his boast and offers to sound his horn. Olivier protests, " If you sound your horn now it will not be an act of courage and already both your arms are covered with blood," to which the Count answers, with that pleasant simplicity and irrelevant factitiousness which endeared the French soldiers to their allies, " I have struck some noble blows." Olivier continues : " When I told you to do it you thought it unworthy . . . valour tempered with sense is not a foolish thing and moderation is worth more than pride. The French are dead because of your thoughtlessness and Charles will never have service from us again . . . your prowess, Roland, has been your undoing . . . you will die here and France will be disgraced. To-day our faithful comradeship must end, there will be a sorrowful parting before the fall of night." The heroism of the *Chanson de Roland*, the succession of stanzas which account one after the other for the death of this pagan prince or these dozens of pagan soldiers is a heroism as unreal in history as it is impossible in fact, a childish phantasy, charming because of its childishness. It contains in its fulsomeness none of the details which persuade us of its reality. It is a pleasant

phantasy of the kind of action we should like to perform, but, because it fails to persuade us, it is not a good dream of action in the English sense. It is significant that it was not as generally translated into middle English as other French romances. Unless I am mistaken only a fragment survives of an incomplete translation from the end of the Fourteenth Century (Lansdowne MS. 388). The account lacks corroborative detail to enable us to make the transfer and for a moment to exist in a state of suspended belief. The landscape is sketched in, and although there is a great deal of light, there are no shadows. To the typical French question of " What, would you do in a situation like this ? " Roland has given the excellent French reply, " I would kill my enemies and return home."

In one or two passages, however, it is possible to note, even at this early point, the beginnings of that observation of deportment and expression which is later to become famous as " French psychological analysis ". Although Olivier has been wounded to the death, he continues dismembering the Saracens and heaping the dead one upon the other. He calls to Roland, and Roland, looking at Olivier's face, convinces us that Olivier's end is near. The face " was ashen and gray, discoloured and pale, the bright blood streams down his body and falls in splashes to the ground ". Olivier's vision is obscured and he cannot see clearly either far or near, but he continues to wield his sword, and in this day's fury of battle, strikes Roland. Roland gently reproaches him, offers his forgiveness and they part. Olivier dismounts, joins his hands, and confesses his sins. His heart stops beating and again, the convincing detail, " his helmet falls forward and his body falls at full length upon the earth ". It is from this kind of observation as to what are the outward and physical tokens, life, aspiration and death that Rabelais and Montaigne, Corneille and Flaubert are to construct their books.

The *Chanson de Roland*, despite its simplicity, is a complex poem. If it was written in Normandy part way between the Isle de France and the island of England, and written in Norman-French, part way between Latin

and the languages that were to become French and English, if it is a Christian poem, part way between bloody paganism and gentle Christianity, and is to exercise influences on both English and French literature, the French have, nevertheless, found it more to their liking than the English. A partial reason for this may be that the French dialect has remained closer to the Norman-French than the English. However, a more potent reason may be found in the fact that the direction of phantasy in the *Chanson de Roland* is a direction to which French imagination is to adhere in the future. Light without shade, action to be undertaken in the future, uncontrolled by the realities, but a close observation of the external signs of feeling and aspiration.

2

INTERPRETATION of mediaeval narrative material, particularly if that material has in it any element of tradition, has been thrown into confusion by the patriotic attempts of the English, French and German critics of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, who, disheartened by Macpherson's *Ossian*, were eagerly and ardently on the hunt to find a northern epic which they could assure themselves was as good as that of Homer, a natural epic produced by a natural and innocent people. In pursuit of this commendable ambition they seized upon *Beowulf*, the *Nibelungen*, the *Chanson de Roland* and even Arthur—preserved though he was for most of them in the bright sophistication of Chrestien. Yet, they had to have an epic. They observed that Arthurian material was found outside of Chrestien, in the Welsh books. A schism arose which rent the calm of academia with horrid controversy and splashed its walls with ink. One group of scholars took their stand on the thesis that Chrestien got most of his material from Celtic tales direct from the Celtic mouth, and that, whatever he may have been by race, he was certainly not Irish, and that he tarnished the red of Irish romance into the mauve of the drawing-room. The sectaries of the other school, Francophile for the most part, suggest that although Chrestien undoubtedly derived some of his matter from

Celtic or pseudo-Celtic sources, he was a practising novelist, gifted with considerable originality. He was as capable of inventing an episode as a pedant is of bolstering up an argument. He took something but he invented more. As between those there are still others who attempt to explain Chrestien and other novelists of Chrestien's type as deriving their material from lost romances, which lost romances are doubtless based on other lost romances until all fade into the twilight of what might have been. For many years the problem was still further complicated by reconstruction of Arthur in terms of what purported to be primitive Celtic myth. Arthur was the culture hero, the Prometheus of the Celts, and his adulterous wife, Guinivere, because the Celtic form of her name might be interpreted as " White Eyebrow ", was Aurora, the Goddess of Dawn. The scholars of the Nineteenth Century wanted something primitive, and as this primitivism was not to be found in the documents at hand, they went about hypothetizing documents with ingenuous determination.

These facts are noted in order to make clear that any account of the Arthurian material is likely to strike the spark of controversy. If temerity was required to undertake this investigation at all, boldness to the point of folly is necessary in an attempt to take thought on any aspect of Celtic-Anglo-Franco-Normanic-Arthurian literature. But exactly because this literature is, in the forms in which it has been preserved to us, clearly international, it comes very near to the problems under investigation. Perhaps the facts necessary to this inquiry may be simplified.

In the first place it is necessary to admit that there must have been some talk of Arthur among the Celts, both on the island and on the Continent. If there was talk of him it is possible there were accounts of him in writing. But of this talk and these accounts we know very little, and how much weight we give to them must depend upon what our view is of the busy, learned, worldly, controversial and highly imaginative Twelfth Century. If we are willing to admit that the men of the Twelfth Century, taken by and large, were no less

intelligent than we, that they were cosmopolites and were as ready as the next man to make use of any literary material which came into their hands, and, finally, if we are willing to turn aside from the question of origins in an attempt to get clear about questions of uses, these vague lost originals may be disregarded.

The Arthurian material in the Welsh books, the *Mabinogian*, the *Black Book of Caermarthen*, the *Book of Aneurin*, the *Book of Taliessin*, and the *Red Book of Hergest*, whether it is an original record of folk material —whatever the term folk material may come to mean— or whether it was influenced by the rich development of Arthurian phantasy in the Twelfth Century, preserves a Welsh character. There is little doubt that this Arthur is Irish. He is a wild hero, surrounded by wild Irish. The Arthur who appears in the account of Geoffrey of Monmouth is a very different person. He is a king of the Twelfth Century. Geoffrey appears to have been fairly well read, and whatever he took, either from his reading or from stories he heard, he transformed to suit the needs of his imagination. One of these needs was, as has been suggested above, to produce a hero who could be pointed to with pride as greater than Charlemagne. (Professor Tatlock has recently attempted to show that Stephen's *Draconis* is an attempt on the part of a continental Norman to ridicule Arthur and exalt Henry. There were undoubtedly eddies of aspiration. This attempt to get a great hero in the Twelfth Century is not unlike the attempt of Nineteenth Century scholars to discover a primitive epic.) But the account of Geoffrey is more than a political impulse. In it we learn of Arthur's victories, of Gawain, the adultery of Guinivere, Arthur's fatal battle with Mordred and his departure for Avalon. These episodes were developed later and the Round Table was added ; but as interest centred more and more on the achievements of Arthur's knights, Arthur himself, the Wise King and Saviour of his people, retreated into the background of phantasy, a genial cuckold, helpless before the vivacity and energy of the knights who surrounded him. The episodes in Geoffrey's account, from whatever reservoir of imagination they were drawn, are

seldom far from political realities. The interest in Guinivere's adultery, for example, is less an interest in a grand passion than the consequences of a situation. Arthur has gone to the Continent, Mordred, his nephew, has been made regent and, seizing his opportunity, usurps the crown. This crown carried with it, as the realistic Twelfth Century well understood, rights over the body of the queen, which, to be sure, Guinivere was willing to grant. The direction of Geoffrey's imagination is neither toward Celtic romance, tales of wonder and horror, nor toward the elaboration of courtly love. He was interested in etiquette, largely as etiquette serves the needs of a ruler. Merlin was useful to him. It is probable that a man of Geoffrey's timbre would maintain towards these prophecies something more than a state of suspended unbelief—yet he clearly made use of them and probably wrote some of them himself to establish the reputation of his magician.

The Arthurian material, as it appears in the works of Chrestien, is of a very different kind. Here all is love and courtesy. The French novelist had not been taught that compositions must have unity, coherence and emphasis. He was telling a story. The more story he told, the better chance he had of pleasing his audience, particularly, it would appear, his patroness the Countess Marie. Anything can happen in a story, and in Chrestien's story almost everything did happen. Knights come and go. We follow them on far and exciting quests which appear to have no very close connection with the episodes which introduce them, or with the adventures of other knights whom we may find more interesting. But over and above this welter of story, these innumerable episodes, read with interest and forgotten with facility, is a dominant interest in the passion of love as that passion manifests itself in the courtly etiquette of the Twelfth Century. Love is sometimes regarded as a physical passion, inhibited by social accident; the Lady is married to an overlord, the knight has shown himself in this or that detail of behaviour unworthy of receiving the satisfaction he desires. More rarely in a novel is love spiritualized. In some instances

a rare gift of psychological analysis is demonstrated, the knight having won his lady lives in a love mist unwilling, or more likely unable, to take part in the knightly exercises expected of him, until his name becomes a byword at the court. At this moment his mistress with love and self-sacrifice persuades him to " love honour more ".

The novel of Lancelot and the cart illustrates the extent to which etiquette stimulated the activities of phantasy in the French novels. The matter and the idea of this tale, according to Chrestien, were given him by the Countess Marie. A knight proposes to Arthur that he should take Guinivere as hostage and hold her until a knight from Arthur's court will overcome him in single combat. The seneschal Kay, like many another butler in moments of stress, is proving difficult and insists on accompanying the queen. Unless Arthur will grant him any request that he may demand, he says he will leave the court. Arthur is forced to let him accompany the queen. The court follows. After various episodes which need not concern us, Lancelot is discovered without a horse, the horse having been killed in a fight at a ford (when knighthood was in fine flower fords were very useful to gangsters who could catch lonely wayfarers at a disadvantage). Lancelot's only chance of getting to the queen is offered by a peasant's cart. He hesitates to make use of this unknightly means of transportation, but setting either the queen's honour or his own desire above such details, he climbs into the cart. The queen is in a castle surrounded by a wide river which can be approached by two bridges, one of them a sword with the thin edge upwards, and the other a bridge under water. Lancelot chooses the former. When he gains entrance to the castle, he joins the queen by rending asunder the bars at her window and is wounded. The queen hesitates to accept him as a lover, because he has been so unchivalrous as to come to her " rescue " in a cart. The blood on the queen's sheet betrays her guilt, but as Kay has also been wounded, there is some doubt as to which of the knights was her lover. The situation is resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. The central point of the story, however, is as to whether a lady can have anything to do

with a gentleman who is willing to ride around the country in a peasant's cart. It appears to be accepted that he who rescues the lady will have her, and although this tradition is not entirely unknown in modern times, the elaboration and conjugation of love in terms of etiquette may not be without significance. I think we may assume, without too much stretching of plausibility, that a lady of the Twelfth Century, unless she were the Countess Marie, and had her head filled with extraordinary ideas, would not, if she desired a knight, hesitate to accept him because of the means of his propulsion. The novel is the action of logic in an inhibited world. It is French. Whereas Geoffrey has presented us with practical diplomacy, Chrestien gives us a French picture of a diplomatic practice.

3

KING ARTHUR and his knights were destined to become international figures, and their fortunes in the history of national imaginations have been as diverse as their adventures in the romances. Arthur became the symbol of the great king, Guinivere of the great adulteress, Gawain the worldly gentleman, Eric and Enid the romantic lovers, Tristan and Isolde the victims of love. These characters have become European symbols which, like the beauty of Helen or the bravery of Aeneis, stir our emotions. The adventures of none of them, however, have aroused as much interest as the adventures of Parzival, the best knight in the world. Not only did his story achieve immediate popularity (some twelve versions, each of them containing original material, were composed within forty years of his first appearance), but variations on the theme have continued to appear through the ages. Due perhaps to the fascination which his story exercises over us, scholars of both the dry as dust and the highly imaginative types have obscured his story and his significance by murky controversy.

The facts of importance to this inquiry are roughly as follows. About the year 1180, Chrestien de Troyes, writing now under the patronage of Philip of Flanders, began a long poem to which he gave the title *Cont del*

Graal. He died before completing it. Shortly after his death, the unfinished story was taken up by several continuators, who, as they were ignorant of Chrestien's original intention in connection with the story, added and elaborated at will. Within some ten years of Chrestien's beginning his poem, or even earlier (dates of mediaeval literature are very frequently most obscure), another author, Robert de Boron, living in England, wrote an account of the Holy Grail. About 1310, or thirty years after Chrestien may have commenced his labours, the Austrian knight, Wolfram von Eschenbach, treated the story which Chrestien had written, adding, however, two sections at the beginning which give an account of Parzival's parentage, and two sections at the end which round the story off and connect it more closely with the story of the Holy Grail than the portion which Chrestien wrote.

The versions of Chrestien and Wolfram may be selected for comparison. The story which Chrestien here attaches to the Arthurian cycle and the quest of the Holy Grail is one of the most popular of all forms of phantasy. Scholars are in the habit of referring to it as the Great Fool theme, but it is probably better known to the modern public than even the story of Tarzan. The hero, who is represented as having lived close to nature and far from the haunts of men, crude in his manners and rough of speech but with a heart of gold, is destined—as which of us has not hoped for himself—to become recognized as the best man in the world. As the theme has fascinated American romancers and biographers who depict the rise of an ignorant country boy to a position of trust and honour in a marble bank, so, too, did it fascinate the mediaeval romancers, Chrestien and his followers.

Chrestien tells us that the son of a widow had been brought up in the forest because his mother, broken-hearted at the loss of husband and brothers, wished to keep him ignorant of knightly deeds. On a spring day he met four knights from the court of Arthur whom he mistook for angels. He insisted on going to court and on being made a knight. His mother gave him good

advice to be of service to ladies and to demand from them in return a kiss or a ring, to inquire the names of his fellow travellers and the like. With the advice she also gave him the worst nag she could find and ancient accoutrements.

Thus ridiculously equipped he sets out for adventure and finds it. He reaches the court of King Arthur. The good king is unhappy. A knight in a beautiful red armour has taken his golden cup and none dares avenge the insult. Parzival behaves like a yokel, demands to be made a knight and is sent after the knight in the red armour. A silent maiden in the court laughs and says that he will become the best knight in the world. Kay, the difficult seneschal, slaps her face. Parzival slays the red knight, but he is such a booby that he is unable to get the armour off the corpse and is planning to burn the body out of the armour when advice is given him. At the cell of a hermit he is given instruction, told not to be so foolish and is dubbed knight. Men of the world, he is told, do not constantly quote the advice their mothers gave them, nor do they constantly ask impertinent questions. After having demonstrated the value of this advice by acquiring a mistress and slaying her persecutor, Parzival proceeds on his way.

At night he comes to a stream and his way is barred by a steep rock. Two men are fishing in the stream. He is told that he must ride a perilous path and he will reach a castle. At the castle he is evidently expected. His armour is removed and he is clad in a scarlet robe and ushered into the presence of the lord. He is given a sword, which, it is said, was adjudged and destined for him. A mysterious procession appears, a squire holding upright a lance from which blood runs down on the squire's hand, a maiden holding a "Graal" which shines so that it puts out the light of the candles and a damsel holding a silver plate, attendants bearing candles. Although Parzival's curiosity has been aroused to the utmost, he remembers that gentlemen do not ask questions and chats, during the procession, of other matters. In the morning the castle is deserted. He meets a weeping maiden who upbraids him. For had he inquired as

to the meaning of the procession, great good would have come of it.

More adventures follow. On a winter day, Arthur and his court come upon Parzival who is gazing at three drops of blood on the white snow, lost in thought of his mistress, of the red of her lips and the white of her skin, whom he has forgotten. The knights fail to arouse him and when they attack him he overthrows them without coming out of his reverie. It is only when Gawain, the ideal man of the world, approaches him with courteous conversation that Parzival comes to himself. He has realized the ideal of the correct lover.

The story as Chrestien told it would be fairly simple were it not for the continuations that have been made. It is clearly the story of the great fool, who becomes the best man in the world, a study in etiquette, implemented by the Grail story or the story of the magic talisman. This talisman, common in the folklore of all nations, may have various functions. Sometimes it supplies food and drink for countless guests. Sometimes it brings happiness, or again it may cure a mysterious illness. Chrestien was not only a courtier and something of a snob, but he was also a man of gentle breeding, passionately interested in polite behaviour. If the plots of most of his novels do not turn upon the question of behaviour, his interest in this question is, nevertheless, pervasive. His decision to present in this last and greatest of romances the development of Parzival from a yokel to a gentleman, was either a fortunate accident or a stroke of genius.

4

WOLFRAM'S German account differs from Chrestien's in imaginative grasp rather than in order of events. Although Wolfram feels himself free to add an introductory section and to expand individual lines many-fold, yet he follows very closely the story which Chrestien presented, frequently making use of Chrestien's own phrases, translated and sometimes mis-translated into German. The great difference between the two, however, is in this—that whereas Chrestien was concerned with presenting an account of the best knight in the world,

defined in terms of chivalric behaviour, Wolfram presented us with the ideal of the " great " knight. Chrestien's Parzival, in failing to ask the question as the Grail passed, committed a social error, for which he was punished by being dismissed from the castle until he should learn better manners. Wolfram's Parzival, in failing to ask the question, sinned against humanity by failing to show adequate sympathy. But the difference goes even deeper. By means of his rugged style, frequently obscure, and frequently mystical, Wolfram shrouds his Parzival in a mist of German wonder at a world controlled by forces which we cannot understand until we have suffered bitterly. The company of the Grail is a select band of pure knights prohibited from indulgence in courtly love—only the keeper of the Grail Castle may be married—defending the mystic Grail and exercising a spiritual authority over the affairs of men greater than that of the pope. Parzival, destined to become the leader of this band, after he had freed himself from sin and proved his right to this exalted position, is debarred from the company on his first visit because he fails to ask the liberating question at the proper time of the proper people, but his failure is not a failure, as it is with Chrestien, in etiquette. There are no social rights and wrongs to the situation. Throughout his adventures he is impelled to seek again the castle which he cannot find, for many years to forget God and rediscover Him again, until finally destiny has been fulfilled. He is recalled to the castle, finds the question, and after these trials is acclaimed the great man.[1] The adventures which in Chrestien are incoherent have in Wolfram a quality of compulsion. They, like the question at the castle, are in a world which is outside of reason. If he could once again be in that happy situation, and if when there he could ask the question, all would be made clear to him. The world would again become orderly and regular, the meaning of life would be clear.

If we separate the work of Chrestien from the work of his continuators, and particularly from the religious mystical account of Robert de Boron—the differences

[1] His son is Lohengrin and his nephew is Prester John.

between two types of national phantasy are clear. Whereas in Chrestien love and theology, though presented in a sprightly manner—Chrestien and Horace are perhaps two of the finest gentlemen who have ever occupied themselves with letters—are conventional and serve the conventional purpose of developing a conventional knight; in Wolfram love becomes love of humanity and theology becomes knowledge of God and the two remain modalities through which man blunders until he attains beatitude. Wolfram, however, though he was a mystic, was by no means an ascetic. No ascetic could have been attracted to the story of Chrestien. Wolfram was a man of the world, a knight, traveller, courtier. But he was a German man of the world, to whom destiny presents questions to which, he had the thought, the answer could be found, for which he had the fear he would never find the answer. Parzival is a record of this thought and fear.

5

THE four families of book which have been taking up our thought in this section, that is Turoldus' *Roland*, Geoffrey's imaginative and administrative history, Chrestien's novels and Wolfram's redevelopment of those novels, may be taken to present the beginnings of the three or four characteristic attitudes which I have suggested are to be found running through the imaginations of the English, French and German literatures. These are, to be sure, only the beginnings, the first stirrings of these imaginations. Language, matter and aspiration were still green. Turoldus was doing a new thing in a new language. Geoffrey, writing in Latin, took much of his material from Celtic imagination and was to produce a book for the English; Chrestien, taking some at least of his material from Geoffrey, writing in a language scarcely less new than the language of Turoldus, though influenced strongly by his reading of Horace and the sweet songs of the troubadours, in still another language was writing for a very polite, not to say fastidious, court. Wolfram, the German, derived certainly from Chrestien from whom he got his theme,

the education of the hero, which he sharpened and pointed in a new direction.

The *Nibelungen* presents still another kind of situation. The author of this Middle High German poem was writing at about the same time as Chrestien, that is, a little after Geoffrey and a little before Wolfram. If Wolfram was operating on French or Franco-Anglo-Celtic materials, the author of the *Nibelungen* was operating on materials which are undoubtedly Germanic if not simply German.

The intention of this author is clear. It was to write a courtly epic and, as the courts were Christian, it must be also to write a Christian epic. Turoldus and his followers looked back to Charlemagne. Geoffrey and Chrestien looked to Arthur. The German poet looked back to a cycle of story that had received high literary development before either Charlemagne or Arthur made their appearances. Sources and origins are, as always, obscure, nor are they germane to this inquiry. This, however, is clear and it is of the utmost importance, the Nibelungen material was the stuff of German heroic poetry and had been the stuff of that heroic poetry for five hundred years, from the time before the Germanic peoples first came into serious conflict with the Roman imperium. It was in a real sense an epic matrix. Although it refers to events which occurred in Burgundy, we find it in the Ninth Century far to the north-west in Iceland, a little earlier than that in England, a little later in the Rhine country. Beowulf is a branch of it. The monkish Latin Waltharius gives us a version. It has been treated, transformed and dressed up by authors of various tribes and enriched by the copious epic diction of the old Germanic dialects. It was murky red and gold, pagan and bloody. It was a collection of great stories, and perhaps the strangest puzzle in this tangled problem is why others should not have reached back, overleaping that which in their own courts was so bright and new and fresh and efficient to take some of the older themes and bend these themes to their purposes. That they did not may of itself be evidence of the feeling of progress, the feeling that the new age needed new dreams.

One author, however, did reach back, taking the story as a whole and adapting it in a significant manner to the style of the courtly epic. He left out a large number of episodes which were at hand and were necessary to make the matter clear and substituted mystery for circumstance.

Several of the episodes of the *Nibelungen* do not make sense. There is no reasonable explanation for making the tragic action turn on the quarrel, the Sunday morning babble of the terrible Kriemhild and the Amazonian Brunhild. The quarrel begins by one woman saying to the other, " My husband's a better man than yours," to which Kriemhild replies, " If you value your peace of mind, you'd better make no more statements of that kind." It rises to its height when Kriemhild calls Brunhild a whore and shows her ring and girdle, the latter apparently an intimate piece of ladies' night apparel, richly studded with jewels, which, according to Kriemhild, her husband had stolen from Brunhild the night he lay with her. Brunhild calls her husband. The king calls his warriors and Siegfried. Siegfried like a gentleman denies the episode and it occurs to none to ask for an explanation of the ring and the girdle . . . none, that is, except Brunhild, who arranges for Siegfried's murder. The reader of the poem is given no explanation as to how Siegfried got the girdle or as to the basis for Kriemhild's charge, or as to the reasons why the court was willing to permit so serious a charge to pass without further investigation. The German scholars have explained away the difficulty by reminding us that whoever knows his history of literature—and implying that the lords and ladies of the Austrian court of the Twelfth Century knew theirs as well as the modern professors of Germanistics—will remember that in earlier versions the episode is quite clear. Brunhild is to marry only the man who is stronger than she. Siegfried is the man. Having overcome her once in the games, he is given a potion and caused to forget her. Later he becomes involved with Kriemhild, sister of King Gunther and Gunther desires Brunhild. As Gunther is less strong than Siegfried, Siegfried, with his cloak of invisibility,

assists Gunther in the games. On Gunther's wedding night, his powerful bride picks him up and hangs him on the wall. Gunther, humiliated, again asks help which is again given, but this time Siegfried takes the ring and the girdle with its jewels. All of this is quite clear in historical perspective, but the question is: Was it clear to the audience which heard it?

It may, however, be urged that the incoherence of the episode in the later version and its bad articulation serve another purpose, and one more close, as we are to see with increasing clarity, to the needs of the German imagination. The ring and the girdle and Siegfried's supposed adultery are of no importance as objects or as an action. (Kriemhild seems rather proud of the fact that her husband was unfaithful with the king's, her brother's, wife.) Actions and things have no motive or reason. Only emotions have coherence. Siegfried denied the adultery on oath and the king accepted the denial. Both agreed to tell their wives to talk less. But Brunhild's emotion aroused by Kriemhild's accusation continued to grow and this emotion carried along with it the resentments of the lesser knights of the court, bringing all down in the great fight which concludes the poem some six thousand verses later.

After Siegfried's death, Attila, King of the Huns, marries and falls in love with Kriemhild (at night, "in his arms enclosed he held her, as he was wont alway to caress the noble lady, she was to him as life"). But nothing comes out right. Gunther's and Siegfried's marriages fail for no particular reason. Gunther and Attila with all of their courts are destroyed in one of the most sanguinary and cruel battles of all literature, and again for no adequate reason except the emotion of a neurotic woman. The battle was fought treacherously—it was no more than a massacre by Kriemhild of her house-guests who were her own brothers—to avenge the death of Siegfried. Siegfried was slain, treacherously, because of Brunhild's quarrel with Kriemhild. Whether or not Siegfried actually did commit adultery appears to be of slight importance to the narrator of this version, and if this central point of motivation was omitted

when lesser motives were clearly indicated, we may conclude that it was of some importance to him to have this point vague.

That this author was a writer of considerable ability is seen in another deviation from his original. In the Eddic and Volsung versions of this same story, put into writing in Iceland a few centuries earlier, Kriemhild is given a drinking potion, forgets Siegfried, and marries Attila. Attila, assiduous in the attempt to increase his possessions at the expense of his neighbours, invites Kriemhild's brothers to a feast and there, despite Kriemhild's opposition and her attempts to warn her brothers, slays them all. This is all changed. The carnage which concludes the poem is an effect of Kriemhild's nerves and results from her determination to avenge the death of her husband. The movement of these passages is brilliant. At first Kriemhild is shocked by Siegfried's murder, then tracing the deed to the instigations of Brunhild and the hand of Hagen, makes bold accusation. From that time forward the brothers are eager to get her away from their capital city. She refuses to return to the court of Siegfried's father, nor is it until Attila's messenger assures her that she will be avenged for all ills that she consents to go with him. She is a woman of one emotion, as shrewd and cruel in the carrying out of her revenge as she was vain and bold in her taunts at Brunhild. This cruelty and this vengeance derive from emotion, her love and pride in her husband, transformed by his death.

To assert that the author of the *Nibelungenlied* omitted, because of an oversight, to account for Kriemhild's boasting is to do his art an injustice. By this omission he raised the poem one step higher than the brilliant social and psychological novel it would have remained had the account been inserted. He gave it that quality of mystery, of terrible things happening for no particular reason, which we are to see later in Luther and Faust, Grimmelshausen and Nietzsche.[1]

[1] The question of the author's intention is here of importance. Unfortunately neither critics nor authors know enough about why authors do things to present an account of the process. I do not, however,

By the end of the Twelfth Century the beginnings had been made and the directions of imagination which we were able to trace faintly at the court of Charlemagne have defined a course which they are to follow for a hundred years or more.

The Anglo-Norman Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his Latin history, gave the English a hero who, in his wise action and administrative skill, was to remain with them until the present.

In Chrestien de Troyes' love stories, Anglo-Norman material becomes French.

Wolfram, the German, domesticates French imagination to the needs of German phantasy and the unknown author of the *Nibelungenlied* using German material writes a German poem in the French manner.

wish to imply that he proposed to himself particular reasons why an account of this motive was better omitted. It is sufficient for us to observe that this omission served the needs of his phantasy.

CHAPTER V

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

IN the area of a hundred and fifty years which falls roughly between 1250 and 1400, between, let us say, the composition of the first part of the Romance of the Rose and the death of Chaucer, the directions of imagination became clarified. Although there might, in the Twelfth Century, have been some doubt as to the qualities of a Wolfram treating a French theme in a German manner or of the author of the *Nibelungenlied* treating a German theme in the French manner ; in the Fourteenth and late Thirteenth Centuries, the German mystics, brooding over a world which, because it escapes analysis remains a world of mystery, and the authors of the lyric German Volkslieder, are unequivocally German. In France, through the *Roman de la Rose*, action becomes disguised in a complicated allegory and, if successful composition in a given genre may be taken as evidence that the imaginations of the people who composed in that genre were at home in it, the popularity of the *Roman de la Rose* both in France and abroad may be taken as symptomatic of the quality of French imagination. In England the quality of imagination is cleft : Chaucer and Langland, though the accents in which they speak differ greatly, are sharply aware, each in his own way, of the bright fields, the things, of space and time, laughter and frustration.

In these three territories events had been proceeding at vastly different rates of speed. In order to get a glimpse of the peculiar ways events in the history of literature seem to cluster in time and space, it is necessary to glance back briefly on the fifty years of the Twelfth Century which have occupied, perhaps, too much of our attention already.

Whatever may be the reader's judgment as to the ulti-

mate value to him of the events of these fifty years, all will agree, I think, that these were years of extraordinary and intense literary activity. This activity had a distinction—in so far as it influenced literatures in widely different areas and languages for several hundred years to come—which is comparable to the literary activities of the two other earlier periods of great energy, namely the Fifth Century before Christ in Greece and the last century of the pagan era in Rome. The Twelfth Century was, with the rise of the *chansons de geste*, the Arthurian material, the romances of antiquity, with its historical and pseudo-historical writers, its scientists, the epic of Reynard, the fabliaux, the troubadours, Chrestien, Marie de France and the beginnings of the German Minnesang, a golden age in literature. The three languages which were most used at this time were Norman-French with the French dialects, Latin and German.

I

WITH the beginning of the Fourteenth Century that peculiar weariness, staleness and flatness which inevitably comes into a language after it has been used with great effectiveness in literary discussion made its appearance in the Norman-French (and Anglo-Norman dialects) as well as the other languages—Provençal, for example—which had been enjoying great literary prosperity for more than two centuries. The mediaeval renaissance died in France.

Philosophers of the history of literature like to speculate upon the causes of new literary movements, but are frequently content with dismissing the death or decay of a movement by finding in its mortality the beginnings of new interests. Inasmuch as literature has a great deal to do with language and inasmuch as when a literature is particularly effective the linguistic symbols which are the instruments of this effectiveness may be thought of as being charged or overcharged with meanings—powerful stimuli to thinking and feeling, it may appear that the end of a literary movement has to do with the wearing down of the linguistic symbols. The words no longer serve in the stimulation of feeling. The old and effective

combinations still carry their power but it becomes impossible to create new combinations.

It is clear that a definite relation exists between the state of language and the beginning of a new movement. When, for example, Europeans came to the decision that they wished to create in the vulgar tongue a vernacular literature which would be comparable in scope and in finish to the literatures of Greece and Rome, they discovered that a term of apprenticeship in the vernacular was required. Not only was a great amount of experimentation necessary, before even Rome could produce its Latin Cicero, but Dante's *Comedy* and *New Life* did not appear until after the Italian language had been prepared by the experiments of the court of Frederick II and the Italianate Troubadours. The problem in modern China, which is far enough away to be taken as a control on these speculations, is not without interest in helping us to get clear on the question of the relation between language and literary movement. Until recently the literature of China was written in a language which in some ways bore the same relation to spoken language as mediaeval Latin bore to French or Italian. In 1918 a movement was begun to write the new Chinese literature in the spoken language, but in its present state the spoken language seems to be incapable of producing an effective literature. The words lack point, grammar is uncertain, references are vague. A process of refinement is necessary to give precision to the symbols of communication. In Europe the problem was seen and in some ways apprehended by DuBellay and his associates of the French Pléiade in the Sixteenth Century, when they set about their systematic importations to bring refinement into the spoken language. We shall have occasion to refer to this question in a different connection later. (Cf. Chapter VI.) But for the present it may be sufficient to point out that if exercise is necessary to prepare a language for literary power, the end of a period may be marked by a corresponding decay of linguistic function. The words become too well known, the meanings which the words elicit are too clearly the particular property of the particular words used. At the same time that ambiguity disap-

pears meanings become more generalized. The responses to words become responses to ideas and that complex state of emotional excitement which it is the business of literature to produce and to allay, fails to put in its appearance. The technique of writing is too well understood, the journeyman poet follows a formula that has been developed by his masters. Under unusual circumstances, to be sure, writers have appeared at this point in the history of literary cycles and have, like a Milton, turned all of the experience of past literature to their own advantage. But these are the exceptions. The usual case is that of France in the late Thirteenth and all of the Fourteenth Century, up to the time of the Rhetoriquers, who by an extraordinary elaboration of metrical formula, succeeded, whilst re-working old themes, in producing poems that are readable, but ineffably dull. For, given a minimum of verbal ingenuity, it is impossible to write very bad verse in the forms made use of by these French writers, so too, is it very difficult to write good poetry. In a generalization of this kind Villon must always be a problem, but he will be dealt with in a moment. The fact seems to be that the *Roman de la Rose* was the last sparkler of the French mediaeval renaissance. After it came the Machaults, the Philipe D'Orleans and their followers and imitators. It is not that these men lack skill, nor even, in the case of Philipe, a touch of personality, but they were suffocated by their literary medium.

Although a situation of this kind produces little literature that is memorable, and a great deal that is better forgotten, it displays the mechanism of imagination and the national preoccupation somewhat better than those other periods that are dominated by big names. In working through the writers of such a period as the French Fourteenth Century, one has the sense that these people are re-telling old story. Attempts to strike into new territory are stillborn, feeling seems to be more nearly dead than could be possible in any historical period. The themes remain and they are, characteristically for France, erotic adventure in which the inhibitions come to take on, more than they have in the past, the tone of the drawing-room. The question of what would please a lady remains

as important in the Fourteenth as it had been in the Twelfth Century. There is a sharper distinction between polite literature and vulgar literature than there had been before. Because the language is worn out, or perhaps because it is over-refined allegory, a highly complex system of symbols takes the place of and dissipates a great amount of feeling. The vulgar literature, the fablieux, was of a kind that when it survives into modern times, except in the pages of a Chaucer, Boccaccio or Antoine de la Salle, is referred to as smoking-room stories or worse. The characteristic theme of these tales is a triangle and frequently the stories turn about a husband, a wife and a priest, and how one of them with a partner, deceives the third in erotic behaviour which is sometimes high spirited and amusing and at others only ingenious. In these accounts the prohibitions are destroyed. They are tales of action, but, again characteristically, tales of erotic action. To be sure, they are vulgar tales, but the term vulgar is here used in a somewhat technical sense. They were read and enjoyed by members of all classes, indeed one of the best collections we have of them was made by Margaret, the vivacious Queen of Navarre. Their vulgarity, in the sense that is in which the Fourteenth Century thought them vulgar, appears to rest upon a disability which has always affected prose, upon the thought that they are too easy to do. The writing of verse might be called another story. Here the action of the emotions is what Fourteenth-Century France thought it should be, professions restrained by good taste and action limited by the proprieties.

2

FOURTEENTH-CENTURY England presents a different picture, and one which it is somewhat difficult to understand except in the linguistic terms I have been throwing out as suggestions in the last paragraphs. For if French literature of the Fourteenth Century is dead, English literature with its Chaucer, Langland and the anonymous ballads, is very much alive. This aliveness, a fresh and vibrant vitality, this joy in the youth of the language, at times playing tricks with words, like a swimmer joyous

in a new stream, can hardly be explained in any except linguistic terms. The English people, who in the Fourteenth Century produced an excellent literature in the English language, were the same as those who in the Thirteenth Century had been producing an inept literature in Norman French, and a literature in English which was, at best, somewhat commonplace. (*Orms Ormulum* has been described with great accuracy as the world's dullest composition.) Although the Fourteenth Century was prosperous, it was not much more prosperous than the Thirteenth Century and the Black Death gave it a set-back which the Thirteenth Century had not experienced.

It may be that the England of the Fourteenth Century found itself in its own language as the England of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, projecting imagination through Anglo-Norman and Latin, had not found itself. It appears as though the mediaeval renaissance, which had prospered so greatly in the Twelfth Century in the French dialect, suddenly reappeared in England in the Fourteenth Century in the English dialect; that, however well Geoffrey and the polite Norman-French poets had been able to weave pictures in the fringe of the English imagination, the texture could not become complete and the design well knit until the people of this island returned to their traditional speech. The mediaeval renaissance in England was retarded by the linguistic barrier, when that was removed it poured out in full flood.

But another factor entered to complicate the situation. While the England of the Fourteenth Century was enjoying this belated mediaeval renaissance, others, notably Petrarch in Avignon and Italy, were beginning to make those first tentative explorations which were to lead to the classical renaissance. Even apart from literature, a new spirit was making itself felt in European life, a new kind of individualism was appearing. Men were paying more attention to fact and the organization of facts and less attention to meanings which were at times psychological, at times esoteric. And in these beginnings we see Europeans turning once more to actualities that are physical and hard and independent of human volition, to

develop later into what we frequently call, without either blush or apology, the modern scientific method.

The English phantasy of the Fourteenth Century is thus seen to have been determined by two factors—one clearly linguistic, of which the Fourteenth Century was fully aware, and the other historical which worked as a ferment in the imagination, raising strange structures which were not always healthful. Chaucer and Langland serve as illustrations for both of these. Linguistically these two poets belong to different parties although they both wrote English. Chaucer, the courtier, made an easy transition from the Norman-French to courtly English. He appears to have known the tricks of French rhetoric as well as the most pedantic of his contemporaries, and had he chosen to write in the French he would possibly have written as badly as they. (It is perhaps not sufficiently understood that when Chaucer is bad he is awful.) But Chaucer did not habitually write in French and that historical accident adds another star to English literature. It is clear that he had the craftsman's joy in achievement, but, as he was writing in the vulgar tongue, he spoke of himself only as a maker, never as a poet, for poetry requires Latin, the more dignified medium and allegory, the more noble purpose. He was aware too that careless scribes would do their worst in copying his epigrams, ruining many and leaving others unintelligible. But the fact remains that he wrote in English and, having trained his ear in French, and making use of a comparatively unfamiliar idiom, he gave the old formulae a new brightness. His sense, for example, of the vitalizing adjective, of the one word chosen from a dozen at his disposal which would give the noun it was attached to a power of penetration, was a great deal more than the accident of genius. It was the operation of a well-schooled temperament, sharpened by a transition from one linguistic medium to another. Nor was his pleasure in experiment merely an accident. As a bi-lingual Englishman he had two vocabularies from which he might choose to satisfy his appetites; sometimes he took a French word and kept the French pronunciation, at others, by a change of accent, he anglicized it, or again, he translated it into English, boldly

and at times crassly. It requires something more than an effort of imagination on our part to remember what fun it must have been to say that a man is " in good point " when we are thinking that he has *embonpoint.*

In opposition to this, Langland was much more of a true-born Englishman. There can be little doubt that he was a gentleman and very well read. (Scholars have only lately come to see that one may write of the lower classes without being one of them. Although Langland was not a courtier, he was clearly at home in the best literature of his period.) Langland was making use of a dialect which in its tone, and to a lesser extent in its vocabulary and structure, and to a very great extent in its intention and feeling, was notably different from Chaucer's. The difference in tone is perhaps easiest to grasp. Chaucer wrote in a smooth meter determined by the number of syllables in each line, reconstructing his English rhythms from the rhythms he had learned in French. Most of his lines were of ten syllables, though an eleventh was sometimes added for a weak ending. When they appear to have eight or nine or twelve or thirteen, the fault may be ours or Chaucer's, but there can be no doubt that the ten-syllable line was the form through which his imagination flowed and into which his words arranged themselves, regular, and allowing for small variations of rhythm only when the form is well understood, completely felt, and when these variations act as a surprise. Langland made the attempt—and if we allow for the fact that our ears are no longer used to it, it was a very successful attempt —to apply the older English alliterative measures. The number of syllables is indefinite, the accents are usually kept at about four and they are very strong accents, made more emphatic by alliteration. The recurrent initial consonant acts on our ears like the beating of a gong. The effect here is of shouting and of syncopation, although even in Langland there are moments of a kind of rough sweetness, but the ear comes to anticipate wide variations of rhythmic structure, action is here and freed. Poetry becomes an irregular movement, modulated and restrained only by the requirements of the general plan and that plan was characteristically a dream. Langland is thus

closer to the English tradition. No satisfactory explanation has yet come to light as to why he should have chosen the English form and Chaucer should have chosen the French. It seems probable, however, that throughout the Thirteenth Century there were more literary centres in England producing oral if not written literature than have recorded themselves on the pages of history. From Norwegian sources, for example, we can assure ourselves that there was very extensive literary commerce between Norway and Scotland and—the differences of languages being what they are—it is probable that if the Nordic skalds came to Scotland they did so for business purposes, in which case they sang their songs in the only forms known to them, the Germanic alliterative measures. It becomes probable, therefore, that there were people in the Thirteenth and early Fourteenth Century on the island of England who were finding entertainment in a literature which in form and structure was very different from the kind of literature that was being produced in the Anglo-Norman court of London. The editor of the learned and moral Gower has noticed the influence of this kind of literature in Gower's Norman-French. Nor indeed is Chaucer's syllabism entirely free from it and we frequently have the feeling that even Chaucer's ear had in it the echoes of English alliterative verse.

Linguistically, therefore, Chaucer, by adapting English phantasy to French form, liberated new powers in the English language and Langland, by making application of whatever English practice there may have been in the north and east, raised it above anything else that has been preserved to us. They are the English mediaeval renaissance.

You may take Gower and you may do with him whatever you please. He wrote indifferently in English, Latin and Norman-French. He was very moral in his youth —one takes his word for it, Chaucer seems to have had doubts about it—and in his age he makes his *Confession of Love*. This, his best poem, in middle English, gets what little power it has from the mechanism which Chaucer operated much more effectively, namely the translation of Norman-French shoddy devices into a fresh

language. I cannot be greatly moved by the fact that Gower's ballads, the mature homage of a middle-aged gentleman are, " as good as anything that had appeared in French up to that date ". Gower is a dot in the historical current which, if the proper data had been supplied, might have been predicted. Chaucer and Langland were constellations. Both the latter are English. Both are Fourteenth Century and each is a brilliant illustration of his own aspect of the period.

At this point the historical moment enters, for Chaucer is as much a part of the Renaissance, looking forward into the new world of science, as Langland is a part of the Middle Ages, but a Middle Ages hag-ridden by theology which even in the Fourteenth Century was producing Wycliffe and his men and which was some centuries later to culminate in the scandals of the puritan state and not so many years ago to manifest itself in Marxian communism as one aspect, and the Tennessee trial in America as another. But still another factor enters, giving a third meaning to the imaginative endeavours of these writers. For whereas Chaucer, with his bright words and easy manners, derives from France, Langland with his mysticism, his indefinite outlines, his dream with its circular structure in which one scene melts into the other, neither beginning nor end, actuality giving way to feeling, and feeling crystallizing itself as allegory, is the German limb of our imaginative inheritance.

3

THE things that were happening to the German imagination had similar significance. The German-speaking peoples had in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries experienced a literary renaissance no less powerful than the one which had swept through the French-speaking peoples. Troubadourism in Germany had become Minnesang and Minnesang had embraced also the singing of long narrative poems, French in theme and plot but German in their expiration. The German writers were closer to the people. Their language retained, long after the French and English languages had lost it, a pliability and a readiness to accept vulgarisms from the popular

speech. The vulgarity or refinement of a world is not a function of the thing it refers to. Heine in the Nineteenth Century and Goethe a few years earlier speak without blushing of the shirts of their mistresses. In German " swinemeat " is still " swine meat " and not pork. The distinctions are commonplace, their significance is not. This significance lies in the fact that the German imagination is less concerned with the things of the earth than either of the other imaginations with which we are treating. The effects on the feelings, and only the effects, are of importance. Feeling suffuses things and gives them significance. It is only when we can get ourselves into a state to accept this arrangement of values that German literature comes to have meaning for us. But the things of the earth, in our experiences of every day, have a bad habit of getting in the way of our feelings, and this produces new difficulties. For the moment it is sufficient to point out that the German Minnesinger who inspired in French and expired in German had a deserved success but that this success ceased in the Thirteenth Century and ceased for somewhat the same reasons that caused the decline in France. The world got too well educated, the tricks became too well known. Writing poetry came to be the evening pleasure of the master workmen. With laudable zeal these cobblers and carpenters drew up lists of the mistakes one might make in the writing of a poem. He who made the fewest mistakes was adjudged the best poet. Finally he attained the rank of Master Singer, but except in one instance missed immortality by a wide range.

However, the two facts which must arouse the wonder and admiration of posterity in German literature are, the development of mysticism and the collection of the folk-songs. German mysticism was an effect of the development of public opinion. The folk-songs are the expression of what modern psychology would call the libido. The two of them are two modes of German imagination. The one confuses itself with a kind of metaphysic which for 400 years has been regarded as the particular property of the German people ; the other has been for the same length of time the expression of the German psyche. But

the two of them complement each other as clearly as English etiquette and English behaviour, or as clearly as French reason and French expression.

The German mysticism of the Fourteenth Century, Master Eckhardt and his followers, is one of the problems of philosophy only because philosophers fail to have any ideas about the German libido. This libido is concerned not with the things of the flesh, nor with the facts of human behaviour, nor with what happens when two atoms of hydrogen are brought into intimate contact with one atom of oxygen; but rather with the effects of these facts, if in the Twentieth Century you admit that they are facts, on the human emotions. For let it be understood that German poetry will never sing to you and the German cultural complex, whether it be dominated by a Hitler or a Hohenzollern, will never have meaning for you until the facts become less important for you than the feelings that are connected with them.

In the Fourteenth Century Germany almost anticipated the events of the Eighteenth Century. For in the Fourteenth Century Germany was concerned about a kind of reality which was of dominant interest to the Eighteenth. In one sense we might think of the German Fourteenth Century as of the development of the mediaeval renaissance. But the mediaeval renaissance was dead. The words, the clichés, the poetic phrases, the compliments upon which the mediaeval renaissance had relied for its life were no longer effective. The literary movement in Germany, as made clear by the Meistersingers who opposed themselves to the Minnesingers, were dead, a stench in the nostrils, and only Master Hans Sachs could arise above the putridity, giving himself, by that kind of historical accident which does but should not amaze historians, a position in the history of literature.

And for the rest there remain the folk-songs and the mystics.

The German mystics have a great deal to say to the Twentieth Century and I wish that I could make their speech clear. If the notes of these pages are adequately apprehended the message of the mystics will be made clear. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that the things

I am trying to say are somewhat in the air, I take it upon myself to point out that mysticism does not mean vagueness, and that the German mystics of the Fourteenth Century had a somewhat better idea of what they were about than Sir James Jeans, the arch-mystic of the Twentieth Century. Sir James confines himself to mathematical propositions and the Germans restrict themselves to emotional situations. One may choose between them and one may prefer mathematics. Nevertheless the emotion boils up, creates its own symbols and expresses itself in terms so ambiguous that they themselves create a feeling and this feeling defines itself in a philosophy. German mysticism of the Fourteenth Century is feeling about God, a mysterious universe which escapes analysis. Luther, 200 years later, was to provide a formula. But do not let us be deceived by a phrase. The emotion dominates action. Mystics are not vague. They know exactly what the world is made of, it is made of feelings. Our task —and that is, in particular, the task of the Germans—is to bring feeling into some kind of a relation with words. The nature of this relation is one of the problems of the philosophers. Book has been written upon book in the attempt to make it clear, but the failure has been in the vague way we have tried to make words connect with facts. For emotion boils up into words and words themselves make emotions. The German mystics, Master Eckhardt and his followers, were trying to give a description of that which was very clear to them, their feeling not about the world they lived in, but their feeling about themselves. This was for them the ultimate reality. They tell you how to develop that feeling: what to give to the poor, what to eat, what to get along without, and if you follow their rules, you will know what it is all about, not perhaps as well as they, but in terms which will be unmistakable. They give you a discipline of life. It is for you to find the meaning and that meaning they themselves understand.

4

THE writers of the *Volkslieder* give you the facts. The German Volkslied has nothing to do with theory. It is the direct expression of emotion. That most of these

emotions are concerned with love is understandable, partly in terms of the tradition which has been established by the troubadours, and partly in terms of the tradition which has been combated by Christianity ever since the Germans came into conflict with the Romans. Rome made Germany self-conscious about love. Since Charlemagne Germany has been willing neither to accept (as in the wild days after the War) or to reject (as in the wild days after Mr. Hitler) the expression of the amatory emotions. The German Volkslied does not tell a story, and this is its point of difference with the English ballad. It is characteristically, although exceptions may be made to this statement, the expression of feeling. The nun Clara, who collected the German Volkslied, was not collecting stories, she was collecting emotions, boys and girls in love who could not get married, boys and girls in love who did get married, young persons like this and that who had this and that difficulty. But her interest was not in the difficulty, it was rather in the emotion that the difficulty created.

Compare this with the English ballad. The English ballad is a story. The English ballad tells you about what happened. You may not be quite clear about what happened, but the ballad is. If you put yourself back into the state of mind of a crowd sitting in a beer hall of the Fourteenth Century listening to a rascal singing a song, you will get as much of what happened as is important and your interest will be in Sir Patrick Spence, who had the misfortune to be shipwrecked and out of that will grow some interest in the emotions of the ladies who were waiting on the shore. Your interest, if you are English, will be in Sir Patrick, not in the ladies. It will be in men in action, not in feelings about action, and whether that action is recollected in tranquillity or whether as in "Edward" it is presented with a certain directness, it will nevertheless be action and not feeling.

The development of the German Volkslied and the English ballad, the one with its emphasis on emotions, the other with its emphasis on story, serves an excellent illustration of the difference between those types of phantasy that I have ventured to call German and

English. It is perhaps not quite fair to point out that the French phantasy of this particular century is sterile, a playing with words, at the time when Germany and England were very much alive. Nevertheless the condition of the three imaginations is not without interest to those who amuse themselves by speculating about the differences between Germany, England and France. For if Germany and England were very much alive in this century, and if France was very dead, the reason may be, and that not by a trick only, connected with literature. If the vitality of the French imagination of the Twelfth Century was due to the insurgence of the Normans, the sterility of that same imagination in the Fourteenth Century may be due to the situation we contemplated in the earlier paragraphs of this chapter: a worn-out language, whereas the vitality of the English and the German imaginations, as may be made clear by the *Volkslieder* and the Ballads, is explained in terms of a resurgent emotion about God in Germany and a resurgent emotion about action in England.

5

THIS brings us again to the question of Chaucer and Langland. Langland, with his brooding about the mysterious ways of God, is German and in his arrangement of ideas is mediaeval. The form he chose for his poetry is in no sense modern. Thus if one is making the attempt to classify Langland, one would call him German and mediaeval. Yet he is much better than either of these. For where Langland is German, he is simply aware (and I use the word simple with full realization of its various senses) of the implications which action must always have for those who act. His dialect, the dialect in general of a more northern England than Chaucer was conscious of, and his poetic form were subordinate to this awareness. Langland brought the lower classes into literature, although the Germans, with their interest in the vulgar sweetheart ("niedere minn") had done this before in connection with individuals. Langland was the first in Europe to be clear about the fact that the lower classes were of themselves important. Before he began to write,

peasants were ridiculous. He picked up—and nobody knows where he got the idea unless it was from the peasant's rebellion—the notion that the lower classes might have some importance in the world we live in.

Chaucer's attitude toward all this was very different. For despite the dirty shepherd and the filthy sheep Chaucer's world was a very good world to live in. It was definitely modern and we need to make no effort of the imagination, or only a small one, to recreate it. Any New Yorker can identify the abbess and the monk and the hoste. They are sophisticated and if they have personal problems they are too worldly to tell us about them. Indeed, who cares about their problems. They belong to the very small closed circle, which is always a circle and always very small and always tightly closed, which knows exactly how to behave and exactly how to keep its troubles to itself.

From the point of view of the history of literature, the English situation in the Fourteenth Century shows a split between the modern and the mediaeval—Chaucer with his modern French rhythms was a representative of the new, and Langland with his Germanic rhythms was a throwback to the old. From the point of view of a comparison of literatures, however, Chaucer represents the French and Langland represents the German influence. In view of the fact that none of us has any notion as to how much Germanic imagination was being thrown into England through the north, or how much was being kept alive outside of the courts, it is extremely difficult to make a judgment between them. In both there is action recollected in tranquillity and in the one, Chaucer, that action is defined in hendecasyllables, and in the other it is defined in the four beat Germanic rhythm. Chaucer, aware of the ideas of orderly presentation that were being introduced by the Italians, Petrarch and Boccaccio, kept his stories simple and regular and concentrated his attention on character. Langland, mediaeval and German, brooding on the effects of emotion, told his stories in terms of emotion.

The Fourteenth Century thus appears to be no less a problem than the Twelfth or the Ninth. Chaucer is both

French and Classical Renaissance in his tendencies. Langland is German and mediaeval in his. In Germany mysticism and the *Volkslieder* are part of the same emotional impulse. But if we go back a hundred years the French *Roman de la Rose* seems to rise up. This is the final expression of French action inhibited by convention. Here the Lover comes into a Garden of Roses and is inhibited by Jealousy and his friends. Yet this is exactly what we might have been led to expect from our ideas of France and the French language. For the *Roman de la Rose* represents with extraordinary exactness that *timbre* which is characteristic of the French imagination. It is action so inhibited that it expresses itself in allegory and because it gives us a better allegory than has been given by any other European imagination it is, to revert to our opening sentence, the best allegory of the Thirteenth Century. Because it is the best allegory it enlarges itself over the Fourteenth, spreads into the Fifteenth and becomes the formula through which this impertinent new poetry of the Classical Renaissance is to express itself, thinking all the time that it is modern, while it is remaining very Thirteenth Century.

At the same time, then, that France, England and Germany seemed to be very mixed up, they clarify themselves :

1. Germany overlooks facts in order to get at emotions.

2. England presents stories, the stories of the Ballads, the stories of Chaucer, the stories of Langland, or even, if you please, of Gower.

3. France a hundred years earlier, in its latest creative mood, gives us the *Roman de la Rose.*

The three are characteristic. In Germany it is a question of feeling. In England it is a question of action and in France it is a question of action so inhibited that the action becomes allegory.

C. THE RENAISSANCE

MOST of the problems connected with the Classical Renaissance are semasiological. They involve not only a shift in the meanings of terms but a new attitude toward the problem of meaning itself. The languages of Europe were raised from the inferior positions they had occupied during the Middle Ages, to places of independence and dignity. The distinction between learned and lay literature disappeared and men came to see that the differences between the verbal experience induced by a Latin author and that induced by a Spenser or a Ronsard were not different in kind. The science of hermeneutics fell into a decline and the factors of meaning, no longer subject to the rigid linguistic classification of the allegorists, were liberated. This resulted in two further changes: first a new series of categories was established, generally referred to as " the categories of reason ". These were of greater or lesser, part and whole, cause and effect, of place and of time; and have to do with the organization of referent. Second, as the attempt was made to identify the verbal symbol with the referent, the peripheral and largely emotive meanings became vague. The apologists were distressed by this. Dimly they understood that the experience of literature has to do with the emotions, and, in a confused way, is not dissimilar to the experience of religion. The values of the experience of literature were described in terms similar to those used in discussions of the experience of religion and confused with those used in the accounts of logic. Beginning with the Sixteenth Century, Europe has paid excessive attention to getting its words attached to things, one word to one referent; and slight attention to the functions of the linguistic instrument.

In the 300 years which follow, European writers have been struggling with this problem of the emotive functions of language. The attempts to solve it have ranged from the proposition that " What a man can say well in verse he can say better in prose " to the daring and unsuccessful speculations of the Stormers and Stressers.

Yet this disruption had advantages. As, in Europe, all questions of importance get involved with theology, the dogmas of the Church were scrutinized and many of them were destroyed. The destruction of the older categories of meaning gave England, France and Germany a free field for experiment and each dis-

covered the directions which its imagination preferred. The Sixteenth Century in France was a century of programmes, in England a century of large action, in Germany a century of religious reform. Inasmuch as these changes were changes in words and their meanings, they proceeded with tumult and confusion.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISTRACTIONS OF THE CLASSICAL RENAISSANCE

THE Renaissance, in so far as it was classical, came into Europe as a distraction or a fashion, but through its contributions it took so firm a hold on European thinking and feeling that it became a part of the structure of European intelligence. It came into England, France, and Germany from Italy, and because of the way it took control of English, French, and German thinking it may be regarded for purposes of our speculation as a system of ideas through which the imagination functioned. England, France, and Germany remained what we have seen them to be : although their languages underwent some change, the directions of their phantasy were constant. New themes were introduced, and new ideas were acquired about what really is the real world. Under the Renaissance, German scholarship began that laborious search for small facts, by which Germans attempt to make their feelings intelligible if not reasonable. France found a means of reconciling her frustrations with propriety, and England somewhat less distressed by the Renaissance than Germany, and much less dominated by it than France, though she discovered a new vocabulary, maintained her independence of action.

I

ALTHOUGH the positive contributions of the Renaissance are important, the opportunities which it offered to imagination, and particularly to verbal imagination, may be found to have even greater significance. For although the Middle Ages lived in a real world, the nations of Europe seized upon the account of the world which was presented by, or consequent upon, the movements of the

Renaissance with an imaginative avidity which was considerable, both in its scope and in its intensity. The men and women of the Fifteenth and following centuries turned their attentions particularly to things and sensations, to the ways things and sensations are organized in time and space and to the reasons why they are so organized. These men and women thus offered to the writers of England, France, and Germany new symbols wherewith the phantasies of these nations might give themselves local habitation. In England, as might be expected, poetry becomes sensation. The Plantonism of Spenser was less a philosophy of pure form than it was the over-rest of a sensationalism which demonstrated that the things seen and felt, tasted, smelled and heard, had an importance which, in a mediaeval sense, was beyond the range of words. Spenser reached into the dialects and into the older speech of his fathers in an attempt to get, in words that were strange to his hearers and strange to his own ear, linguistic gestures that would define the kinds of meaning which he felt imminent and evanescent. When these failed he turned to philosophy and as neither were satisfactory, it occurred to him that perhaps the forms of English verse were the cause of his unease and here, again, he experimented with improvement of mediaeval forms and speculations on quantity in English syllables. In the end, as none of these seemed adequate, he began the greatest experiment of all, which was never completed, namely the construction of a complicated English allegory by which he might map out in politics, philosophy, ethics, in fact in all the departments of interpretation, the complex ways in which the renascent preoccupation with things and sensations stimulated him.

In France, where sensation is scrutinized with timidity, the renascent interest in the proper order and organization of sensation (or bodies and events which produce it) came to predominate. The French habit of never, or hardly ever, uttering a poem until the poet is clear as to whether that utterance will give offence or not, made itself effective in the manifesto of *The Seven*. From then on France has been as much preoccupied with how to write a poem as it has been with actual production. The

achievements of Descartes and successively of Corneille, Racine, Montesquieu, Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, the turbulence of the Querrelle des Anciens et des Modernes are witnesses to the impact of this aspect of the Renaissance upon French phantasy.

For Germany, bewildered by the question of how, theology offered a fresh and a green field. Although France and England suffered under the Reformation, they took it in their stride. Germany was rent by it, to find peace only in the aesthetico-theological formulations of the first romantic school, their predecessors and followers.

2

DURING the last twenty years it has become clear that the term classical in connection with the Renaissance is misleading. The interest in classical literature which swept through Europe with increasing force during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries was the effect of a changed attitude towards living, rather than in any simple sense of the term the cause of that changed attitude. Europeans did not read Cicero or Horace and then set out to be as much like Cicero or Horace as they could, but their reading of these authors was an effect of their desire, imperfectly understood by them and badly integrated, to get some kind of a life that would be more like the kind of life which classic literature describes. Considerable restriction must be made on the statement that the Mediaeval Renaissance was ignorant of the classics. The Middle Ages, to be sure, knew very little Greek, and were patronizing towards Homer. But it knew its Latin authors and liked them. What *did* come over the world during the Renaissance was a new way of looking at these things, and this way, as it is the road down which imagination travelled, needs to be examined.

One of the differences between the Renaissance and the Middle Ages was a difference of opinion as to how ideas should be arranged, the referents toward which they must point, and this, when it is followed back to a point somewhat nearer its source, may come to be seen as a difference of opinion on the nature of facts themselves. The Classical Renaissance did not, for example, introduce form

into literature, it merely introduced a new kind of form. Mediaeval literature, as has been pointed out on many occasions, had a great deal, indeed at times it had too much form. The Renaissance simplified it. Form in the Renaissance has characteristically three moments, beginning, middle, and end. We must not, however, conclude that the Middle Ages was unaware of beginnings, middles, and ends. These moments were as clear to any writer of the Middle Ages as they are to us (when they are clear and not merely convenient fictions by which we simplify our living). The mediaeval writer was not interested in beginnings, middles and ends. Many things do not begin, their middles are obscured and their ends are uncertain. The introduction of these convenient fictions into European living and the introduction of similar fictions into literature marks a very definite revolution, a turning away from a state of mind in which these are not important to a state of mind in which they are. Their importance has usually been said to lie in the introduction of " reason ", a vague word used to describe a situation which, though complex, is in no sense indefinite ; for again it is necessary to point out that the Middle Ages had as much " reason " as the Renaissance, but their " reason " was of a very different kind. It was not nearly as simple a " reason " as that of the Renaissance ; it was so excessively elaborate that it made use of the syllogism with its three parts to hold the facts together. It may be unimportant to you who have no belief in angels, to discover how many of them can stand on the point of a needle, but it was clearly important to those gentlemen of the Middle Ages for whom angels had as much reality as a motor car has for us. It is likely that these gentlemen would smile as impolitely at our discussions of quantum as we do at their discussions of the " realities " with which they were on intimate terms. As a reasonable man is frequently one who shares our prejudices, so the reasonable Classical Renaissance would appear to be a loose term by which we refer to the way the Classical Renaissance acted.

The Renaissance way of acting was towards simplification in the arrangement of ideas about facts. The arrangement was generally in two systems, one in time

and the other in space. A consequence of this was that the Renaissance was more interested in those things that could be arranged, that is, things themselves, bodies which can be handled and put in a line and sensation about these bodies, than it was with those things which, by their very nature, escape this kind of analysis. The Renaissance seems to have been more concerned with fact than with feeling, and in consequence, more concerned with the physical world than the world of feeling or the world of spirit. Questions of when and where came to be raised with increasing frequency and increasingly too did they bring with them the other questions of why and how. From the point of view of a thoroughgoing mediaeval gentleman, the questions of why and how are somewhat irrelevant. By some slight exaggeration, useful in helping to get clear about the matter, " why ", in the Middle Ages, would be answered in a phrase " By God's will ", and " how ", " By the grace of God ".

This simplification of thinking and concentration on those facts which are objective, that is to say, in their behaviour independent of all feeling, have had effects of the greatest importance. They produced not only the reformation of the Church and with that the decay of morals, but also science, and the whole of the modern Occidental culture. In this the reading of classical authors was a symptom rather than a cause. Yet the classicism of the Renaissance was a colourful influence on literature. The nature of this influence is somewhat complex for it went deeper than dressing up a poem with gods and goddesses (the Middle Ages had done that and done it very well). It had to do with the structure of imagination, for though the objectives of English, German and French imagination during the Renaissance remained unchanged, new means were discovered whereby these objectives were attained.

But another change began to make itself felt in the Sixteenth Century which, in its effect upon human phantasy, and consequently upon the ways in which modern Europeans live, was to be more important than those mentioned above. The text-books declare that the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance was a

transition from feeling to reason, even though an inspection of both periods will show that there was a great deal of reason in the Middle Ages and a great deal of feeling in the Renaissance; or they declare again that it was a transition from interest in the inner and spiritual world to an interest in the external and physical world. Both of these changes are noticeable. Yet both are conditioned by a transition which has not received the attention it deserves from historians of the period. This transition was a new interpretation of the kinds of meaning to be found both in literature and in sensation.

The Middle Ages were clearly and consciously aware that any statement which makes use of words had a variety of meanings. Nor is it easy for those of us living in this aftermath of the Renaissance to revitalize for ourselves the varieties of these meanings or the importance of them in the development of mediaeval culture. Philologers and linguists, strangely innocent of the problem of implication and dedicated to the clarification of literal meanings, treat the history of exegesis and hermaneutics, the science of the hidden, with cavalier condescension, and that despite the obvious fact that whatever validity we may wish to give to that science to-day, it conditioned the living and thinking of Europe and particularly the dreaming of Europe, for two thousand continuous years. The new approaches now being made to this problem, through abnormal psychology in Central Europe and through the centrist psychology of Cambridge semasiology, are independent of the achievements of these forgotten two thousand years.

Hermaneutics began and throughout its long life has continued to be associated with the interpretation of sacred literature. Sacred literature for the Jews was their historical accounts of the marvels whereby they came to be the great people they were. The Greeks regarded their Homeric poems with similar veneration. In pre-Christian times the efforts of the Jewish and Hellenistic scholars of Alexandria were devoted to an examination of the various kinds of meanings contained in these sacred books, but the science they used had been found earlier. With the advent of Christianity the old methods were

taken over and developed. The premise upon which work was based was simply that the sacred books (for Christianity, the Old and the New Testaments) contained the truth. This truth was conveyed by means of symbols, sometimes in figurative language and sometimes in plain language. The history of man is the symbolization of this central, unchanging and eternal truth. History is then a veil which inserts itself between us and truth; history, and the words in which history is presented, is a riddle that wants deciphering. Consequently, everything has a meaning. The world of physical sensation which abounds around us is the work of God and presents a riddle which it is our privilege to decipher to the best of our ability. The Bible is the word of God and presents a similar riddle. The meanings of the factors in these problems are variable, a technique is needed to interpret them. If the premises are accepted, the necessity for a science of interpretation was as clear to the Middle Ages as the necessity for a science which will disentangle the meanings of dreams is to the Viennese psychologists, or as a science of multiple ambiguity and parallel definition is to the Cambridge semasiologists. For even without the assumption that the correct interpretation of phenomena will lead us to God, we are forced to the assumption that the correct interpretation will put us in a more effective position than an incorrect interpretation.

The technique of interpretation developed by the Middle Ages was an attempt to classify kinds of meaning. These kinds were, as the famous couplet teaches, " literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical ". The last three depend on the first. The literal meaning is, according to a modern Catholic exegetist, " the truth the author intends, not as a stretch of the imagination; actually, not as a syllogistic potency; and immediately by language, not means of a truth conveyed by language ". Literal truth would thus appear to be " sense " and equivalent to the first of the four factors of meaning as discussed by Ogden and Richards. Although Catholic exegesis complicates its conception of " literal " by the introduction of intention, the fourth of these factors, in order to include figurative language, yet its interest lies clearly in the relation

between word-symbol and referent. The literal meaning is to be found in the pattern of words and, to paraphrase Ogden and Richards, *Fourth Canon of Symbolism*, and to do it some violence, literal meaning becomes what the words actually do refer to, not what they may be made to refer to. Although for the exegetist, literal meaning is both proper and figurative, that is, roughly, plain and metaphorical language, it is only one of the meanings to be found in any symbol. The second meaning is allegorical, or, although the word allegory is used in various senses, generally moral. Once the literal meaning has been firmly established, its moral significance may be recognized. The allegorical meaning is not moral in the sense of action, but moral in the sense of an eternal truth. Jerusalem is literally the Holy City; allegorically, it should convey to us a sense of the Church militant. The third exegetic type of meaning is anagogical and is "a boone to be desired". Anagogically, Jerusalem is the Church triumphant. Finally, the tropological meaning is a course of action to be followed or a virtue to be practised. As truth is eternal and unchanging, the Old Testament and the New Testament, since both are true, must both have the same meaning. In the Old Testament, the New Testament is prefigured and in the New Testament, the Church and the triumphant reunion of man and God are pre-figured. Still another method of interpretation is the typological, in which every event is considered to be a type of something else. Finally, each of the verbal symbols had under one system of interpretation, a fixed meaning: ice is the hardness of heart, a shadow is sin, and the like. The significance of this particular essay into the problems of figurative language and the philosophy of "as if" cannot be entered into here, but that the exegetes were touching on a question which is of considerable importance in the speculations of present-day thought is clear both from the considerations listed above and from the technique of literary allusion which the post-war poets have developed. It may be sufficient to point out that if ice is once used as a symbol for a hard heart, that relation will tend to fix itself when the reader meets the symbol in later or in other connections.

The importance of this method of interpretation and its persistence late into the Renaissance has not been examined with sufficient care. Dante standing in the middle of the road bids us take care of this hidden meaning and in his letter to Can Grande begins the elucidation of the literal, allegorical and the anagogical senses which are to be attached to each word of his epic. Later Pico devoted his great and unformed talent to the attempt at harmonizing Hebraic Christian and Platonic philosophies. The " prophet " Vergil is a commonplace of text-books, but the allegorical interpretations of Homer during the Renaissance have received less careful attention.

Nevertheless the desire of the men of the Classical Renaissance was to free themselves of all meanings except the literal. Reason for them was identified with the literal interpretation of words and things, for what was perceived really, not as a stretch of the imagination, actually not by a syllogistic potency, and immediately. Only by these means can a direct approach be made to the Bible, for clearly, whether or not we accept all of the secondary meanings attached to that composition the plain man cannot be expected to be competent to approach more than, as Origen would have put it, the body of truth. The plain man must decide for himself whatever he can find in it of spirit and soul.

The insistence on the literal interpretation and the identification of reason with a pattern of words which is " actual, immediate and real ", liberated two separate factors of imagination which ever since have pursued an independent course. The first has been generally referred to by the term " reason " and the second by the term " aesthetics ". The aesthetic factor was conditioned by the elements of meaning which the Renaissance refused to recognize as either separate or related entities ; it expressed itself in terms of feeling, was generative in thinking, and defined itself by means of the " as if " mechanism in a bewildering richness of figure. When it was discussed it was discussed under the heading of " poetic fury ", and the Renaissance was put into the same dilemma as the Platonists and the Neo-Platonists before them in the attempt to place this poetic fury in an ordered scheme.

Reason on the other hand, while it made great strides, both in the classifying of phenomena according to their obvious literal and immediate appearances, and in France in the refinement of a linguistic instrument, which would make possible the manipulation of these phenomena by means of symbols, was constantly at a loss to find for itself the authority which experience showed resided in phenomena, but not as a real, literal and immediate quality.

From the preliminary analysis of national phantasy through the Middle Ages, we will not be surprised if we find England, France and Germany responding to this literalism in individual ways. Because for France literalism demonstrated a very safe course of action, it was pursued there with great enthusiasm. In England this literalism, by leaving the other possibilities free, offered new avenues for activity. In Germany, literalism released the emotions which the Polysemous interpretations of the Middle Ages had tended to inhibit.

3

IT will be convenient to separate two conventional aspects of the Renaissance and treat them as two separate movements. These aspects are the reformation of the Church and classical studies. Both were powerful tides, sweeping through the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries, undergoing change in the Eighteenth and still potent in our own. No western European is uninfluenced by them and not a writer in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries but was forced to take an attitude towards them. However closely they were knit in their inception, their effects were somewhat different : many a religious fanatic was unschooled in classical literature and many another was definitely antagonistic to it, as antagonistic indeed as some of the Church fathers had been ; for this smooth beauty of the classics, these nude Ganymedes, these Helens with their red hair, the surge and beat of the sea, this brave, gay and exciting world of sunshine and wind distracted them, they thought, from meditation on more important topics, the nature of God and the problems of ethical reconstruction. The scholars themselves, though

they were definitely occupied by biblical criticism and translation, were not of necessity associated with the reform of the Church. Erasmus refused to be drawn far into the controversy, despite the insistence of the Pope, although his correspondence with the elder Scalliger on the Ciceronian style shows him to have been a man who was not averse to a good fight.

The classicism of the Renaissance appears to have had three well-marked moments. The first which seems to have begun somewhat vaguely with Petrarch and has never ended, was devoted to the preparation of texts ; grammars and dictionaries had to be written if Latin and Greek were to be read. Methods of teaching had to be discovered and the earlier humanists spent what seems to us an excessively long time learning enough about the classical languages to get a working knowledge of classical literatures. Thanks to them, a modern schoolboy probably learns more Greek in a year than the best of them could learn in three. But with the learning of the languages went the interpretation of the books. Erasmus and his predecessors were humanists in the sense that they were masters of life. They knew what it was about. The reformation of the Church burst upon Europe and after Erasmus the business of studying the classics in some way got separated from the business of interpreting the world we live in. Scholarship became technical, although it remained for the Twentieth Century to assert that professors of literature should have no opinions and should confine themselves only to the " facts " of the subject they are professing. Yet this important event had been in preparation for several centuries. Scholarship was left to the scholars, the Scalligers, father and son, Vida, and their associates. Interpretation was taken on by a special group, Montaigne and Rabelais in France and Burton in England. They profited from the scholars, had read widely and in the sense that they were not able to digest all they had read, they did not always read well.

The second moment in the Classical Renaissance appeared with a sudden and breath-taking sharpness and at a very definite moment in France and England. It appeared when writers made public and formal announce-

ment that there was no reason why they should not create in their own language a modern literature comparable to the literature of Greece and Rome. In France this occurred in 1549 with the DuBellay-Ronsard *Défense et Illustration de la langue Française*, and in England, a few years later, in 1553, with Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric*. It is significant that DuBellay's *Défense* was taken as a manifesto, a programme forming a school and that Wilson's *Rhetoric*, though it undoubtedly exercised a great influence, was merely another published book. In Germany the Reformation postponed this moment until the Sixteenth Century, when it was announced in Martin Opitz's *Buch der Deutschen Poeterey* (1624). Although the importance of the programmes announced in the *Défense* and illustrated in the *Rhetoric* can hardly be over-estimated, it is difficult to see why they should have had *any* influence. Englishmen and Frenchmen had been writing much poetry and some prose in their native languages for several hundred years. Why, then, should the announcement of DuBellay and Ronsard and their friends, or of Wilson, or the poets of *Tottel's Miscellany* be regarded with such respect? The answer may be that they were regarding themselves for the first time as the rivals of the Roman authors. From the time of the barbarian invasions the ascendancy of Rome had been so great that authors regarded themselves either like Chrestien, as continuators of the Roman tradition, or thought of themselves like Chaucer, as vastly inferior to real poets. The members of the Pléiade knew that they were French and not Roman, but they had the hope that they might be just as good. Moreover, the scholars had been bullying them. With their Ovids and their Vergils they had been saying so often that these were beyond reach that the movement of the Pléiade was less a discovery that good literature could be written in French than it was a revolt against pedantry. From this moment something happened to literature. There was a definite and consistent attempt to take as much from the classics as possible, whilst keeping the distinction between ancient and modern quite clear. Benoit de Sainte-Maure, or Chaucer, gives us the story of Cressid. He gives it to us in a Christian setting and a mediaeval

city, but when Shakespeare gives the same story, although his costumes may have been Elizabethan, his point of view is at least in intention Greek. But added to this were other changes.

Finally, from Plato's and Plotinus' ideas of the nature of inspiration as one of the four kinds of sacred frenzy, the writers of the humanistic inspiration got new ideas about the importance of the poet and his poetry. The poet was a good and virtuous man, the leader and instructor of the others. His inspiration is thought to be divine. Poetry and experience of poetry, makes us all better in every sense. This idea was to be put aside in favour of others or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say, the words through which the idea got its expression were to receive variant interpretations in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries until they are brought back again in the romantic period, notably by the German critics, to the joyous extravagance of the early renaissance. It is largely from this point of view that the novelty of the new poetic theory is derived, and even this point of view was less novel in its phraseology than it was in its tone.

The first two moments in the humanistic tradition were thus the preparation of critical apparatus with or without interpretative comment and the application of apparatus and interpretation to the creation of a vernacular literature. The third moment is less precise in its appearance and consequently more difficult of definition. It is referred to somewhat generously as Neo-Classicism or rationalism as though one could distinguish with any accuracy where the one ends and the other begins. It is, in a sense, the bringing of the various literary and humanistic formulae of the Renaissance into focus and the attempt to see wherein they are incompatible with each other, which brought about, as a consequence, the radical revaluations of the Eighteenth Century which we now know as the romantic movement. It is the first two moments of the Renaissance that are of importance to this section.

4

THE impact of the Greek and Latin way of thinking upon the imagination of northern and western Europe, whether derived from classical studies or whether an independent phenomenon, brought Europeans once again to the face of a question which has always disturbed them, " Is man the master of events or are events the master of man ? " " Does man measure things, or do things measure man ? " The first successful compromise on this formidable problem was presented by the Greek thinkers and their particular solution was, in a sense, an avoidance of the problem. The theological preoccupations of the Middle Ages subordinated man to the will of God and when, with prosperity and the infiltration of Arabic and Greek thought, together with the development of science, the Middle Ages came once more to face it, they solved it in terms of the Thomistic synthesis. If this synthesis be paraphrased using very crude terms, it teaches us this : that truth, here used in that large sense which might be taken as " the differences between ' reason ' and ' religion ' " is to be found the reconciliation of " religion " taken in the particular sense of the doctrines of Christianity, with " science " taken in the sense of man's independent activities. Inasmuch as religion is by hypothesis infinite and absolute and man is, by general concession, finite and variable, it becomes clear that man may be in error. It is probable that he will discover " truth " and it is equally probable that he will fall into error, or that he will come across truths partially revealed and distorted by his finiteness. These finite " truths " are part of the infinite. To accept them as absolute, to place them above the " truths " of religion, to organize life in terms of them, is error. This formulation, as powerful, it would appear, among the present-day Michaelsons and Jeanses as it was in the Thirteenth Century, is a neat way of putting the compromise. It satisfies phantasy because one of the causes of phantasy is this sense of the incompleteness of experience and of the conclusions which are to be drawn from experience.

It failed to satisfy the Renaissance. The officers of the Church, with their mistresses, concubines, incests, nepot-

isms, drunkenness, and homosexuality, appeared to be less concerned with the realities of religious truth than with their own appetites. The reaction against this, which began as an accident, and drawing upon the emotions and enthusiasms of the Renaissance, grew into a revolution, came to be a fixed attitude, which because it was felt rather than understood, raised new questions of considerable importance. Religion, whether it be a mysticism too intense to be analysed, or whether it be regarded simply in terms of an organization of life, as an answer to the various problems and questions which we all have to face, what is to be done in this or that situation, how is this or that emotion to be transferred into action, or this fear to be overcome, or this temptation to be avoided, offered Europeans a very comfortable frame within which they might operate. The system failed to work. Not only did the leaders of the Church fail to take it seriously and abide by it, but many others of intelligence and probity found satisfaction in those actions which were prohibited and no peace in those actions which were enjoined. The increase of commerce and the luxury consequent upon this, brought temptations not only to the body but also to the mind. The hierarchy of pope, cardinals, and bishops, lacked the flexibility which was necessary if it was to legislate upon these topics. A committee form of government was necessary. Europeans were born anew, and found themselves no longer a part of the body of the Mother Church. They found themselves committee members in a great stock company. God's speech, which in the past seemed to have muttered indistinctly through the Bible, the Church customs and traditions, now, with this new individualism and simplification, seemed to speak clearly through the Bible to individual committee members.

The reformers and the counter-reformers of the Classical Renaissance embraced this child of Augustinian phantasy with wholehearted enthusiasm. Unfortunately, it failed to solve their problems, or if it solved some, it created others which were even more formidable. It became necessary to construct a new ethic which, while it would give the same satisfaction as the old Christian ethic, would still remain Christian, avoid the errors of the past

and would exercise the same authority. Reason was taken to mean man's ability to construct his own life by the light of the Bible and by his own sense of what seemed appropriate. Reason took the place of tradition and ancient authority. Men soon came to see, however, that ideas about propriety are infinitely varied. Something in addition was needed and that addition has been variously described by terms about which no one has been able to get clear. Some have called it " conscience ", others " inner light ", or " intuition ".

The Reformation is thus seen to have had two effects, both of which touch closely upon the problems of phantasy ; the one was the necessity of coming to reasonable conclusions about man's relations with God and the other was the introduction of such large terms as " inner light " or " intuition ", which took the place of the allegorical interpretations of the Middle Ages. Reason became a necessary activity, and as the Bible left many questions unanswered, reason about reason as well as reasons about the special facts and the temporal events of experience came slowly to be a modality of consciousness, producing the philosophers and later the scientists. In the early Renaissance, intuitionalism, whether as in St. Therese or Crawshaw, or the quietism of France and the pietists of Germany, may be taken in one of its partial aspects and to amount to the assertion that feeling is all. When it expanded beyond religion, it overflowed into speculations about literature. The poetic frenzy which had been justified and enlarged from its original platonic form by Plotinus, was one of the four sacred emotions. By means of it man thought he was able to apprehend God. Various kinds of meaning were associated with it.

The most obvious of these was and is still the prohibition against its analysis. I mentioned some time ago that many persons object with irrational fervour, so strong that it may at times be mistaken for the petulance of a psychotic, to good-natured clinical attempts to get clear about the nature of this confusion. The satisfactions of poetry and the satisfactions of religion are both said to escape analysis, both exist for their own sake, both are shrouded by a mystery which scrutiny must destroy.

Intuitionalism affects us in a second way. The symbols by which intuitionalism expresses itself are supposed to be invested with " value ". The defences of poetry—Ronsard's, Sidney's, Jonson's, Shelley's, and the very latest of the present writing, Benedetto Groce's, not to mention the somewhat incidental though nevertheless passionate pronouncements of Jonson, Shakespeare, Boilleau, Pope, Schiller, and a host of others, place " poetry " above knowledge and " science ", insist that it gives us a more intimate sense of truth—now used in the sense of that which is valuable or important—than reason, authority or tradition possibly can. The inspiration of the poet and the inner light of the schismatic are two terms which appear to occur to experiences that are somewhat similar. These experiences, because of their intensity, and their quality as emotion, clothe themselves in symbols and express themselves in linguistic gestures which, at times, arouse the same or a similar state of mind in the individuals who participate in these linguistic gestures. Because the experience is so important, the symbols by which the experience gets itself defined become important, and the symbols thus separated from the experience go through an hypostasis. Poetry becomes the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, the Bible is not only thought to be, it is actually experienced as, sacred.

Because of this almost inevitable linguistic confusion, between inspiration and inner light, between poetic frenzy and the experience of God, it becomes clear why the poets should have arrogated to themselves since the Renaissance functions which many of them were clearly unable to perform. The poet is the master of life because he is thought to have this emotional experience more intensely than the layman. As master of life, he should become also the master of men, leader and teacher, purveyor of truth. This mood lasted until the beginning of the Sixteenth Century. Poets who dealt with great matters eternized their subjects. It subsided in the Seventeenth Century before the brilliance of the rational activities of the Reformation and Renaissance, to be revived again near the end of that century in the quarrel between the ancients and moderns and to become triumphant in romanticism.

One of the most striking of European characteristics is our habit of reducing all of our problems to religious problems and of getting them confused by theology. That this happened in the Renaissance is not surprising, nor if the term temperament be accepted in a broad sense, such as, for example, the probability that a group of people will continue to behave in the future more or less as they have behaved in the past, is it illegitimate to observe that the European temperament found consolation for its bewilderments in the Renaissance in some process of this kind. If a somewhat naked statement of this process be permitted, it would appear that the Renaissance, turning from the traditional theology of the Middle Ages, was forced to construct a new theology which would touch as many aspects of its life as the theology it had discarded. This reconstruction was built up from one man's " reason " applied to the Bible. That which was left over, namely, the satisfactions of religion, which had in older times found sanction in the authoritative pronouncements of fathers and councils, which by precept and example authorized it, was forced to exist and is still forced to exist independently. It became in religious history the inner light, conscience, or Christ within, and in literary discussion, poetic frenzy, intuition, later weakened into taste and again strengthened by the term inspiration. It should be quite clear that these two modalities are much more than sitting down and reasoning in any syllogistic sense and are much more than feeling. They involve, that is, processes even more complicated than these two words usually refer to. They are never entirely separate and yet may be seen to lead independent existences. They are states of mind, conditions of tension, which involve both the conscious and the less than conscious processes. In the early Renaissance they were more separate than they are now. The Eighteenth Century was an attempt to bring them together and to estimate their relative functions.

5

As men in the midst of an intense experience are seldom aware of its causes or its scope, the confusions and dis-

tractions which were introduced into England, Germany, and France in the Renaissance are not to be wondered at. In France three figures dominate the Sixteenth Century. They are Rabelais, Ronsard, and Montaigne. Although each is French, Rabelais and Ronsard were staggered by the impact of the new ideas. Never before and never since have the French men been as wild as Rabelais, and in his panic over what is to become of us all if this goes on, in his conflict of mediaeval and Renaissance, of feeling and referential order usually taken as " thought ", in his flow of words, which at times was an attempt to get, if not the right word for a strong feeling, then certainly enough words, which though weak in their sum would give the phantasies a body, he constructed his prose epic on the theme, the old mediaeval theme, of the birth and education of the hero. But Rabelais's hero was no ordinary fellow. He was gigantic. In his strength and clumsiness he attempted to find the right path between the doctors of religion and the doctors of philosophy, the masters of law and the masters of life whom he met in his fantastic adventures. The path escaped him, but the faith, either his or his creator's, projected through him, was unsullied, that in the end we have wind and sun and man performing his natural functions in both. Rabelais thought, as many still think, that education will help us out of some of our difficulties. But although Rabelais had read widely and well, he was not, in the technical sense, a scholar. The physical man existing in space and moving in time was his reality. Man's problems were his concern and man's bewilderment as man stood between God and the world, was his bewilderment. His sensations were intense and his recurrent question is how may they be brought into harmony. How may this need for action, for resolution of conflict, be calmed ? Moderation and harmony, education in the classics and in the sciences offered a means. Thus man might become more human, or, if you please, more French. He would know where he stood, his inhibitions would be based upon reason which would be either a knowledge of precedent or a sure calculation of possibility.

The predicament of Ronsard aroused an intense emo-

tional conflict. The Rhétoriquers, the last of the mediaeval poets, were not nearly as bad as the Pléiade thought them to be. Yet they were undoubtedly less aware than the Pléiade of the great things that were going on about them. Their reforms were uncertain, and this uncertainty was due, in part, to their incomplete appreciation of the reasons why reforms were necessary. They did not have the thought which Ronsard shared with all of the Renaissance, that the poet is a leader and that in order to become a poet he must also be good, noble and virtuous. The conjugations of the term virtuous in the Renaissance are various, but with Ronsard it has something to do with the quality which comes into personality when that personality has faced properly the problems of conduct. Ronsard had this understanding to a marked degree. Poetry, he felt, had something to do in filling in that emptiness which had come over Europe before the Reformation and of which the Reformation was a symptom. Ronsard, in other words, found in poetry the fury and passion which were to become important in later literary speculation. However, when he attempted to embody these in words he met with difficulties. Before he began, it became necessary for him to point out what they were, to demonstrate from his learning and from his experience, their reality and imminence. Having done this it was necessary for him to construct a language, for, as this emotional state had never before been looked at in the light in which Ronsard looked at it, he found that his language was imperfect in the giving of expression to it. In France, as elsewhere, new words were needed and new words were introduced lavishly, though not without some qualms. Ronsard himself, although he was damned by the pedants of the Seventeenth Century as a linguistic voluptuary and radical without linguistic conscience, spoke very definitely in the preface to his unreadable epic of the dangers of innovation. Critics are in the habit of observing that Ronsard is best when he uses the simplest and most colloquial terms :

" Quand tu serais bien vielle " or
" Mignon allons voir si la rose "

and at his worst when he is putting himself out to be a poet. For there was clearly a difference of opinion between Ronsard who thought these lyrics were pretty things and his own, but somewhat less than the literature which he had in mind, and the modern reader who knows Ronsard almost only through these delightful pistaches. Ronsard the poet wanted grand new words, compact in their sense and carrying feeling through line after line to give body to this emotion which he felt was of the greatest importance. He wanted new forms too. But most of all he wanted a simpler form than the Middle Ages had given him. In his hands the Alexandrian begins to assume the quality which it now has. He did not wish, in other words, to let his feelings be deflected and modulated by too many accidents which might attend the search for thirty words which when placed at the end of a line would have the same rhyme. He and his friends did a great deal to restrain French verse, which the pedants of the Seventeenth Century wanted to put in a strait-jacket. In making this simplification he, his friends and successors, made a discovery. They saw that the simpler the physical form of a verse is, the more clearly and intensely may emotion be made to burn in it. Complicated systems of rhyme, metrical windows of many coloured glass, were thought to be evidence of an intensity of emotion, rather than stimulants of emotion. Whether this doctrine which has been maintained for several centuries is sound is the topic of a controversy which cannot be settled. We may, however, take it that the simplification of metrical form, which was accompanied by a luxuriating vocabulary, are opposing tendencies, the one a desire for richness, the other, a tendency to restrain that desire.

Montaigne came at the end of the century. Rabelais had given an account of the new man who might be expected to arise out of the rummage of his era. Montaigne should have been one of these new men and in a sense he was. But he was also somewhat in advance of his time. The snarlings of the schismatics, the wars of religion, the hypocrisy of the Jesuits, and the general decay of morals which had resulted from all of this attempt of man to harmonize his appetites by means of reason plus the Bible,

left in Montaigne only disillusionment and curiosity. The wise man will not act, he will have only ideas. God is not absolute, the world is not eternal, the stars are not in their places, truth escapes us. From this negative attitude, in the French sense it is reasonable and if it can be embraced it is highly consoling, there developed various points of view which are still of importance. The Church had taught us that lying was wicked because it violated one of the Commandments, and thus belonged to the category of sin. Reasonable Montaigne teaches that lying is wicked because, as there is no truth, and thus nothing we can lie about, it is a waste of time, action in a world where action brings no results. " Thou shalt not kill " is a Commandment. Montaigne thought that murder, either official or private, was inadvisable because if there is no truth, as there are no general principles which have universal authority, it is absurd to commit murder. One man's ideas are as good as another's, and to kill a man because he had a different opinion from yours was to act with undue regard for reason. When his books appeared they offered consolation to all of Europe. They presented one solution of that aspect of the Renaissance which I have sketched as the attempt to reconstruct an ethic on the basis of " facts ", that is, independently of the Bible. It is unnecessary to change the Christian virtues. Montaigne, the Frenchman, discovered the answer. It is unnecessary to intrigue or to lie, to die for a cause, or to kill for a cause, because truth and falsehood, principle and the lack of it are all grey. In this state of mind many pleasant and amusing things remain to be done. One of the things is to demonstrate to our satisfaction that the answer is adequate. The reading of many books, conversation with many people, shrewd manipulation of affairs, what do the Indians look like and what do they think about? are they really so very different from ourselves? Curiosity remains, inspired and directed by this urbane reasonableness. Action is frustrated, not now by convention, but by doubts and uncertainties as to its value.

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In the First Century of the Classical Renaissance France passed through the bewilderment of Rabelais, which resolved itself in a faith in education and the ability of man to solve his own problem, the enthusiasm of Ronsard, checked by a characteristic conservatism, to reach ultimately the urbane and charming Nihilism of Montaigne. The books of which France is proudest were not produced in this century. They appeared when emotions could be better organized, when the ideas which were being presented by Montaigne and others could be used as reference to and justification for the substitution of language for behaviour.

Things were much gayer in England. The Renaissance here was classical only in part. At the very beginning of the century Erasmus had lectured there, Colet and Moore, the Cambridge Platonists and the Oxford reformers had made so much progress with methods of teaching that Ascham by 1563 could boast that many an Englishman wrote a better Latin and made fewer errors than Cicero himself. Significantly in literature, the Renaissance was not, and this in spite of the distinguished Latinity of many an English scholar, a renaissance of ideas. It was a renaissance of words. In this frame of time and space, on this goodly earth, this glorious garden, men lived and moved. The joy of action, bodying itself forth in a wealth of words, produced the literature which Englishmen point to with pride. The Puritans, and there were many of them in the English Sixteenth Century, who pointed out that this enthusiastic preoccupation with things and sensation, this tossing of words new and old, led men away from thought rather than towards it. The Englishman Sidney, characteristic of his nation and class, clubman, courtier and gentleman, replied that poetry, the poetry of himself and his fellows, had its own justification. The sensations that it aroused and the needs that it satisfied made men better than they had been. Poetry was the source of philosophy and civilization. Although Sidney, the clubman and gentleman, was quoting the doctrines of his fellows and was not quite clear as to why or how this

was true, Sidney the poet, knew that he was pointing to that kind of emotional need which, as I suggested above, may be regarded as a part of the religious inheritance of the Renaissance from the Middle Ages.

In two significant ways the English response to the Renaissance differs from the French. In England writers formed coteries and not schools. In France the word became a programme. In England it was a gesture, incidental rather than fundamental to creation. English poets were doing about the same kind of thing that the French poets were doing; sometimes with success and sometimes without it. They were importing, manufacturing, reviving words. They had no linguistic conscience, less perhaps even than the more radical of the Pléiades. Frequently their words make no sense at all, despite the best efforts of the lexicographers and the hypothesis of lost manuscripts and mutilated lines. Verbal action received a justification because it was action. Pedants objected to this and the reaction against linguistic libertinage was definite in England, but as the programme for it was accepted merely as a programme—an idea that has little relation to proper activity—so the reaction against it was regarded as an admonition rather than a law. The second difference between the French and English behaviour with reference to this current is to be found in the fact that theories of educational reform, with the possible exception of Ascham's schoolmaster, are not for the most part considered properly as contributions to belles-lettres. Even the first part of Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which is undoubtedly one of the best examples of English fighting prose, the English mind in action on the political field, is seldom held up to the young as a model. There were too many other compositions of that time which were more sensational, more vivid. In France, on the contrary, the Ronsard lyrics, if they are not incidental to the Renaissance, are an exception to this statement, the documents best remembered, *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, the *Défense*, and the *Essais* are all of them significant because they face the problem of action and give a programme for it.

A note or two may be added to these contentions,

namely the development in England of a rich travel literature and the flowing of history into poetry. The confines of England were insufficient for the English capacity for action. Englishmen not only went out on the seas in part to explore new worlds and in part to bring back Spanish gold, but having returned, they put accounts of their action into books that have become English classics. Whether Hakluyt's *Voyages* is, or is not, great English prose lies beyond the limits of these speculations. What must be generally admitted, however, is that the *Voyages* have become an English classic. They aroused an interest and satisfied vicariously an appetite for action. The statistician could well point out that travel books were written elsewhere, but it would be difficult to deny that travel books in England satisfied a particular need and that the writing of travel books, that is the dreaming about action, became a tradition in English literature.

Travel and adventure are action in space. History may be regarded as action in time. To the English interest in this type of action there were many to give satisfaction, as Shakespeare's histories bear unimpeccable testimony. Suggestions about Shakespeare must be offered with great hesitation, less because so many books have been written about him than because his use of words arouses a very large variety of states of mind. Because of this variety we know curiously little about Shakespeare the man. It may be that Shakespeare actually was a patriot and that he produced his historical plays—and one might suggest his other plays as well—for the glory of Merrie England. It may be that he was a political philosopher and that he wished to present a theory of the state, in which case the theory was presented with singular ineptness, despite the fact that the heroes of his historical plays present as wide a variety of character as the heroes of his other plays. A more profitable suggestion may be that the English Shakespeare, in whom feeling reached a significance sharper than it did amongst his fellows, found historical symbols one way of escape. His phantasy reached back through time, as it had reached over to a sea-girt Bohemia, or a love laid in Illyria, finding in both materials that could give it substance. "What country, friends, is

this ? " asks Viola. " This is Illyria, Lady," and the answer serves, the place of action is defined, phantasy builds its structure.

Throughout Shakespeare's work, words retain their genus as words, symbols for action and purveyors of sensation. In praising him for his philosophy, annotating his wisdom, and measuring his facts, critics have allowed incidentals to obscure his most eminent quality. In one sense knowledge of words implies amongst the savage and illiterate, a knowledge of things. In another sense, knowledge of words may be taken to be an ability to define one set of words by means of another set. Shakespeare had no great need of either of these. For him the word itself was an action, arousing and associating itself with other words, even when these other words appear much later in the composition. By this process of association, so close that it seems inevitable, the words form a pattern of an extraordinary consistency. The consistency of this pattern has led us to a false view (false in the sense that it is incomplete) of Shakespeare's qualities. As words with us are actions, less spontaneous and less valid as actions, we have assumed that there must have been behind this pattern a much more consistent intelligence than a study of each play warrants. We have assumed that the things he says with splendour in one set of words must have been thought by him sordidly in another set. But the assumption is not necessary. The verbal gesture does not here touch upon action, it is action. Shakespeare holds the mirror up to nature in order to complete nature, give a longer perspective so that our actions may be doubled by reflection. Sidney began his defence of poetry by talking about horses. Shakespeare concluded his career on Prospero's island where all action and all kinds of action, from that of the drunken Caliban to that of the soulless Ariel, were possible. In these and at this time English phantasy completed itself. Already the disputatious presbyters were putting limits upon these possibilities by their reasoning about God. England was later to accept the challenge of the Renaissance, to put limits upon its phantasy, first under the attacks of the Puritans and later under the example of France.

The German Luther and the French Calvin deserve a chapter to themselves. For the present it may be sufficient to point out that the Renaissance which came to England, France, and Germany from Greece and Rome through Italy, offered rich material for the literary imagination, providing a new way which it might follow. This movement relied on reason and was concerned with things in time and space particularly in England, how these things are to be used for plans of action in France, and the reasons for it all in Germany. With it, because of it, or as cause of it, was the very complex phenomena of the reformation of the Church. Phantasy here has two aspects, first, an attempt to reconstruct, with no aids except reason and the Bible, a way of living which would be as adequate as the old way; and second, a transfer of authority, which was backed up by quotations from the classics, from the traditions and pronouncements of the Church to conscience and inspiration. These aspects did not constitute a split, but grew sometimes stronger and sometimes weaker in the course of the Renaissance. In the Sixteenth Century, sensation was the stronger and expressed itself brilliantly in England. Sensation was strong in France, but as the French imagination does not express itself directly, it limited itself by speculation as to what, under the circumstances, had best be done about it all.

CHAPTER VII

EXCURSUS ON CALVIN AND LUTHER

I

THE religious reformation, having gathered its energies for three centuries, burst suddenly in Wittenberg in 1517. Its bursting was unexpected and its success was incalculable. Within twenty years all of Europe was divided into two groups, the one supporting the Roman Church and the other, with or without reservation, supporting the reformers. Some of the effects of this movement are generally understood. They have been studied by historians of politics, theology, economy, and law; for in each of these fields the Reformation stirred men mightily and necessitated new organizations of ideas and new patterns of action.

Whatever the effects of the Reformation may have been and however complex its causes may be found to be, the Reformation of the Church was an emotional disturbance, which, in magnitude and extent, is the greatest that Europe has ever known. In it and for it men, having found their souls, lost their heads. In order that the sectary might not burn in hell hereafter he piously burned other sectaries, singing hymns and saying prayers while he did so. To the non-Christian observer, to a student brought up in a community which does not have the European habit of reducing all differences of opinion to theology, or of referring all differences to the judgment of God (a habit deeply rooted in the European temperament), the Reformation does not make sense; its leaders at some times seem inspired and gifted with an energy which is more than human, and at other times in their human weakness appear to destroy the doctrines which they have established with much labour and suffering. The followers rejoice in the strength of these leaders and

are blind to their weaknesses. If this is true to-day, it was even more true three hundred years ago when the smoke of battle and the passion of words obscured the issues which were at stake.

Any student of the verbal phantasies of France, England and Germany, must glance, though briefly, at the two great leaders, Calvin and Luther. Even though the leaders of the Reformation and their ideas are conveniently pigeonholed by theologians and religious leaders, and thus appear irrelevant to any speculations about literature, it is nevertheless impossible for us to get any understanding of the literary developments of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries, the development of rationalism, the emergence of romanticism, modern humanism and its opposite, without at least taking a very cursory and superficial glance at these leaders who have become symbols by which varied and diverse emotions have expressed themselves. Yet the attempt to get clear about the Reformation leads into serious dangers. The scholasticism of the Roman Church was superseded within a very few years of the death of Luther and before the death of Calvin, by a scholasticism of the Protestant Church, rigid in its definitions, intolerant in its point of view and with a specialized vocabulary which none but a doctor of theology will lightly undertake.

If the Reformation be regarded as a disturbance of emotions, and if this limitation be accepted merely as a convenience in assisting us to form opinions on these high and difficult matters, the Reformation will be seen to present problems of peculiar subtlety and interest. The testimony of the churches and the enormous power which the churches of Europe have been able to gather to themselves and have been able to maintain since the Fifth Century are witness to the fact that they satisfy a set of real human needs. For want of a better expression this set of needs may be referred to roughly as the religious appetency. This rough definition, unfortunately, is almost as good a definition as can be offered, for discussions of the term religious experience, as well as discussions of the experience itself (in those rare cases where the word and the experience have been kept apart and the one

understood as symbol, and the other as referent), lead us into difficulties of the same order as the difficulties met when attempts are made to explain the poetic experience and poetry. In a sense this is not surprising, for if the testimony of religious people be compared with the testimony of those who read poetry, the two experiences will be found to have points of similarity, and this is particularly true of the terms in which the two experiences are described. In any case, the religious experience must be accepted as an empirical fact. Too many men have testified as to its existence, have struggled in vain to make clear its nature and too many words in all European languages have been applied to it to leave any room for doubt of its actual existence for persons who have the emotional constitution susceptible to it. Nor should the phrase emotional constitution which I have just used suggest that this experience, whatever its source may be, is any less authentic or valid than it would have been had I used the words religious temperament.

The experience of religion in Christian countries is strongly identified with a set of words contained in a book. As most modern critics will admit the Bible is, from at least one point of view, literature, a collection of stories, myths, poems, biographies, apophthegms from various sources and of various kinds. The close association between the religious experience and a book may lead to the suggestion that this book satisfies emotional needs by a process not dissimilar to the processes by which other books satisfy emotional needs. This leaves out of consideration various elements which must be examined in a moment, but the idea itself is not new and is suggested even to the leaders and the opponents of reform, who are agreed that the experience of literature is less intense but similar in kind to the experience of religion. Luther said that if the Bible were no more than literature and were shorn of its supernatural inspiration, one might as well read Vergil as read it. Erasmus, who never identified himself with the Reformation, indeed out of urbane complacence was persuaded to write against it, announced similar sentiments in his *Enchiridion*, and elsewhere added that in choosing the interpreters of the Bible one should

select the most obscure that one could find, those that go farthest from the letter. Perhaps the clearest statement of this point of view was made by Calvin in his *Institutes* (I, viii):

> Read Demosthenes or Cicero, read Plato, Aristotle or any other of all that sort: I grant they shall marvellously allure, delight, move and ravish thee. But if from them thou come to this reading of Scriptures, wilt thou or not, it shall so lively move thy affections, it shall so pierce thy heart, it shall so settle within thy bones, that, in comparison of the efficacy of this feeling all that force of rhetoricians and philosophers shall in manner vanish away: so that it is easy to perceive that the Scriptures which do far excel all gifts and graces of man's industry, do indeed breathe out a certain divinity.

This fact of his own experience Calvin adduced as proof of the divine authority of Scripture.

The situation encourages strange conclusions. These might be formulated as follows: When it came into Europe the Bible was a book. The reading of this book stimulated and relieved powerful emotions amongst a somewhat limited number of persons. These emotions, which form the heart of the religious experience, chose other symbols which gave them support, and permitted their continuance. These were themselves drawn from dissimilar sources, magic, folk custom, tradition, law, history, psychopathology. These symbols got themselves organized—as the histories of the heresies which have so tormented the Church from its earliest inception make clear—into patterns of different kinds. On rare occasions these patterns may have had to do with emotions which differed widely from each other. On other occasions, however, the patterns of heresy refer rather to the way small groups of emotions differ from the larger or dominant group. The transition from paganism to Christianity, whether in Europe or elsewhere, need not be the change from one kind of emotion to another. It is first the transition from one set of symbols—and for the most part verbal symbols—to another. Once the new set of symbols has been substituted for the old, the new set proceeds to generate its appropriate feelings. Although there was a difference of opinion between the heretics and

the members of the established Roman Church as to the references of the symbols which both used, yet to assert that the emotional state of the heretics was different in *kind* from the emotional state of the orthodox is to run the danger of falling into the same error as to assert that the experience of religion is in itself different from the experience of literature. Whatever particular referents the heretics attached to their symbols (" Is Christ God or man ? ") they used the symbols of orthodox Christianity, called themselves Christians, were for a time members of that historic Church which established its tradition as orthodox, and were in so close an emotional sympathy with the essential emotional states which the Church generated that, as Calvin pointed out, ample justification for his revolutionary movement could be found in the writings of the Church fathers themselves.

Of the many ways from which the history of the Church may be regarded, one is as the history of dogma and the other as the history of an emotional state which, projecting itself through dogma, derives satisfaction. One may examine the references of the dogmatic statements, that is, the account dogma gives of the universe, or one may examine the uses of dogma and its references in the satisfaction of feeling. If the feeling, or to use Dr. Richards' term, the " appetency " be regarded as antecedent, the transformations of dogma gain a coherence which they do not otherwise have. We are thus able to see how this feeling, choosing its symbols at various times from diverse ranks of experience, shifted the references, not by a system of logical analysis but according to needs which are still obscure, mixed its Christianity with stoicism, Platonism, magic and the like, until, less by reason than by the accident of trial and error, the historic Church emerged. In this sense, to divorce the symbols used in religious writing and discussion from the symbols used in literature, to separate religion from phantasy, is to place upon speculation an arbitrary limit which sterilizes thought. Moreover, if the limit is not placed, the reformation of the Church must be regarded as one of the great events in the emotional and imaginative history of the European peoples.

The emotional experience connected with the literature of the Bible, historically authentic and emotionally intense, acquired strength from similar emotional experiences in the worlds in which the religious leaders lived. The terminology from these other worlds was taken over by the religious leaders in part unconsciously and in part by means of metaphor, which later, like many good metaphors, became a rule by which the experience was to be judged and tested. The Roman Church was established. Because of the intensity of the feeling which the Bible aroused, because also of the way that feeling spread, taking in new symbols and new areas of experience, the members of the Church found it necessary to exercise repressive measures, if they were not to have their feeling misinterpreted. Feeling is associated with aspiration, and the religious experience had become another word for aspiration. The strong hand of orthodoxy forged a weapon, namely that the Bible was a sacred book and that its interpretation was a matter for experts. The experts were the doctors of the Church, the Pope, his councils and advisers. While the Church was still fairly young and the religious experience still vital, the interpretations presented by it and the discipline exercised by it had a common sense which, if frequently violent, was nevertheless understandable. When the Church became wealthy, involved in its disputes with emperors and kings, a going business concern, requiring shrewd administrative intelligence, the harshness of the discipline increased as the intensity of the experience declined. It became increasingly difficult for even the doctors of the Church to get at the Bible. Luther reports, thirty years after the event, that he was surprised to learn in his student days that the Bible contained more than the readings he had heard in church service. This statement has been combated as one of Luther's characteristic exaggerations, but it undoubtedly contains some truth. Moreover, as the Bible was in Latin, it was available only to that small number of students which could attend a university and the system of education was such that they would be well prepared for their reading before they began it. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the force of

the emotional disturbance that lies at the beginning of all religion should have been restricted to a very few, chiefly mystics, who were particularly adapted for it. Yet if this was one consequence of the policy of the Church, it must be admitted that the opposite policy of putting the Bible into the hands of all, of stimulating this intense experience amongst all classes has also had unfortunate effects. Emotions, even good ones, are dangerous. They frequently lead to violent action and the history of the Reformation, which is in fact the history of the effects of putting the Bible into the hands of all, should lead us to look with somewhat more sympathy than the reformers did upon the historic policy of the Roman Church.

2

MARTIN LUTHER, a German, and John Calvin, a Frenchman (a Picard, born near the borders of the Isle de France), were the leaders in the movement to bring the Bible back to the people. Whatever differences in temperament there were between them and however different the history of their reforms has been, it must be clear that both of these leaders had their entire lives determined by the religious experience, and that this experience was bounded by the words of the Bible. In the beginnings of their work they professed to find all truth in the Bible. They professed to care little for tradition and they were clearly making use of the word truth as a term which referred to the emotional experiences which they themselves were having, rather than as a term which referred to any set of objective historical facts. They used it in much the same way that Keats used it when he said, " Truth is beauty." Although the effect of these men's words was wider than that of Keats, there is no reason to believe that Keats was speaking either with less sincerity or with less accuracy than the reformers. As the reformers grew older, though their linguistic habits changed, they came to understand that this experience which they had once felt with such intensity was not to be derived as simply as they had thought from a book which they had come to think of as sacred. The emotional reservoir of the Renaissance has been sufficiently insisted upon. It

is at this point that the rational enters, or, to speak more properly, should have entered. The word truth, when first used, referred to an emotion ; later it got transferred to the words of the Bible. When the reformers were under attack they could cite passages from the Bible which, because these passages produced the emotions they were pleased to cherish, were presented as the words of truth. When, however, opponents arose, men no less sincere, no less powerfully moved by the religious experience than the reformers, and when they, in turn, cited those passages from the Bible which were the cause of their own experience, difficulties arose which were, in many cases, fatal to them.

A problem of no little significance for all concerned, was the problem of keeping emotion going. Emotions have a habit of flickering and when the religious emotion grew dim and the reading of the Bible failed to renew it, the reformers began to doubt either themselves or their associates. It is extremely difficult to maintain an emotion among sceptics. If the emotion is important to us we will do our best to get rid of the sceptics even if it means going away ourselves. Given the power of men like Calvin and Luther, it was easier to remove the sceptics. The excesses of the Reformation are thus seen to be consequences of the emotional experience which it was the business of the Reformation to propagate and defend.

Although Calvin and Luther were similar in their common desire to distribute the Bible amongst the people, in their return to the Bible as verbal symbols which stimulated and gave authority to all of their emotions and actions, although their theology was similar and the very symbols by which they attempted to make their emotions clear and to implement them were identical, yet Luther was a German with German feelings and a German imagination, and Calvin was French. Luther, with all of his gifts, blundered into the leadership of a revolution. The story is well known. As a professor of theology he had doubts as to the legality of some of the practices of the Church, and, according to the custom of the time, he drew up a list of these doubts and suggested that they be

debated. The effects were as terrible as they were unexpected. Luther found himself driven from one position to another, always in a straight line, however, from questioning the legality of indulgences, to asserting their illegitimacy, to denying the authority of first the Pope and then his council, to approving of the heretics and finally into the establishment of his own reformed Church.

In the earlier stages of his development he announced that he would accept as valid any statement which was made to him on the authority of the Bible, or which was proved to him in discussion. The Bible was first and the discussion followed, but the discussion was accepted as a possibility. As he developed, however, the importance of the Bible increased and the validity of reason declined. His last sermon in Wittenberg, delivered in the gross epithets of a gross age, was a violent philippic against reason and the rational method. The emotion about God and its validity had become too precious for him to permit of its being questioned. Luther, who exercised a penetrating common sense in many of the daily problems which he faced, never succeeded in getting into the clear about many of the problems which those who do not share his emotion consider important. His writings abound in inconsistencies. Friendly critics have pointed out that most of these are due to his impetuous temper and to his facility in the creation of epigrams. It is clear that words frequently led him astray. But it is also clear that words led Calvin astray much less frequently. Luther experienced God in a characteristically German manner through his emotion, and the words in which this experience is expressed are rightly considered the beginnings of modern German literature. In style and in reference they follow the lines which we have seen establishing themselves from Wolfram through the Mystics : powerful feelings, suffusing the organism, spreading through confusion upon confusion until they tinge the universe.

Luther blundered into the Reformation, but Calvin entered it by a proclamation. At the age of 12, Calvin had received a curacy, another was added when he was 16. After completing his studies in Paris, the time arrived when he must cease being a curate and let himself be

ordained as a priest. At this moment he made his decision and two years later, at the age of 27—this was in 1635, eighteen years after Luther had published his theses —Calvin produced his *Institutes of Christian Religion*, which was a complete statement and a completely logical account of the position of the Protestant. The *Institutes* went through many editions and many changes, but the logic in it never faltered. Portions were enlarged, single sentences were made into chapters, but the statement remained a logical and coherent whole. It was neither an attack nor a defence. It was the statement of a programme : first, knowledge of God as the creator, second, knowledge of God as He is known through Christ . . . how to participate in the grace of Christ . . . the ideas of election. . . . As the Pléiade and as every important literary movement in France since, has begun its activity by a proclamation, so Calvin, the reformer, began his— before we act we must know how we are about to act, the position must be made clear and it must be made clear in words. The various possibilities need to be tabulated, a net of words must be woven, each consistent with the other until, made of words, the system appears to which the maker refers his acts, indeed comes to accept as substitutes for acts, and, if the words are his own words, he will announce the system to be external and immutable. You may, if you please, consider this pattern of consistent words heartless in the consequences they imply in terms of action. But they must be accepted as consistent, that is, as logical. Although Calvin admitted that belief cannot be forced by persecution and that the Church, which was of the spirit—or in the terminology I have been using, of the emotions—was powerless to take action, yet he urged upon the civil authorities the necessity of stamping out differences of opinion. When Ameux, a councillor of Geneva (having dined too well), said that Calvin was a bad man and a hypocrite, Calvin refused to rest until Ameux had been punished. For, he said, the councillor had not insulted Calvin the man ; he had detracted from the glory of God. If we accept the strength of the religious emotion which inspired Calvin and consequently the realities which it projected and through which it

operated, Calvin's logic becomes clear. It becomes absurd for us to imprison a sneak thief who has stolen an object of small importance and to permit men to go free who by attacking God debase either the power or the dignity of the emotion associated with that symbol. However terrible this logic may be in its operation when looked at objectively, it is inevitable in terms of the situation which produced it.

The differences between Calvin's and Luther's theologies are comparatively unimportant. Both of them derive their emotion from a reading of the Bible and in both of them the emotion modulates itself by means of such terms as " grace ", " the holy spirit entering the heart of man " and both are bewildered by the problem as to whether this original emotion is to be maintained by " good deeds ", or other acts, such as the sacraments of the Church and the like. The differences between them, however, are the differences between national imaginations—the German holds fast to the emotion, he is willing to be inconsistent, to change the symbols by which the emotion manifests itself, so long as the emotion is maintained. The Frenchman defines his possibilities of action, ties them up in a system of words and then in accordance with these words proceeds to act with demoniac fury. Verbal consistency is the good intention which smooths his way.

3

ENGLAND took its Reformation with a difference. Here there were proclamations like Calvin's, but the proclamations failed to have the desired effect. Here, too, there were emotional tumults like Luther's and a brief space of furious persecution—the Roman Church at its worst. But the English imagination refused, except for a brief time in the Seventeenth Century, to limit its possibilities of action. English heretics would write statements of principles, would recant and then go on being better heretics than they had been before.[1] Words are, after all, only words. Action is important. The English

[1] This was not true of all Englishmen, many died for their words.

Reformation became a political game. The succession of the English bishops was only possible because a Roman would consecrate a Protestant who would consecrate a Protestant who would become a Roman. Yet the reality of the religious experience, of the emotion derived from the Bible, was no less in England than it was elsewhere. It penetrated every corner of the English land and is to be found in almost every book that was produced in England for some three hundred years. Because here it was less sharply defined than it was elsewhere, it more easily entered into that freer emotion which is called the emotion of literature. The terminology of the disputes was taken from the churches into the study and was used to describe the experience of poetry. In the Seventeenth Century, when English poetry reached heights that it has never since attained, Herbert, Donne, Crawshaw, Vaughan, Traherne, Marvell, Milton, and how many others, felt the experience of religion flow over into the experience of poetry and were unable to distinguish whether poetry was religion, or religion was poetry.

Many people have had the thought that the literary experience is unique and separate from all others. The thought is broad and the acceptance of some statement of that kind leads us into difficulties which, as the critics of past ages have been unable to solve them, may not be capable of solution. However, even if the statement refers to a valid distinction between various types of feeling, it must become clear that, however powerful the literary emotion of the Renaissance may have been if regarded as independent of other human needs and appetites, that emotion, which in the Reformation expressed itself in words which have been applied indifferently to the religious and to the literary experience, was in its effect even more powerful and rich. It may appear, if these pages are read to their conclusion, that the emotion of literature is not vastly different from the emotion of religion and that this similarity is due, in part, to the ambiguities of the symbols by which emotions get expression. For the moment we need not pursue the question too far. Two emotions, which express themselves by the same symbol, may, or may not, be the same emotion. Dr. Freud and his

associates in the Twentieth Century are not entirely certain about it. For the historian it is sufficient to observe that the Englishman, Frenchman, and German of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries were not clear about it either.

D. ACHIEVEMENT: SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE Seventeenth Century, or at least the first three-quarters of it, was a century of achievement. In England, the verbal flights of the Sixteenth Century had sufficiently refined the language to give it an excellent muscular tone, the destruction of the ethical system of the Church and the development of the natural sciences gave a broad list of referents with which to operate, and the destruction of the mediaeval categories of meaning permitted the free operation with feeling which is characteristic of the English imagination. The rise of the categories of reason across the Channel and increasing familiarity with the classical categories exercised a helpful restraint on action. Inactivity is Milton's symbol for the horrors of hell. France occupied itself with the strengthening of verbal patterns and established the system which ultimately was to strangle it. Germany, distressed by the Thirty Years War, continued the transformation of folk-song into hymn and attempted to import into Germany the ideas of linguistic reform which had been successful in France.

CHAPTER VIII

ENGLISHMEN IN ENGLAND

ENGLISH phantasy undertook its highest flights in that century which of all others in English history, with the possible exception of the Twentieth, has been the most tragic. It was a century of unlimited nervous and imaginative energy which witnessed the overflowing of that energy into not only two parties, Royalist and Schismatic, or three parties, Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian, but into a myriad of parties whose divisions were less divisions of thought than they were valencies of feeling. The atoms of feeling, agitated as they had never been before, or were like to be again, reached out towards each other, overleaping logic and probability until they made strange compounds. The sensualist Milton became the intellectual leader of the Puritan party because in his young strength he advocated divorce, as in his maturity he was to look without scorn upon polygamy. Donne, the libertine, who could love both fair and brown, country and city girl indiscriminately, became the Dean of St. Paul's and celebrated God, His Son and the Virgin Mary in the same style and, on one or two occasions, with the same conceit, he had made use of in his earlier poems to mistresses.

I

THE English Seventeenth Century is, above all, a century of action. When in 1603, England having lost the subtle hand of Elizabeth, James Stuart of Scotland rode down towards London, he was met by a party of Presbyterians with one of those petitions which were to flutter through the English air like dead leaves on an autumn day. It became immediately clear that a greater change was in the air than a mere change of sovereign. Impulses, which for forty years Elizabeth had carefully balanced by playing

one against the other and leading much of the energy off in literature, were now about to assert themselves and demand their proper sphere of action. This sphere was not to be by refraction in a Spenserian ideal of beauty, drawn through Ficino from Plato, or in Petrarchism. It was to deal more directly with local problems and was to deal with them in a specifically English manner. The British intolerance of ideas was never more clearly shown than in this century when England was probably more learned than ever before. England would not have this or that idea only—and the choice of this idea in preference to that one is frequently called logic—it insisted on having them all. When an Englishman compromises, he gives up nothing and takes everything. His compromise is truly a synthesis and consists most frequently in his admission that he is between two poles, the north and the south, and that the theatre upon which he intends to operate will be the entire universe. It was no accident that the greatest poem of this period, the one which has most profoundly stirred the English imagination, was the account of the creation of heaven and earth and the destiny of man. Imagination projects itself here into sidereal space and back beyond the beginnings of time. The fruits of the earth were never more dearly loved in England than in these years when a large body of Englishmen were decrying them as rotten. The early Nineteenth Century in England, which in its sense of brown earth and green grass has most frequently been compared with this period, made use of a philosophy to justify that love. The Seventeenth Century very frequently loved in spite of its philosophy, and, by the laws of English logic, got an additional sensation by violating its own prohibitions. The sermons of the Puritans, jewelled and thunderous, raised sensation to a kind of holy ecstasy. By their latinized diction, their lengthy and involved queries, they induced the adoration of God and His eternal law and disdained the arts of persuasion. They bullied their audiences into belief and from belief into action and from action back again into language which constructed further fields where the process might be continued in an eternal round. This was the last period of great English prose, for after the

Restoration, in the hands of Dryden, and after Dryden in the hands of Addison, prose becomes subdued to a more practical purpose. It became not action in general, surge upon surge of energy, overwhelming reader and speaker, but logical persuasion to this or that small deed, the costume of women, the proper reading of a man of fashion, the eccentricities of a whimsical knight. The prose of the Seventeenth Century, whether it be that of a Puritan Milton, the Anglican Taylor, the scoffing Burton, or whether it be that tight, close-knit, vivid prose of Bacon, is prose for its own sake. It is action in a world of infinite possibilities, a battle for a cause, in which cause the destinies of humanity and the life and death of God Himself are involved.

Literature under Elizabeth was different only in that it was less definite, more confused, less sure of itself. Its aims were not clearly defined and the frame within which it operated was frequently constructed with an eye on foreign sources. Elizabethan literature had a myriad of tongues, indeed, the clamour was deafening. Except for Spenser and Shakespeare, and the brief span of Marlowe, we miss a definite formality. English imagination was acting in all directions at once. The sonneteers were twittering adequate sonnets on a pattern so successfully that you can only with difficulty distinguish one from the other. As the ideal of the man of action is to act independently, conquer his own empire out of a chaos of peoples, so the Seventeenth Century, both in its imaginative action in literature and in its literal action in politics, produced men whose notes are so diverse that each can be picked out from a wilderness of authors as an individual. John Donne was scarcely in his grave when Milton brought forth the first of his more memorable poems. Milton, Herrick, Herbert, Walton, Vaughan, Taylor, Fuller, Davenant, Cowley, Waller, and many others, each with his own distinguishing mark so clear that one cannot be mistaken for the other, lived at the same time and within a few miles of each other, breathed the same air of combat and, for the most part, were nourished by the same fruits of classical scholarship.

In the Seventeenth Century it is possible for us for the

first time in these hasty chronicles to catch the full flavour of English imagination. Englishmen, it has been said, dream characteristically of action through a real world with clearly defined edges in space and time. They love the instrument which makes this action possible, the fields, the air, the goodly frame of the earth. Because they act on impulse, they dream of acting by principle. In the Seventeenth Century this rough and tentative statement demonstrates itself with such clarity that it is possible now to reduce it to a more orderly form. From the old English poets through Chaucer and Spenser, it is possible to trace a precise notation of sensation. The notes made by these poets are not to demonstrate a general principle useful in controlling future action, as they might be used by a Frenchman, but they are made for their own sakes. They induce a feeling which is at the same time individual and powerful. From Geoffrey of Monmouth, again through Chaucer and Spenser, it is possible to note a persistent interest in political action, the action of men in a state; and a host of minor writers—minor only because of lack of space—gives illustration to this preoccupation as to how men can best live together and at the same time preserve their individual freedom.

2

POLITICAL liberty is, perhaps, the first consequence upon this innate demand for action. If the Englishman, as has sometimes been asserted, must always be free, and if this love of political liberty is bred in his bones, the Seventeenth Century was, nevertheless, the first century in which liberty became a programme for action, a political plank for which unborn Occidentals, as well as Orientals, were to suffer death. Yet the ideal of liberty might never have appeared in England had it not been for the accidents of the Reformation, the dissatisfactions of Luther and Calvin and their determination to return to the Scriptures as a constant re-excitant of their religious emotions. The arguments they make use of in attack and defence, culminating in the significant if politically ambiguous note by Margaret, Queen of Navarre, that it cannot be against the law for a man to attain a true knowledge of God, appeared

in England and were taken up by men of various temperaments. But in England the religious controversy was the expression of an emotion much greater than the emotions stimulated by reading the Bible, or by a knowledge of the God which the Bible describes. It was not, in a narrow sense, religious. It involved the differences, for example, between the city-dwelling merchant and his talkative apprentices, living in an atmosphere of ledgers in which emotions could be identified by symbols; and the land-owning gentry, less communicative and more bound by traditional patterns of action, as well as the secondary differences which display themselves in the domain of morals or scholarship. In England the political struggle of the Seventeenth Century was on the part of both the Royalists and the Rebels a struggle to preserve the possibilities of action. Milton dedicated the best years of his maturity in fighting for liberty, first with the Presbyterians against the bishops, then with Cromwell against the Presbyterians, then, briefly, independently against them all, and died embittered just fourteen years before the compromise of 1688, which was to bring much that he had hoped for to pass. The political liberty of England was a torch which within the next century was to set all Europe aflame; but not at once, not until the Frenchmen in France had carried their own experiment to its conclusion and came to see by force of reason what England had seen as a clear necessity. Then France was to follow the example of the American colonies and the example of France was, with more or less violence, to be followed by the rest of Europe with the establishment of constitutional monarchies. As these pages are being written, the light of liberty, which for 200 years has inspired hope and complacency, is flickering out. The Seventeenth Century may well be a fitting introduction to the Twentieth.

With dreams of liberty and the possibilities of unrestrained action, safeguarded by law, there is to be found with increasing frequency in the English Seventeenth-Century meditation on the opposite of action, death, her paler sister.

French critics have observed, with some asperity, that

English authors seem to dwell at undue length on this subject, and have been astonished at the gloom which they find in English poetry. The English meditation on death, however, which appears in the earliest English documents and is given its complete expression in Stuart literature, is an inevitable companion to the English phantasy about action. The theme of death, which arouses the English imagination, is not to the Englishman, as it is to the Frenchman, a depressing subject. John Donne wrapped himself in his shroud, had his picture painted and kept this portrait before him during the last years of his life. In his earlier poems, death, the cessation of action becomes an aid to coquetry,

When I dyed last, and, Deare, I dye as often as from thee I goe,

or

Oh doe not die, for I shall hate
All women so, when thou art gone,

When by thy scorne, O murdresse, I am dead,
And that thou thinkst thee free
From all solicitation from mee,
Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,
And thee, fain'd vestall, in worse armes shall see;

Before I sigh my last gaspe, let me breath,
Great love, some Legacies;

Donne can even think of his skeleton, which wears the necklace made from his mistress's hair and turn it into a compliment. He thinks that when he is dead from a cause unknown to science, and his friends in curiosity will have cut him up to survey each part, they will find in his heart the picture of his mistress. The theme has its variations and for more than one poet the idea of death is an excuse for more rapid and intense action. Robert Herrick urges us to gather rosebuds while we may for old time is still aflying, and John Marvell hears time's chariot clanking at his heels more passionately than even Donne. He reminds his mistress that worms shall one time violate that virginity which she protects from him and urges her to yield. At times when the French wrote and delivered

sonorous funeral sermons, the English expended their phantasy on brief, but perfect, elegies :

> Underneath this marble hearse
> Lies the subject of all verse.

Critics have rightly urged that this preoccupation with death, these love poems and, to a certain extent, the erotic libertinage of the Seventeenth Century, are derived in turn from the Greek anthology and Latin poets, from Petrarch and from the grossness of manners which surrounded them. Yet, although the fact cannot be demonstrated before a court of probate, it seems certain that the Seventeenth-Century interest in death is more intense in its feeling and broad in its scope than a mere imitation of a classic original. Meditation on death is indeed a consequence of the English love of deeds. It is the end of action, not to be regarded with as much horror as with regret, not the decay of a body, but, at times a final rest, at others an incentive to make the most of what we have and at still others a transition from one sphere of action to another.

The Petrarchism of English literature of this period is, in its symbols, derived from the poetry of Italy. In the Elizabethan period, Petrarchism and Platonism combined to offer a fairly good imitation and at times an excellent re-creation of the Italian original. By the Seventeenth Century, however—and we must keep in mind that Seventeenth-Century poetry follows hard on the heels of Sixteenth-Century poetry—this Italianate Petrarchism had been naturalized in England and had found its own modes of expression. The symbols were much the same, the despairing lover and the cruel mistress. But when Donne gazes rapturously into his mistress's eyes he becomes a philosopher, and taking his symbols from experimental science he can use, and use effectively, the line :

> Inter-inanimates two souls.

The flea which has in it both of their bloods is an argument for her to yield. Donne is Petrarchian in reading the formula . . . backwards ! The characters and the symbols of Petrarchian erotic poetry are there, but they

are transformed into action, or into taunts. A similar situation is seen in the works of the Cavalier poets, who were not entirely independent of the influence of Donne.

> Why so pale and wan, fond lover,

or

> Out upon it I have loved
> Three whole days together
> And am like to love three more
> If it prove fair weather.

By a neat variation upon a line from Julius Caesar, Lovelace excuses his leaving by

> I could not love thee dear, so much
> Loved I not honour more.

The Seventeenth Century was undoubtedly libertine. If the Fourteenth Century can, with some show of reason, be called the " Naughty Fourteenth ", the English Seventeenth Century is downright wicked. Donne himself and several of his followers have written with skill poems that must bring blushes to the pale cheeks of the postal censors when these same poems are passed in the cause of high art. The libertinism of England, however, differs from that of Italy as seen in the works of such a poet as Marino, in that it carries with it sensation rather than sensuality. These poets, Donne, Marvell, Herrick, describe situations which a purer age leaves to the elaboration of phantasy. For Ariosto sensation was all. The libertine poems of the Seventeenth Century begin with sensation and carry it further.

Phantasies about physical action thus involve phantasies about death, and, in their symbolisms, become entangled with the Petrarchism and the eroticism which were then in fashion. They carry with them still another consequence. They elevate physical action or, as something depends on the point of view, degrade it, into intellectual activity. But the Seventeenth Century thought for the sake of thinking, rather than for the sake of having thoughts. There is a great deal of discussion about reaching truth, but it was more fun to go after truth than it was to put it in the bag. Bacon, characteristically as an Englishman, formulated the rules of the experimental method and left

to Descartes, the Frenchman, the discovery of modern scientific method. Many experiments are needed, said Bacon, that is, many kinds of action against different backgrounds ; truth is to be approached slowly, and conclusions are to be drawn only after many experiments have made the drawing of conclusion, it would seem, a sad inevitability.

Critics of a duller age have objected to the metaphysical poets because of their intellectuality. Dryden thought they were too philosophical, Steele thought they were too involved, and Johnson thought that they were too intelligent. Although Dryden should have known better, he may be excused by the Francophile spirit of the age in which he wrote. Steele and Johnson, however, were unable to understand a fact which the metaphysical poets understood very well indeed, namely, that it is as easy for an unself-conscious Englishman to have feelings about ideas as it is for a Frenchman to have ideas about feelings. The conceits and wit of the metaphysical poets are of this kind, woods and fields and simple nature were not enough for them. The curiously subtle way in which nature is put together, the new investigations of both scientists and historians, the legal controversies of Puritan and Royalist, and particularly the new and splendid translation of the Bible, now in everyone's hands and raising technical questions of various kinds, opened to them a technical vocabulary which, if it is no longer necessary to us for penetrating our problem, was at any rate open to them. They used the vocabulary, not as the French did with the idea of fitting the words together to form a consistent pattern, but as blows in a battle, clearing the way.

This intellectualization was further stimulated by a stylistic problem which confronted them. Poetry in the vernacular, as anyone might see, had come to stay. Poets still attempted, and some succeeded, to write finely in Latin under the impression that, sooner or later, with the rapid changes in language that they saw before them, the vernacular would disappear and men would return again to that language which had so impressed the barbarian Germans in their early conflict with it. Certainly the general public, and with that public a large number of

writers, had no such thoughts. The English language of every day was as good as Latin and a great deal easier to read. Attempts were being made, particularly in England and France, to clean up the excesses of the Sixteenth Century. Before long France was to have her Academy. England proceeded by independent action. A literary, or more particularly a poetic, style was needed which would be suitable for all kinds of poetry from epics in the grand style to the lyrics of every day. The Sixteenth Century had experimented freely. In the Seventeenth Century experiments were limited to a few definite directions, the involved, nervous, learned and conversational style of metaphysical poetry was one direction. Donne could write,

For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love,

which may be taken as an idiomatic appeal from words to action. But he was also capable of higher flights. The classic style, with its slick simplicity, all depending on the position in a stanza of the keyword, was still another, and Spenser provided a third. Yet in all of these, whether plain or jewelled, the attempt was made to discover a way of writing which would be all things to all men. The experiment along classic lines was successful. As we now see, it must have been, for it was a further development of the Renaissance tendency to make things simple and orderly. Yet the experiments of Donne and the Spenserians were good experiments, and now that we have left the dominant enthusiasm of the Renaissance somewhat behind, we can return to them with more pleasure than those gentlemen of the Eighteenth Century whose violent objection to them may indicate that they were not unconscious of their charms.

3

THE English interest in action had still another effect of importance to these speculations. It completely changed the course of the Reformation in England. English writers could make no choice between feeling and thinking. They were not like Luther, content to accept the religious emotion and restimulate it again and again by a

return to the Bible, nor, like Calvin, would they consent to cutting off avenues of action by the formulation of a method. The English Church stood between Rome and the Schismatics. It accepted the authority of the Bible and permitted a direct appeal to it. It accepted also the authority of the Church tradition. Neither of these singly nor together was quite enough. It wanted also the world that it lived in. Hooker retired to the country that he might see God breathing through the fields. Each man gets only a fragment of truth, all men by studying all things may conquer a section of it. According to Saurat, Milton's final philosophy was this kind of a pantheism; God is infinite, He created the world by making a portion of His infiniteness concrete, He created man who, with the world, is a part of divinity, then slowly withdrew Himself, leaving man free to act. Despite the agitations of their Scottish neighbours, Englishmen could not be persuaded to give up their freedom of choice. The English Reformation is thus seen to be very different from the Reformation elsewhere, neither meditation about God, nor the statement of principle, but rather God acting in His own world. In a world of activity all possibilities are open and in England under the Reformation all possibilities were tried. There is here a lack of system, if system be understood as possibilities of action defined by words which are consistent with each other and thus which exclude other possibilities. There is too, at times, an austerity which contrasts strongly with the German uncertain symbolization of its bewilderment about the nature of feeling and about the nature of God. This austerity, however, is attributable only to one party of poets. Milton has been said to have been the chief offender, but of that more in a moment. Vaughan, the Silurian, called his poems *Silex Sicintilans*, the *Flaming Flint*, the stone which burns. The point needs no further development.

4

DISCUSSION of Stuart poetry in England frequently begins and always ends with Milton, undoubtedly the most striking phenomenon of the time. If regarded from the point

of view from which these pages are being written, he raises questions which will clarify the situation.

In the first place it is important to emphasize the fact that Milton is a classicist. He experimented successively with all of the classical forms. No theme, for example, could be more hackneyed than the praise of a country life. Surrey, imitating Martial, had had his say about it in *Tottel's Miscellany*. Since Surrey every youngster with poetic ambitions had tried his hand at it and it would seem that the possibilities had been exhausted. Yet Milton, in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, took the theme and, without making any deviations from the pattern which came to his hand, succeeded in infusing it with new life. The chief objection to these two poems to-day is that they contain so many phrases which have become proverbial that one feels them to be somewhat commonplace. They are commonplace only because of their success as poems. A similar success attended his efforts with the pastoral elegy. From the Greek of Theocritus, the elegy had come into England through Italy. It seemed that all variations on it had been tried, and although by some deviation Shelley in the Nineteenth Century was to be successful with it, it is significant that after the perfection of Milton's *Lycidas* it disappeared in England. And in *Lycidas* Milton combined the various strains of tradition which his predecessors had found effective: the general pastoral tone, personal feeling and a sufficient touch of political satire to add salt.

The epic was, of course, the great form of the Renaissance. Although only a half-dozen epic poems are now generally known, this half-dozen is chosen from amongst thousands of compositions which were put together. The most notable of these is Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*. Tasso had attempted to write a regular epic for modern times. Before he undertook his task he examined the theory of epic poetry in some detail and published the results of his examination. The poem should, he decided, deal with historical material sufficiently remote that the imagination could handle it freely, but sufficiently near that the general public for which it was written would still have some knowledge of the events. It was to be written in the

vernacular and must make use of Christian rather than pagan deities. The idea is excellent and the reasoning is sound, and as Tasso is a worker of superior ability, he brought forth an epic on the central episode in the Crusades, the capture of Jerusalem, which humanity will not wish to forget. Yet when the scale of his poem is compared with that of Milton, the difference becomes clear. Milton faced the same problem of writing a modern epic on a subject of general importance to Europe. Instead of choosing an episode from recent history he chose the entire historical pageant, the creation of the world and the fall of man, with, in the ninth book, episodes in perspective which showed man's future. In these attempts, as in his masque and in his sonnets, Milton was doing what others had done before, but was doing it better. The point of importance in analysing the structure of mood and imagination is not that Milton was taking old forms in the classical fashion and improving upon them, but that these forms had become ways through which English imagination could be projected. These were no experiment. They were instruments for action. That intelligence and passion should have been given at this time in the fullness with which they were given to Milton and that Milton should have happened to be an Englishman is one of the fortunate accidents of history. But, having been given this intelligence and passion, Milton expressed them in ways which may now be considered national. Were he not in his imaginative projections so characteristically English, he could not have exercised the power he did over the Romantics of the Nineteenth Century. From Addison's clear defence of him in the *Spectator*, through the 1850's and even to the present day, interest in Milton is one of the touchstones for the development of English imagination. His position with the Puritans had attracted some followers, still others have been attracted by his use of blank verse and others by his brilliant organization in *Paradise Lost* of an intractable material. Yet, in a sense, each of these qualities is a part of the English imaginative achievement of Milton's own period. Each is action in a different world, the political, the world of song, the intellectual.

As Mr. Tilyard has pointed out, Milton's failures in *Paradise Lost* are due to the qualities I have ventured to name as typically English. Mr. Tilyard observes that Milton had throughout this long poem a very definite statement to make and that the entire organization of the poem, as blocked out before Milton began to write, was a careful, though very complicated, elaboration on the opening lines : man's first disobedience, his fall, the fruit of the forbidden tree and the restoration through the intervention of Christ. In presenting this material, some portions were more attractive than others, the passionate energy of Satan, the description of infinite space, the movement of creation, these themes were kindred to him. The portions which dragged are those portions where Milton was forced to describe inactivity. In the earthly paradise, Eve unable to remain inactive sets out with gardening tools to cultivate a garden which could not help but produce more than sufficient for her needs. It was, no doubt, according to Milton's view, Eve's light-minded feminine frivolity which caused her to take the apple, and her inability to appreciate that every action, no matter how insignificant it may appear to be, is of the utmost, and Milton would say it is for each of us of cosmic, importance. Yet it might also be urged that Eve took the apple, as she is described to have taken it in *Paradise Lost*, because she could not resist taking some action which was definite and which flowed from her own independent decision. Milton can find no better way of describing the condition of the fallen angels than that they lay inactive in a stupor. This was the horror of hell. Satan, significantly, the brightest of the fallen angels, arouses them from their sloth. They proceed to build cities, to make explorations in characteristic English fashion.

A second objection which has been made to *Paradise Lost* is that the Prince of Evil becomes the hero. If the poem is read carefully, as Mr. Tilyard has pointed out, the objection falls because Satan dominates no more than half the poem. Yet Satan is by far the most vivid character in it. While man was still part of God, lacking in the ability to choose for himself, man has little appeal to the imagination of England. The description of the infinite

is somewhat better, but where all is activity, activity becomes an ecstasy rather than an interest. Satan struggling against his fate, the great fighter, is a character much more easily apprehended and much more suitable as a symbol for English phantasy. Here is action in limitless space, restrained only by a few simple rules.

Milton's ideals of self-control are central to an understanding of his imagination. They are the point where the two complementary English phantasies meet, the phantasies of acting on impulse and acting by principle. Impulsive action is clearly dangerous, yet too many principles inhibit action entirely. Milton learned this to his sorrow at an early date. As a young man he fell in love with and married a young woman of some physical attractiveness. Exactly what happened is not known, but it appears that she was as prudish as she was beautiful. During, or shortly after their honeymoon, Milton began his composition of the first pamphlet advocating divorce according to principles almost as free as those now obtaining in Soviet Russia. However bitter Milton's own experiences may have been, the point that he raised in this controversy is a point which was to recur in both his prose and his verse, namely, whatever restrictions may be imposed upon action should be imposed not by law, but by the individual himself. Every man must do as he thinks best to preserve himself, as well as to preserve society. Impulses must be scrutinized, and, Milton insisted, a strong self-control must be exercised. Self-control of some kind or other, imposed by moral principles or by the fatigue curve of the organism, is an inevitable corollary to anarchistic philosophy. Milton was not, to be sure, a complete anarchist. Yet throughout his life he found himself against the government, and advocated consistently that the more laws a nation has, the unhappier it becomes. Milton and his apologists have asserted repeatedly that he proposes self-control in place of legal control. Yet we must not forget that this means simply that an individual should do whatever seems best to him. Milton takes great pride in repeating on several occasions that through his various marriages, and as a young man of considerable sensibility, he nevertheless retained his

chastity and refused to frequent prostitutes. Saurat, however, has pointed out that for him continence was a kind of magic by which he thought to increase his poetic powers. Throughout his work he describes sexuality with a gusto not out of keeping with the libertinage of the other poets of his time. From the description of the birth of Euphrosyne (Zephyr playing with Aurora on beds of blue violets and dew-washed roses, " filled her with thee, a daughter fair ") through the pamphlets on divorce, the personal passages in his magnificent defence of free speech (for we must not only be able to do what we please, but also to say what we please), these references continue. They reach what is perhaps their most complete expression in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*:

> Both turned, and under open sky adored
> The God that made both Sky, Air, Earth, and Heaven,
> Which they beheld, the Moon's resplendent globe,
> And starry Pole:

they say their evening prayer and retire. They have no need to put off " these troublesome disguises which we wear . . . ."

> . . . nor turned, I ween,
> Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites
> Mysterious of connubial love refused:
> Whatever hypocrites austerely talk
> Of purity, and place, and innocence,
> Defaming as impure what God declares
> Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all.
> Our Maker bids increase; who bids abstain
> But our destroyer, foe to God and Man?

He is no less specific in his description of the intoxication which follows upon the eating of the apple, and the lubricity which follows upon it. If there is any one point upon which Milton is unequivocal, it is that all God's creatures not only have the right, but that they are enjoined to perform the sexual act. Milton objected to man's complete surrender before this form of activity, passion's blind mouths. Other kinds of action were equally attractive to his imagination, fighting the bishops or the Presbyterians, or the Parliament, fighting the united opinion of Europe, which regarded the Protectorate with

the same disdain and fear with which modern Europeans look upon the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, and looked upon Milton in much the same way as our public press has looked upon Lenin, who occupied the same place in Russia that Milton hoped to occupy in the Commonwealth. These forms of action, together with the less spectacular action of the scholar, Milton identified with the will of God, for God Himself, being infinite, and Milton's God was an English God, has action as one of his modalities. Milton's self-control, particularly in the periods after *Comus*, with its sexual magic, chastity for its own sake and also because it increases your power to operate, is the focal point at which all possibilities of action meet and limit each other.

In the Seventeenth Century, between the death of Elizabeth and the restoration of Charles II, English imagination discovered the symbols by which it could make itself concrete. The two modalities of the Renaissance, the sensations of things arranged in a neat order and the emotion, either aroused by things or by words, that is events, were seized upon as the particular property of England. By the breaking up of the balance which Elizabeth had imposed and the turning of attention more precisely to immediate problems of living, action with things and feeling was liberated to flow in various directions. Phantasies of action were accompanied by phantasies of death, the end of action, and became involved with imported modalities, such as Petrarchism. The formation of a new style by experiments with many styles capitulated to these demands, and in the end Milton gave complete expression to that which was at the same time English and Renascent.

CHAPTER IX

FRENCHMEN IN FRANCE

THE Seventeenth Century brought to the French imagination a definition of purpose and direction no less clear than it had brought to the English imagination. If liberty, meditation on death, and an individual treatment of the objects of sensation, have in England become part of imaginative tradition, they have been able to do so only since the writers of the English Seventeenth Century gave them currency. As has been seen, the Seventeenth Century in England was characteristically an organization of the symbols which the Renaissance had brought in from classical antiquity and from Italy, in such a way as would aid in imaginative and emotional expansion.

I

IN a similar sense the Seventeenth Century in France was French. The literatures of both nations started with much the same inheritance. As we have seen, both had responded vividly to the new ways of thinking and feeling which had been imported from abroad. In both, during the Sixteenth Century that which may be called the emotional modality of the Classical Renaissance produced characteristic results: Rabelais, Montaigne, and the Pléiade in France; Spenser and Shakespeare in England; in both nations a wide enlargement of vocabulary, an importation of classical symbols, and in both, though this to a lesser degree, a simplification of the external forms through which literature gets itself expressed. The element of reason was present in the Sixteenth Century but it was in both countries a platonic reason, sensuous in its effect. Whereas these elements were modified in England by a canalization into their possibilities for action, they were rejected in France. Aristotle took the

place of Plato, and Vergil the place of Homer. That type of imagination which, in the preceding generations, had found delight in the sensations of things, now, in France, was to find its pleasure in arranging the things of sensation by categories into a system.

It is by no accident that the French writers point to their Seventeenth Century as the great century of their history, and do so despite the friendly admonition of their neighbours who suggest that other centuries, the Thirteenth, for example, deserve a higher place. The Seventeenth Century satisfies, as no other century can, the French need to set up boundaries, to determine precise referents, to build up a system, a method to which all can agree. If the word points sharply at its referent, if the nature and position of the referent is made quite clear, none except an unreasonable man will doubt that the referent is where it is and fits as it is said to fit into a system of other referents. Few, indeed, do deny; but the question which is raised with insistence outside of France has always been as to the use of the system, the value of this elaboration of the obvious. Corneille observes, and few will doubt, that we sympathize with the misfortunes of kings in tragedy, not because we are like kings in royalty but because kings are like us in humanity. The instruction which tragedies offer is, to be sure, found in moral maxims judiciously interspersed, in the simple painting of vice and virtue in such a way that vice will not be mistaken for virtue or virtue for vice. It is clear that when good men are dominated by emotion they are apt to experience unhappiness. There will be few to deny and none, perhaps, to doubt the soundness of these observations; yet as an aesthetic programme, they leave much to be desired. When Corneille made these observations, he had, as he announced, been connected with the theatre for fifty years and should know whereof he spoke. These are not the statements of a grammarian or philosopher—Corneille objected to both—but of a practising artist and as such they must be taken as an account of what Corneille thought he found of importance in the experience of literature. But this account omits to mention values in the experience

of literature which other nations have found to be essential to it. It may be that these values escape analysis and it may be, too, that the values which Corneille announces are irrelevant.

French imagination of the Seventeenth Century is hag-ridden by the terms " reason ", " good sense ", " order ", " method ", and the rules. This explains, in part, why the productions of French classicism have failed to appeal as strongly as they might in England and Germany. To be sure, Racine, at the end of the century, was much more interested in feeling, and particularly the feelings of women, than Corneille had been at the beginning of the century. It is also true, as I shall attempt to make clear in a moment, that reason, common sense and the rules were forms through which Corneille's imagination expressed itself and that Corneille, with his magnificent technical virtuosity, was much more than a technician. Yet both he and Racine, to choose only two examples where one might choose fifty, were masters of method and reason as Seventeenth-Century France understood those terms. Common sense, simplicity, clarity, these were the qualities without which as they thought art must perish, these were the limits fixed by the good sense of two thousand years of European intelligence beyond which imagination cannot soar. As the destiny of *Paradise Lost* in its French translation makes abundantly clear, from the earliest attempts to bring it into France to the latest French comment on it available to me, that of Professor Cazamian, French imagination will not soar to the higher flights. It wants its time and space held within sufficiently strict verbal limits so that they can be apprehended one at a time by the myopic eye of common sense.

Contemporaneous with this early Seventeenth-Century French limitation of imagination, this clipping of the wings of Pegasus, and tying of a pink ribbon about his neck that he might be displayed in the drawing-room, an object of wonder and admiration to the ladies and gentlemen who constituted the good tone of French society, other changes were proceeding which themselves tended towards a limitation of the possibilities of

action, and towards the careful scrutiny and dampening of the fires of feeling. France had had its troubles with the Reformation. Calvin has shown us what can happen to a Frenchman when he is sufficiently certain of himself by virtue of a proclamation to undertake action. Yet Calvin, across the borders in Switzerland, had found powerful partisans in the very family of the King. Experience showed that the Christian religion as Calvin had instituted it did not present a sufficiently tight and closed platform upon which the social and political life of a Christian nation could be organized. The tyrannies of Calvin, it soon became clear, rested upon centralized political authority, which, though it may have been inspired by God, was defended by a brutal and uncompromising military arm. France, wearied by the civil wars, was willing to return to its more traditional system and was led back by Richelieu in the service of the magnificent Louis. Richelieu and his party, at those moments when he had one, relied upon the authority of the Church in much the same way as Calvin relied upon the Bible and the *Institutes*. The monarchy of France was no less determined to maintain itself and its dignity than was Calvin determined to defend the honour of God. Even a brief inspection of the arguments of the period shows a curious overlapping of sense as between the terms " God ", " King ", " Honour ", and the like. The emotions to which these words point were not dissimilar, nor was the political structure of France vastly different *in its effects upon the emotion*, and consequently upon the imagination from the structure in Geneva, except in this sense : Richelieu approached God through the forms of the Church, whereas Calvin had approached Him more directly. Consequently Richelieu's approach was more nicely modulated ; literature and the poets could, in France, be useful to God and the King, as they could not in Geneva. In this scheme of centralization there was a place for writers, who, like Chapelain, knew how to observe decorum.

Other forces were at work. The court became the centre of France as it had not been in the past. And about the court as gentlemen, servants, gentleman-servants,

writers, politicians, divines, and women good and bad, was a crowd of hangers-on whom it was Richelieu's purpose to use in the furthering of his aim. They formed groups, they talked, their meetings became well organized. On one evening a week you could talk about literature in a Blue Saloon and another evening you could talk about natural philosophy, which we now call science, in another. So delicate was the adjustment of hope and fear in the France of this time that men gave themselves to the research of those gestures, verbal or physical, which could be made without arousing resentment and yet which might serve to underline the excellent qualities of the individual. The inhibitions which we have noted in earlier French phantasy were strengthened by the particular structure of French society at this very critical point in the history of France.

2

FROM Normandy, that same province to which France owes so much, came a short, energetic, dogmatic, schoolmaster of the Muses. His name was Malherbe. He saw what was needed and proceeded to supply it. These emotional youngsters of the Pléiade, by their attempts to expand the French language and raise it to a position where it would be capable of arousing an emotion which might be compared with the emotions of the ancients, had come very near to spoiling the French language altogether. By their importations from Greek and Latin, from Italy and Spain, and from each of the dialects native to the provinces of France, they had ruined French diction. As Malherbe's successor, Voiture, observed with considerable justness, a word is a sign; and if language is to be understood, the signs must have precise referents. Malherbe began the process of giving them their referents. His ante-room was filled with young authors, who assisted him in spreading his dicta. Discussion of literature has always been a pleasant occupation in the drawing-room. In Seventeenth-Century France, under the impulsion of Malherbe, this discussion became almost a passion.

Words and poems, it was discovered, had a meaning

which common sense could untangle. Poetry was no longer the fine frenzy and the emotional upheaval which it had been as a result of the neo-Platonic speculations of the preceding generation. It could be discussed as definitely and with as much logic as one discussed the latest scandal or the flavour of a pudding. Poetry was made of words and words are signs. If the signs are not clear, they are nothing. If the poem is not clear, it is nothing. An account of a situation, in verse or prose, is clear if the words of it are used with precision to point singly to the things which the account is about, if all peripheral meanings are omitted and if it can be presented, less briefly perhaps but with equal effectiveness, by another set of words. Brevity and simplicity are virtues.

The phrase, " Nothing is beautiful but the true," was clear and reasonable to Seventeenth-Century France, because after some fifty years of discussing Cartesian truths France had for this phrase a series of parallel definitions, the expansion of one word into several, and with these parallel definitions beauty could be identified. By clarity further, the French meant, clear for the average man. The clarity of the philosopher, or the technician, or the peasant, were illegitimate. Boilleau, after advising his follower to follow nature, tells him to freqent the court and the city. The insistence on average good sense in matters of diction and in the analysis of poetry and the attempt to write in such a way that everything said by one set of words could be said equally well by another, excludes one set of meanings from words and focuses the attention on the precise arrangement of things, character, and feeling in space and time. To be fair to the salons of that period we must admit that they usually began their discussions either by the assertion that pleasure is one of the objects of poetry, or that poetry must move the emotions. Since pleasure, however, was identified with the knowledge of truth, the admission did not take them very far in liberating these other aspects of meaning which appealed particularly to English and German imaginations. And, having admitted that poetry was to arouse emotion, they leave the statement lying

in isolation and turn to more homely and reasonable topics.

This pleasant discussion of words, which was begun by Malherbe, has continued to the present day. In the Académie française discussion of this kind became an institution sanctified by law, tradition and gay court costumes, in which even now the modern immortals lighten the beginning of their dreary labours. When the Academy was first established it was little more than a salon at which kindred spirits foregathered to discuss literature and words. When it got its charter, it was for a time undecided as to its policy. It began by a series of *discours*, that is, each member read an occasional paper which he had worked up on some literary subject in much the same way as women's clubs of to-day occupy their leisure moments. When this pastime became somewhat dull, the Academy undertook to censure the works of its members. This, not unnaturally, created painful moments. More agitation ensued when Richelieu, himself an amateur dramatist of more pretension than talent, insisted that the Academy censure Corneille's *Le Cid*. It was not until this flurry had passed that the Academy hit upon its true task, the examination of French words and the formulation of a French grammar. Words which were not French were to be excluded, the usages of French words were to be determined by fixed and definite rules. Native wood notes wild were to be condemned as illegal. Inhibitions were to be placed upon action, for it is only by means of these inhibitions that French imagination feels itself free to explore the particular areas of experience for which it has an acute and penetrating predeliction.

The centralization of government, the salon, Malherbe and the Académie française are illustrative of four tendencies which, though they do not explain them, serve to throw light on the hypostasis in Seventeenth-Century France of the terms " method " " good sense ", and the rules. Another tendency was the current into which scholarship had fallen. In our inspection of the achievements of the Sixteenth Century, we took note of the fact that the first objective of classical research was

to study the classics and to provide instruments for the rapid apprehension of the classical languages. If the study of the classics carries with it interpretation, the writing of text-books and dictionaries is, by its very nature, a technical task. The study has to do with feeling and values, together with the exploration of meaning. Texts have to do with reasonable arrangements and analysis. Until the time of Erasmus, scholars performed both functions and when the scholars happened to be good scholars, they performed them excellently. After the time of Erasmus these two functions were separated. You either read the classics as you read any other book, for pleasure and the liberation of the spirit, or you studied and analysed the classics as the biologist studies and analyses a beetle. What is generally referred to as the reasonable and analytical tendency of the Renaissance got separated from the aesthetic or appreciative or emotional tendency. As the pedants had little opportunity to make themselves heard above the ululations of the Pléiade, they took an ample revenge on the more sober generation which followed. Many of the technical problems which they proposed and solved, were of considerable difficulty. Before one reads a text it is clearly important to know what text one is going to read. The problems of textual criticism were infinitely involved. The Middle Ages, early and late, had less interest in individual authorship than we have and did not scruple to sign the great name of a dead poet to their own production. The manuscripts had to be gone over, freed from interpolation, dated, and by sure rules assigned to their proper authors. Lorenzo Valla's demonstration that the donation of Constantine was a forgery upon which the Church of Rome rested its claims for temporal power was much used by the reformers, but its value goes far beyond this. It was the first successful application of these rules of textual criticism upon which modern literary scholarship is based. These same rules even to-day are causing many an American to spend sleepless nights resenting attacks on the sacredness of the Scriptures. Technical criticism, the establishment of text and readings, preceded rule and method and was a

task of sufficient magnitude to keep a good many good scholars occupied for several centuries.

Unfortunately, scholars attempted to go further. The republic of authors was agitated by the question as to how it might be able to create epic poems, odes and dramas, which would be as good as those produced by the ancients. The scholars hastened to its aid, and from a vast reading abstracted the rules which were necessary. Scaliger made a very detailed comparison of Homer and Vergil in order to determine which was the better poet and what was the secret of epic art. The scientific method, which at first had been occupied with propriety, in the determination of matters of historical fact, its proper province, now turned its attention to the determination, by means of a vocabulary which had been inadequately tested, of the effects of literature and the means whereby these effects are to be attained. Pedants did not introduce, but they served to make popular, that collection of vague fictions (poetry, elevation, beauty, sublimity, and the like) which ever since has dammed any attempt to think about poems, the effects poems have or the needs poems serve. From the scholars, poets and critics get the rules.

That the rules were bad rules, in so far as they failed to make clear our varied experiences with literature, is of less importance than that they were thought to be good and adequate rules. They were accepted by the French as the proper limits to action. When the reaction against them set in strongly, rebels like Leonard Welsted in the Eighteenth Century in England, or Bodmer some thirty years later in Germany, could point out that when the rules were not definitely irrelevant they pointed out self-evident truths. It was quite true that Horace in his *Art of Poetry* had warned the writer against joining a horse's head to a woman's body, but, as the rebels pointed out, who would ever have the wish to join a horse's head to a woman's body. Epic poems were thought to be stories of heroic action which were to be interpreted in terms of morality by means of complicated allegory. The epic poet is thus the master of life.

But the rules went further than this, particularly as

they applied to drama. The unities were introduced, the action of a play could continue no more than a day, although there was considerable debate as to whether Aristotle had in mind a day of twenty-four hours or a day of twelve hours. Corneille felt himself under the obligation of making apology for extending the time of his dramatic action to thirty hours. The unity of place required that the action of the play be in the same town and preferably in the same or in contiguous buildings. The unity of action, perhaps the most useful of all these unities, although it would have been interesting to get Shakespeare's views on the matter, limited the story to a single series of events in which each event was connected with all of the others and led to a single denouement. The question is not whether the unities are, to use one of the terms against which I have just been inveighing, good or bad (they seem to have been good for Pierre Corneille and to have been bad for his younger brother Thomas), or whether they were, as many have pointed out, historically inevitable. The fact of importance here is that the unities were, after some preliminary skirmishing, held by French authors and critics as a direct gift from that Apollo who has the interests of French art under his particular care. In England or Germany where books are valued more for their effects than for how the effects were attained, the fact that the action of a story is confined to twelve, twenty-four or thirty hours is a matter of passing interest and of secondary importance. In France it was of the first importance. How can you enjoy a play with safety unless you know that it is a good play, and how can you tell whether it is a good play unless you know that it has been written according to definite rules of reason! Action must be restricted and imagination held within limits.

3

THESE tendencies were given definition and method by the work of the philosopher Descartes. His two most famous compositions are named significantly *Treatise on the Emotions* and *Discourse on Method.* Descartes popularized, though he did not invent, facultative psychology.

The divisions of the mind are neatly clarified. They are desires ; imagination which exhibits alternate courses, the consequences of the courses originally proposed and the means whereby these courses may be followed ; and judgment which determines which of these alternates is to be accepted. If two things are desired at the same time, imagination and judgment will enable us to choose which is the better and to accept it. Love, for Descartes, is a movement towards that which is good and can bring nothing but joy. Love cannot, if properly directed, become an excess. Frequently, however, mistakes are made. When we become aware of the mistakes we cease loving the inferior and love only the superior. Corneille's Poleucte begins by loving his mistress better than himself. He becomes a Christian and suffers martyrdom for his faith. He explains that he still loves his mistress better than himself, but that he loves God better than he loves his mistress. Imagination is thus mediate rather than immediate. Its procedure is analytic. It shows what may be, as reason shows what is. In England its function is to give an immediate satisfaction, in France this function is to present data through which judgment will find its course. Imagination thus served to modulate feeling, and to bring about substitutions. Emotions, the sources of these desires for action, are not eliminated, they are transformed, or by progression, a similar emotion is substituted for the original one, the second gives way to a third, and so on, until an original emotion is so changed that it becomes director to a set of actions which is opposed to its original intention. This kind of analysis is generally referred to as French reason.

Upon inspection it appears to be reasoning about words, rather than reasoning about things. Analyses during the last fifty years have shown that the lines which were thought to keep emotion, will, and judgement apart, are not nearly as sharp as Cartesian philosophy suggested. Yet the facts were as ready to the hand of Descartes as they are to our hand. Descartes preferred his manner of organization less because there is a sharp distinction between emotion, will, and intelligence, than because these words served useful nuclei in his restriction

of the possibilities of action. In the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes makes it quite clear how we can all arrive at truth. First, we must never accept a thing as true unless we know clearly that it is true. We can know that it is true by reasons which are certain and evident. The conclusion is that that which is true, is, when all is said and done, true. By this kind of playing with words Descartes convinces himself of the first fact which appears certain and evident, namely that he thinks. Consequently, he must be a spiritual entity and in rapid order thereafter, God must exist, God's nature must be good (for the goodness of God is as certain as the fact that Descartes thinks), and finally God would not deceive us on any question of importance. Thus by a conjugation of words and a substitution of one word for another, Descartes succeeds in reconstructing the entire physical, moral and religious world, which, under the attacks of science on the one hand, and of the schismatics on the other, had been showing considerable instability.

Both the *Treatise* and the *Discourse* were written in French and not, as had been the habit of preceding philosophers, in a Latin of a particularly crabbed and unpleasant kind. Descartes was an " honnette homme ". He was man of the world, polished, urbane, sincere. His discussion flows like a well-managed soliloquy, anticipating doubt, answering objections, and leading you on to the end of the paradigm, where the word is given in its final form, neatly labelled, and ready to the hand of anyone who cares to use it. He differs from the popular philosophers of to-day, not in that he is more original than they are, but rather in that his message was more novel to his audience. He was the first Frenchman, with the exception of Calvin, whose subject-matter was somewhat limited, to address himself directly to the people of France. Philosophy was made easy. Anyone could be a philosopher and everyone became one. This particular form of reason, this playing with words by means of substitution, was similar to the entertainments offered in the Salon under the leadership of Malherbe. The words of philosophy appeared to have a wider scope than the words of poetry and a more universal application.

But the system of words, a pattern in which each phrase is either consistent with all the others or picks out one of the meanings of the others and extends it, was similar in nature to the system presented by the critics.

By these symbols Descartes succeeded in giving order and direction to tendencies already evident in the Seventeenth Century when the need for this kind of clarification was very great. Had Descartes not appeared someone else would have been pushed forward to take his place.

The first fruits of his writing were positive. Corneille is entirely Cartesian, as is the rest of the Seventeenth Century, whether it derives directly from the *Discourse* and the *Treatise* or whether by pursuing diverse courses it arrives at the same end. The contribution at that time was positive, but it had within it the same virus of disintegration which was to be found in the work of Calvin and the reformers. The idea that truth must be clear, certain, and obvious to all people, serves well enough for a society like the society of Paris which swung around the court like planets around the *roi soleil*. This community began its thinking from the same premises, shared the same prejudices and suffered at night from the same terrors. When by the process of social change this group gave way before others, when the Jansenists, for example, got themselves established at Porte Royal, took over Cartesianism and with Pascal changed it, this obvious clarity which Descartes demanded was seen to have many facets. Each facet of sense, might, it is true, be part of the same bright jewel, but as the facets multiplied, the central unity disappeared. Out of Cartesianism grew the famous quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, and out of that developed the manifold and conflicting phantasies of romanticism, which ultimately came to deny the truths that Descartes had, by his clear method, attempted to establish. The appeal to individual judgement carried with it dangers which were to produce at the same time Deism and utter scepticism.

Descartes' greater service is to be found in his influence on the beginnings of popular science. As an " honnette homme ", and a member of the Salon, he believed only

what he saw, but he was sufficiently curious to exercise a penetrating vision. As reasoning about the words of philosophy came to be the pastime of the gentry, soon reasoning about the laws of nature came to be a popular parlour game. The development of natural sciences came first through the interest of the amateurs. These were the men who in the 150 years after Descartes established the laws which physicists and chemists, botanists and biologists have been taking for granted ever since. Harvey and Galileo came earlier, but those who followed constitute a brilliant galaxy, men of letters, statesmen, retired gentlemen, performing millions of useless experiments and at times hitting upon some such law as the expansion of the gases, the laws of gravity, the propositions of thermodynamics. They constituted a public eager to read books on popular science who bought Fontenelle on the oracles or on astronomy, or Bayle's philosophical dictionary.

Descartes' formulations are of greater service to positive science than they are as observations in psychology, although in this field he intended them to be equally definite. In psychology they satisfied the French need to set limits to action which when taken together with the other restrictive tendencies of the early Seventeenth Century, mark the beginnings of French Classicism, that third moment in the development of the Renaissance, when feeling which results directly from sensation fades before the attempt to get sensations organized.

4

CORNEILLE'S tragi-comedy, *The Cid*, marked a significant moment in the movements of French imagination. Not only was it severely attacked, in part no doubt because it was very popular, but its continued popularity established a form which French dramatists were to follow with slight variation until, in 1827, Victor Hugo's *Cromwell*, a romantic tragedy, created such a riot that the police reserves were called out. The story of *The Cid*, the kind of story many thousands of dramatists were to make use of in the next two hundred years, derives from the gossip of the salonist. The Cid loves Chiméne. The

Cid's father is very old and has been awarded a position at court which is desired by Chiméne's father. Chiméne's father boxes the ears of the Cid's father. The Cid avenges the insult knowing that it will cost him the love of Chiméne. Chiméne demands vengeance for the death of her father and the king throws the matter upon the judgment of God. Another of Chiméne's suitors fights the Cid. Chiméne thinks her lover has been killed and now that honour is satisfied, gives free expression to her love, learns presently that the Cid has been victorious and hope is held out that after the Cid has fought the Moors he and Chiméne may be united in marriage.

In essence the story is the banal gossip of a community sharply conscious of political realities. Two seekers after the same place quarrel and involve their children. Similar topics on a lower scale form the themes of hundreds of conversations in every similar community. The development which Corneille was permitted to give to it, placed him under restrictions which any but a Frenchman would have considered onerous. The audience was to see no action, but was to hear only the conversation of the characters. Even so, Corneille offended the good taste of France in one instance, when he permitted the audience to witness the blow which Chiméne's father gave the father of the Cid. Voltaire suggested that Corneille because of this over-great familiarity was constrained to call his play a tragi-comedy rather than a tragedy. The restriction of the time of action was a further difficulty, as Corneille himself confessed. The duel followed too closely on the murder, and what was to be done about getting Chiméne's father properly buried. Yet it was precisely these limitations which stimulated Corneille to his best efforts. If the interest of the audience is not to be aroused by action, the lines of the play must be made so much the better. The entire drama is, as I have suggested before, a conjugation on the word honour, the complications and the conflicts which arise between the meanings of the two words honour and love. The trick is turned very neatly. Chiméne grants the Cid an interview just before the combat which is to decide his fate. He, knowing that

he has lost her love, professes to welcome death. Her scorn softens for a moment and she points out that if he is killed she will be forced into a distasteful marriage with his rival. She urges him to go out and fight for her and then rushes from the room. If judged by the common sense of either the Seventeenth or the Twentieth Century, the situation lacks consistency. A young lady should not accept the services of a young man who has just killed her father. And, in urging him on to victory she is suggesting that her father's death was deserved. The brilliance of Corneille's achievement lies in the fact that these inconsistencies are hidden from the reader. If we accept the limits imposed by the word honour, as it was used at the time, and also the limits imposed by the word love, and then develop the two emotions according to the modulation of the theories suggested by Descartes, the progress of feeling, though it is neither feeling in a real world, nor a progress which takes into account the varied possibilities of the situation, was felt to be along a straight and narrow path which leads finally to a point of repose where honour and love are both satisfied.

Corneille's tragedy gives to intrigue symbols which make it permanent in the world of imagination, elevating it above the restrictions of the social group in which it originated, and making his dramas vehicles by which the smaller souls can feel themselves elevated. Corneille wants scandal for his substance, but he wants true scandal. Tragedy, he observes, must be developed according to a probability which is either accepted by good sense or presented by history. The two are not the same. Chiméne's appeal to the Cid is according to good sense —because, inasmuch as she loves him, she would detest marrying another. History is not probable and violates good sense. " It is not probable that Medea would kill her children . . . it is neither true nor probable that Andromeda would be rescued by a flying cavalier who has wings on his feet, but it is a fiction [Corneille's earlier version said, ' an error '] which antiquity accepted." Mere similarity to an historical fact or an accepted fiction (*vide* error) is not sufficient. " Plots ", he quotes Aris-

totle, " come from fortune which makes things happen " and not from art which imagines them. He combs the histories for episodes. Brothers murder sisters as frequently in France as elsewhere, but the thing satisfies Corneille only if it happened in history and thus is generally known to be a fact. When he writes a play about it, it is the play of *Horace*. Starting from the fact which is certain and unquestionable, he proceeds to an examination of the emotions which might lead up to it, or be derived from it. These emotions, however, are derived from the words in which the situation is described, they blossom into other words, which words generate new emotions and thus by a careful fitting together of word and thing the tragedy progresses. The action is reduced to the smallest possible space, tragedy becomes a tragedy of conversation. Corneille's great successor, Racine, was to carry the method further, but Corneille established the form from which other—and except for Racine lesser—men were to carry on.

Corneille was a student rather than a scholar, for him the building of a tragedy was a serious business to be undertaken after the situation had become clear and to be carried through by a manipulation of the rules which had been established or which were being established. The " Examins ", which during his retirement he prepared for each of his plays, as well as his three " Discours ", the first concerning the utility and parts of the dramatic poem, the second concerning tragedy and the means of treating it according to probability or necessity, and third concerning the three unities of action, place and law, show him to have been a student of antiquity rather than an imitator of it. His text is usually Aristotle, but he takes Aristotle with a considerable difference. The principles are stated in their order. They are then examined, tested for clarity and reasonableness, and if they are found to be inconsistent with patterns of Seventeenth-Century thought, they are carefully modified.

5

THE distance between the imagination of France and the imagination of England in the Seventeenth Century, is

much greater than the small channel which separates the two nations. Whereas England liberated its imagination and the most characteristic monument of that liberation is the lost paradise of Milton, France restricted itself and set careful limits to the territory which its imagination was to cover. The rules were a kind of sumptuary law for literature, they legislated upon the garments imagination was to wear. They directed it to the problem which the French have never been able to let go of, namely, what is one to do or say in a given situation. They defined the situation and thus put limits on the possibilities of speech.

The difference defines itself again in the linguistic ideals of the two nations. The tendency of French theorists was, as is commonly known, to discover a flat language and to reduce poetry to eloquence, the aroma and fine flavour of good conversation. This desire for plain speech was, as the first historian of the English Royal Society points out in 1666, to be carried over into England from France. But, although Ben Jonson had advocated the use of a vocabulary which would fall between the extremes of pedantry and the colloquialisms of dialects, England under the first two Stuarts looked with scorn upon attempts to take from it its linguistic pleasures. The language of Milton's poetry, and in particular his Epics, and of his prose, is of so pronounced a latinity that it never would have done in a Parisian drawing-room. The eloquence of a French Balzac, when compared with the imaginative flights of English Fuller or Donne, displays the same difference. Although Balzac was a *précieux*—by accident rather than by character we are told—and permitted himself somewhat greater liberties than were to be permitted his successors, yet Balzac is pedestrian when compared with his English contemporaries. For the English the difference between prose and poetry was a difference only in form and in scope. Prose aroused feelings which are only slightly different from feelings aroused by English poetry at its best.

A third persistent difference between the outlines of the two types of imagination is to be found in their

attitude towards programmes. The French Pléiade had presented a general programme which was to influence the development of poetry and language. The Seventeenth Century, in the *Discourses* and *Treatises* of Corneille, the Pronouncements of the Academy and the essays of Chapelain were to supply tragedy with the form it must wear and the body it must nourish for two hundred years. The programmes were taken seriously, and were presented before the literature which they controlled was produced. This is to happen again on several occasions, in the Nineteenth Century, for example, when Balzac and Zola define the form and substance of the novel. The programmes which were presented in England, and there were not a few of them, are, with the exception of Sidney's *Defence*, unknown to the general public and one may have doubts as to how far they were generally operative on the works of the poets. In France, a programme is a set of words which defines the way in which we are to act in the future. In England, a programme is much more often meditation upon actions in the past, the emotion of making a poem, for example, recollected in tranquillity.

CHAPTER X

UNCERTAIN GERMANY

GERMAN criticism, which becomes depressed when it treats of the master-singers of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, reaches the depths of its depression in face of the varied distractions of the Seventeenth Century. In a sense this depression is justified, for Germany in this century was greatly tried, not only by the Thirty Years War, but also by the quantity of bad poetry which it produced. Yet in the attempt to trace the curves and metamorphoses of national imaginations and national literatures, the Seventeenth Century raises problems of interest. The Thirty Years War occupied all the energy, imaginative and physical, which a nation much more powerful than Germany could have spent upon it. That there should have been any literature produced in Germany at this time is surprising. But it is not surprising that, under the circumstances, the literature which was produced should be of two kinds : first, a literature which seems to be irrelevant to the central interest of the German imagination, a literature made out of foreign formulae and recipes ; and, second, a literature which embodies, better than any that came during the preceding three centuries, the qualities of imagination which Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walther von der Vogelweide in the Middle Ages, and Goethe, Hölderlin, and the great singers of the Nineteenth Century lead us to regard as characteristically German. What literature there was at this time was produced under conditions which psychologists usually call " distraction ". It was an exercise of the imagination which satisfied either a powerful need of the individual, or illustrated individual, and thus symbolized national, characteristics, which in happier times tended to become blurred.

The Thirty Years War was an effect of the forces which were discussed in connection with the reformation of the

Church. The very powerful religious emotion, or if the considerations adduced above may be found acceptable, the feeling which became so powerful that it could express itself in no other symbols than an omnipotent God and an eternity of either bliss or damnation, got itself involved in the late Sixteenth Century with political issues which it was powerless to control. The consequence was the most terrible war that any modern nation has experienced. The Thirty Years War reduced the German population by about three-fourths. Entire towns were destroyed. The country was overrun by soldiers and vagabonds. The political causes which produced these shambles were varied and complex, but behind them, keeping them effective, was a ruthless religious emotion, expressing itself in Lutheranism of various shades, in the Catholic counter reformation, and in Calvinism.

Yet during this period and during the difficult years of reconstruction which followed, Germans continued to produce literature, and some of it good literature. The compositions which retain their importance to-day and which illustrate points relevant to these pages are the lyric poems, a play or two, and one great novel.

I

GERMAN lyric poetry had been kept alive during these dark years in the folk-song, which had either maintained itself as independent of the intrusion of learned poets or had slipped simply and quietly in despite of minor transformations over the lips of the German mystics. Luther himself was a great lover of convivial song. He built song into the service of his Church and, as accounts of his home life testify, used to amuse himself of an evening by singing with his friends. With his reform of the Church came a reform of the German language, and with it a renaissance of song-writing. Although he had learning, Luther was not a humanist; and the poetry of the classics worked less powerfully upon him than the poetry of the German people. He made free and unashamed use of the device re-discovered by the Salvation Army, of taking popular melodies, changing the words and applying them to churchly needs. The old German love song, "I am

thine and thou art mine ", was made to serve his purposes admirably. And so too did other popular songs of the day. Yet Luther was, despite his strong religious feeling, an active man with powerful impulses. His hymns reflect these qualities. They are songs of the Christian triumphant, calls to battle. Luther may have been, and in some cases he certainly was, in doubt as to the theological implication of the movement which he was leading. He could change his position on higher criticism and find himself slipping from one theory into another. He was never publicly in doubt, however, as to the strength and definiteness of the feeling which he put into his religious songs. However much his religious emotion may have flickered (and there is good reason to believe that Luther was not always as definite in his private views as he was in his public), the hymns are the expressions of feeling which, overflowing the limits established by dogma, return to a reality which was the source of Luther's power.

These religious symbols find themselves reiterated and transformed throughout German literature. In the Seventeenth Century they are given significant application by two poets, one a Lutheran, Paul Gerhardt, and the other a Jesuit, active in the counter-reformation, Friedrich von Spee. Although the songs written by both of these men were, for the most part, written upon definite occasions, a religious festival, a marriage, a death, they retain a strongly personal note, and as the emotion to be relieved is of great power, the occasion upon which they were written, an actual event, finite in time and space, is comparatively irrelevant. Paul Gerhardt, the Lutheran, translated the hymns of Bernard de Clairvaux, but for him Christianity was much more joyous than it was with Bernard. The world he lived in was the reflection of God, and he was aware of God's grace at every moment of the day. Whereas Luther's hymns had been songs of a church militant, Gerhardt's hymns are much more the lyric expression of an individual.

Perhaps one of the most curious expressions of these particular qualities of German imagination to be found in all literature is the Jesuit Friedrich von Spee who called his poems the *Trutz Nachtigal, The Spite Nightingale,*

Because in Spite of all Nightingales it Sings Lovely and Sweet, and also Well Poetic, so that it would Dare to let itself be Heard with Very Good Latin and Other Poets. Spee is also aware of the polite pastoral literature which was being produced in Paris, Amsterdam, and London, and wrote eclogues, " Eclogues or Pastorals in which Damon and Halton Play at Dice and at Night Praise God while Moon and Stars Shine ". He regretted that he was not permitted to go into India and become a martyr for the faith. He sought persecution and found it. He converted a lady of fashion who gave herself to light amusements, by training his choir to sing godly songs beneath her window at night. For him the soul and not the Church was the bride of Christ, and out of this union were generated symbols which are still wondrously powerful. The intensity of emotion necessary to propel life of this kind was kept in order by the symbolism of the Church. In the love of God and in the symbols presented by the Christ and His sufferings this emotion was given its body, a substance, which, whatever may become of the theological frame in which it was moulded, must still retain its power. It is true that a great amount of the poetry written by these religious singers is ingrowing. The poets are overwhelmed by their feeling and the images they use are frequently simple and at times conventional. They have great need of the flowers that bloom in the spring, green fields, and the twittering of larks. These are not observed with the sharp precision which an English poet, a Herbert or a Vaughan, would bring to them. The angry hue of the rose does not, in German religious poetry, bid the rash gazer to wipe his eye. Nevertheless, the simplicity and sometimes the earthiness of the symbols, the " chicks " running to the shelter of the hen, for example, mark the difference. For it is these which give the effect of a simple person in the grip of a powerful feeling, making use of any symbol which comes to hand, indifferent as to its elegance, and concerned only with its referent. This referent is the feeling and the situation out of which it grows rather than the object of the symbol itself.

2

ALL German poets of the period wrote religious songs. Yet many of them tried their hands in other forms of composition. The disturbance created by the war sent many of them on their travels. The literary renaissance in Holland, the events in Italy, France, and England, were observed with admiration and some humility. These poets saw foreign nations making successful attempts to domesticate Greek and Latin literature. They looked with envy upon the establishment of the Italian, French, and Dutch Academies. They noted with regret that their own language was still unrefined and a mixture of many dialects, some of them excessively harsh and others strangely flat. By a natural reaction they undertook the reform of German literature and language. These undertakings are generally treated with some scorn by German critics. Yet, in spite of the many mistakes made by these honest and in some cases cultured, gentlemen, the reforms served commendable ends. From the advantage of historical perspective we can now see quite clearly that the German imagination can operate only with difficulty and great self-consciousness within the kind of limits that give delight and inspiration to France. The general failure of the reformers of the Seventeenth Century and the bitter controversies of the Eighteenth give us an advantage which the Seventeenth-Century writers did not possess. Then, and for a hundred and fifty years more, reform was an open question. Clearly something had to be done and one of the things which might have been done was the application of French method to German problems.

The first attempt here, as the first attempt in other countries, was the reform of language. Whereas in England the reform had proceeded by trial and error, and success was attained, when it was attained, by the efforts of individuals who used words more powerfully than their fellows were using them,[1] in Germany, the attempt was made to carry the reforms through by organized academies: "The Fruit Bringing Society", "The Order

[1] The distinction between shall and will, which the Renaissance attempted to make, has never been quite successful.

of the Palm ", " The Nourishing Society ", " The Upright Pine Association ", " The Pegnesische Flower Order ", and the like. The first linguistic reform was the attempt to clean up the language, to get rid of foreign words, window became " day-lighter ", nose was " the face tower ", the theatre was a " show castle ". Even Greek and Latin words needed to be Germanized, and German substitutes, frequently in the worst of all possible bad taste, were found for Venus, Flora, Athena, and the like. The significance of this is not so much that it illustrates a powerful nationalistic impulse misapplied, as that it testifies to the fact that the Germans who were involved in these reforms got whatever kind of emotion they got from classical literature by means of a mechanism which differed widely from the mechanism to be seen in France or England. For in these countries the name of a Latin divinity charms less because it is foreign than because of the cluster of meaning which it brings with it. Venus and Flora become English, and as they become English, carry echoes of those other poems where Englishmen have met them.[1] The attempt to Germanize the names illustrates not an ignorance of classical poetry, for that was almost impossible in the Seventeenth Century, but an indifference to it and a misapprehension of the function of words in the generation of the poetic experience.

The best known of the reformers was Martin Opitz, whose *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey*, published in 1624, performed in Germany a function similar to the combined functions of DuBellay's *Défense* and the work of Malherbe. Opitz began his career by an address later published under the title *Aristarchus or Concerning the Contempt of the German Language*. *The Poetics*, a restatement of the principles put forth by the humanists in France and Italy, was produced when he was 27 years old. It contains nothing new in general theory and that is its weakness and its significance. After announcing the Renaissance platitude that the poet is born and not made, and its

[1] The controversy which was at its height in the last decade concerning the line popularized by Gautier " La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé " is a resurgence of this same misunderstanding which, fortunately, is not common in France and England.

corollary, that a genius who does not observe the rules will waste his time and ruin his reputation, Opitz explains that the purpose of poetry is to give instruction by means of pleasure. A poet must read the classics day and night and those other hours which remain he must spend with the great poets of modern nations. What time is left to him should be devoted to the careful composition of verses. The German nation, he thinks, is not capable of producing high poetry in its own language, but it may do very well with lyrics and idyls.

Opitz's most important contribution is his discussion of metrics. German song writers had been writing excellent German verse and had been paying, by and large, little attention to the discussions of the Latinists who carped at them to produce a German quantitative verse, or to the Francophiles who wished to see syllabic counting introduced into German verse. The compromise offered by Opitz satisfied both and increased that regularity in the German line which, though it pleases the Germans, is often felt to be a defect by non-German readers. Opitz insisted that the syllables of the line must be counted and must be arranged according to a system of accentual alternation. The accented syllables, he observed, are naturally long syllables, thus the French and the Latin advocates were satisfied. Opitz insisted further that the stress of conversational speech should be the guide to the poets. The inflections of the German language which frequently give the words a light ending contrasting with the stress of the main syllables gives German more accentual variety when spoken in normal conversation than is to be found in English where the inflectional endings have disappeared. Opitz's insistence upon the exploitation of this characteristic gave much German verse of the Seventeenth Century—and this is true also of subsequent periods—a monotonous regularity which, unless it is handled with great skill, becomes either ponderous or frivolous. Other factors tended to encourage this monotony. End rhyme and assonance falling on the accented syllables, both final and internal, seem to ring a bell where the accents fall. Finally the fact that many of the poems of this period were written to be sung, and to be sung to the

comparatively simple tunes of the folk-song, either pure or as adapted to religious ceremony, was not conducive to rhythmic variation. The form of the madrigal, with its irregular lines, which whether imported or indigenous, had some influence on the stanzaic structure of the poem served somewhat to lighten the verses. When, as in some instances, poets wrote songs which when read without the melodic accompaniment appear to be in irregular versicles, they fall upon the ear with a pleasant and surprising freshness. For the most part, however, Opitz's discovery of the metrical quality of the German language has received somewhat more praise than it deserves, particularly when Opitz's own compositions are compared with those of von Spee, who was indifferent to these reforms. Although speculation as to what might have been is thankless, there is reason to believe that German poetry owes no very great debt to this, which is considered Opitz's greatest discovery. The discovery itself, however, is of importance here in illustrating a quality which critics of Germany have sometimes referred to as a lack of delicacy in German operations with ideas or facts. Opitz's definition of accentual meter does little more than to emphasize a quality of German verse which is not altogether desirable, and to cut off for some time the development of a more flexible type of verse, whereas the exigencies of music might well have carried German verse on in the general directions Opitz desired.

3

OTHER poets, too, attempted to bring into Germany the discoveries made by French, English, and Italians. Christian Hoffmann von Hoffmannswaldau attempted to introduce Italian Marinism and the Spanish *conceptismo* into German. Although he is not as unsuccessful as some of his patriot critics maintain, whose resentment of foreign models is excessive, Hoffmannswaldau never succeeded in becoming a popular poet and that despite the occasional sharpness of his images, and the early baroque quality of his thought, somewhat disquieting in the unrefined German of the Seventeenth Century.

Weckherlin, who paid little attention to the reforms of

Opitz, spent much of his time in England and France and was Milton's predecessor in the Secretariat of Foreign Languages in England. He attempted to introduce a kind of verse in Germany in which only Schiller, in his somewhat eccentric moments, has been successful, namely the formal ode in the grand style. Spenser succeeded in this in his *Prothalamia* and Dryden in his *St. Cecilia Songs*. It is a kind of poetry which requires great mental control and a complete discipline in the use of words. In this style Weckherlin was more often successful than not, even though he writes more gold, silver, satin, and ivory into his poems than they perhaps need. The style is an artificial style, and makes a somewhat greater use of artifacts, particularly the rich objects of luxurious living, than any other style. It is this quality in Weckherlin's poetry which irritates his German readers, who require a more simple and earthy kind of poetry, a more direct expression of feeling.

Perhaps the most generally successful of all the German poets of this period was Andreas Gryphius, who wrote poems and tragedies and comedies. His comedy, *Mr. Peter Squentz*, an adaptation of the episode from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, is a rollicking satire on the pedantic master-singers. *Horibilicribrifax* is an adaptation of the theme of Miles Gloriosus, or The Braggart Soldier, which had enjoyed great popularity amongst the dramatists of France and England. Gryphius applies the theme to the conditions of the Thirty Years War. Of greater interest than these operations with foreign materials are the poems which Gryphius calls *Churchyard Thoughts*. The writing of epitaphs, which had been stimulated in part by Greek anthology, and served as a convenient vehicle for the *carpe diem* theme of the Renaissance, had been practised in all countries during the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries. In England, as was pointed out above, meditation on death took characteristically the form of either coquetry or reason for gathering rosebuds to-day. The *Churchyard Thoughts* of Gryphius introduced a more general note and one which was to become extremely popular a hundred years later, due to the influence of the English grave poets,

Blair and Young. The successful manipulation of this theme in Germany, a hundred years before it appeared in England, throws further light on the progress of German imagination and the development of that complex imaginative phenomenon known as the Romantic Movement. Gryphius' concern with death is of the thoughtful kind which later is to be approved of as sentimental and finally to be condemned under the same term. He is less concerned with his own death, or with the death of a friend whose demise he is celebrating, or with the general problem of the passage of time, than he is with death as a general factor in all existence, as the end of feeling, the final emotion.

4

THE last of the authors to be mentioned in this connection is Grimmelshausen, the author of *Simplizissimus*, a novel in which is to be found not only the best extant description of the actual social conditions brought about by the Thirty Years War, but also, in its continuation, the first of the European stories on the theme of Robinson Crusoe. This novel relates the adventures of a foundling hero in low and high society and the transitions of fortune which accompany them. In general structure it resembles the Picaresque novel which was rapidly attaining great popularity. But the quality of the book, as well as some of the episodes, revert to Wolfram's Parzival. The stupid hero, destined in the end to find his soul, comes finally to the conclusion : " Your life has been no life but a death, your days a heavy shadow, your youth a phantasy, your prosperity an alchemist's treasure which goes up the chimney and leaves you before you are aware of it." Like Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, he attempts to find peace in a quiet life. Later he sets out on his travels again, is shipwrecked and with one companion finds refuge on a deserted island : " Thus we lived like the first creatures in the Golden Age . . . the small island our whole world, and in it each thing, yes each tree, gave an impulse to *gottseligkeit* and a memory of those thoughts which a true Christian should have."

The Seventeenth Century thus gives us a glimpse of the

periphery as well as of the centre of German imagination. The centre remains constant in the works of the song writers, a powerful feeling expressing itself now in religious symbols as it will express itself later in symbols taken from the Middle Ages or from the landscape. Later, too, it will become involved in the tiresome discussion as to whether religion is nature or whether nature is religion, even though it would appear that both terms are, from the point of view of getting an understanding of the situation, irrelevant to the operations of German phantasy. The verbal, and in a secondary sense the sensual, symbols, which might be listed under the terms nature and religion, are of use in giving direction to a powerful feeling which, otherwise, dissipates itself in the search for adequate vehicles. The periphery of imagination in the Seventeenth Century consists precisely in this search, a curiously defeatist attitude towards those qualities which are not only most German, but are also the most effective qualities in German poetry. To the expatriates, German feeling is not good enough, its indifference to form and consequently its acceptance of the simplest of the forms, its constant reversion to the themes and structures of folk poetry, appear to these innovators to be lacking in that elegance which they see elsewhere. The great popularity of Goethe in the Nineteenth Century, as compared with Schiller, is, as we shall see, due to the existence of this peripheral inferiority. Whereas Schiller approached his profession by way of general ideas and theories, Goethe, the " naïve " or intuitive poet, assimilated new ideas and expressed them without the intervention of conscious artistry. There were no Goethes in the Seventeenth Century, yet the experiment which Goethe performed with success was here attempted.

In the end of the Seventeenth Century German literature suffered a decline, but it flowered again with early splendour when the English ideas about nature and the Rousseauistic ideas about emotion once more gave it symbols associated with the infinite through which it might function.

E. DESTRUCTION OF THE CATEGORIES

THE system of identifying each symbol with a single referent and of then classifying the referents (and symbols) in logical categories was too rigid to admit of universal application in all the symbol-referent situations which appeared in France, and it failed to satisfy the needs of the Germans and the English. By the end of the second third of the Seventeenth Century, reason began to test itself. It worked admirably in the natural sciences and in mathematics—though even here fictions occasionally raised their venerable heads. It worked execrably where language had other functions than giving an account of a physical situation. In these situations the tendency was to apply the logical method and the logical vocabulary. The notation that had been useful in accounting for similar and dissimilar and cause and effect was transferred to experiences of literature and religion. All writers were not caught in all the traps that lay in wait for them when they made this transfer, but the booty in boobies was large. Except for the work of Racine, a development of the method formulated by Corneille, the best imaginative writing of this period in France is epigram and satire, La Rochefoucauld and La Fontaine. In the meantime Pascal by a candid analysis of the referents to the word " faith " and by adding referents to the term " nature " succeeded, as he and many of his readers thought, in demonstrating that faith is reasonable. Bayle's *Dictionary* by confronting verbal systems which were thought to be systems of philosophy worked further havoc. The unease which the system produced burst in the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns where many referents to the keywords in discussion were changed and confused. All educated Frenchmen and many educated Englishmen were forced to re-examine the meanings they attached to the terms " reason ", " nature ", " primitive ", " savage ", " civilization " and " rules ". As each of these fictions was thought to refer only to one single referent, they examined the word rather than the referent; and as the participants in this famous quarrel were emotionally agitated, confusions resulted in tone, intention and feeling. Most strik-

ing among these confusions is the increasing tendency to give approval to a kind of civilization which was very different from the civilizations they were accustomed to. The destruction of the categories of reason in France was a slow process and proceeded by operations with the categories themselves.

In England the situation is illustrative. With the return of the Cavaliers from exile, England became for a short time French. The impression the highly organized governmental system of France had made upon England was associated with the linguistic system with which France, as we have seen, kept itself in order. Yet, as was to be expected, the reign of the French fashion was brief. Except for the work of Pope, no important heroic couplets were penned in England after Thomson's *Seasons*. Blank verse became increasingly popular as the cult of Milton, Spenser, and Shakespeare took possession of English imagination, and free verse flourished. In prose only do we find the lasting effects of the French adventure and even here the brilliant history of the English novel, the realism of Defoe's pseudo-statements, illustrates the intransigent need of English phantasy to express itself in a world of real things. Amongst the philosophers, Newton's formulation of the laws of motion, Locke's naming of the motions of the mind and the deists' identifications of God and Nature, liberty and savagery, supplied a new set of referents to old words and suffused them with a feeling of approval. Inasmuch as all of these operations were linguistic, innumerable confusions entered and these were further developed in France.

Throughout the Eighteenth Century French interest in English affairs was intense. England's practical demonstration that political liberty is necessary in order to make action in all possible directions possible, greatly impressed the French writers who were becoming impatient under the logical conclusion that if words are used only referentially, the poets might well go out of business. Voltaire brought back to France enthusiastic reports of English thought when he returned after his exile. In their own historical speculations, Voltaire and Montesquieu further developed the categories of cause and effect, applied to the relation between culture and climate, and succeeded in demonstrating, as they thought, the evils which follow upon " superstition ". Rousseau made the break. Inasmuch as feeling is actual it became necessary to fit it into the categories, but as the categories had allowed no place for it, it appeared that the categories were wrong and with this wrongness, Rousseau thought, went the wrongness of the entire verbal system which he confused with civilization. But as Rousseau himself was working blindly with words, his attack succeeded in substituting new categories for the old. For

clearly the substitution for the proposition " Civilized man is noble and savage man is ignoble " by the proposition " Savage man is noble " is a transformation of category, rather than a destruction of all categories.

CHAPTER XI

FRANCE

I

THOMAS HOBBES once observed that if he had read as many books as other men he would be as ignorant as they. The epigram is a truism, but it testifies at the same time to the growth of a state of mind which, though it developed slowly in France and among the Francophile English of the middle and late Seventeenth Century, was in the end to produce Rousseau's violent and spectacular rejection of the verbal system with which the Seventeenth Century had identified thought. The apogee of classicism, popularly so called, was very brief in France and that despite its incandescence. Malherbe, Descartes, Corneille, to a lesser extent perhaps, Balzac, thought they had found the way out of the difficulty created by the rejection of mediaeval systems of thought and the Renaissance attempts to build anew. But having travelled along it for a short distance they found themselves in difficulties, and those difficulties were real, whether, as some believe, they arose because men left the narrow way of reason and strayed into dusky groves where they sported with emotional Amarylises, or whether it was because the way had been inaccurately surveyed and led them by an inevitability which historical perspective now shows us to have been obvious, into a wilderness.

This way was referred to in the Seventeenth Century by the term reason and in the Twentieth by the term scientific method. Specialists in their several fields have put considerable restriction on the senses which the words scientific method can dispose of. Yet the habit which we too frequently fall into of taking our authority from the phrase " science teaches " or if we are more academic,

" the fact has been scientifically demonstrated " should lead us to regard our methods of using this term or its elder sister reason with more hesitancy than we now exercise. To analyse the various senses which the terms reason and nature were used in during the Seventeenth and later centuries is, fortunately, not within the limits of these speculations ; nor will a complete analysis be possible until after Dr. Richards has completed his lists of parallel definitions. For the purpose of getting a little more light on the mechanism of imagination and its verbal expressions, it is necessary to point out that by the process of trial and error, a process which at times was tragic and at other times pathetic, the Seventeenth and the succeeding centuries have discovered that there are hidden traps in the word reason and have come, if not to a careful definition of the term, to an expansion of it which at times, and particularly in countries outside of France, blurs the senses in which it was primitively used.

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to make clear the processes—largely emotional and very frequently verbal—by which Europeans came to apply " reason " to " life ". This attempt was, if stated in very large terms, a necessity frequently felt and sometimes understood, to get for the actions one actually performed, an authority which in dignity would be of equal rank with the authority of the Church, which would have more inner consistency and which would be of universal application, open to every man. The reformers of the Church attempted to find this authority in the Bible by permitting the Bible to work upon individual feeling, a process which was frequently miscalled reason. When it became clear that the Bible was susceptible to many conflicting interpretations, they either turned to another kind of reason, denying it all, as some of the atheists of the time, or they used the time-honoured formula of the mystics, namely, " try it and see ", thus becoming as dogmatic as the Church which they had attempted to reform.

In literature, considered as separate from the Holy Book, which because of its history and symbology was accepted in a different manner from profane literature, the Renaissance went through two phases not entirely un-

like the phases which may be traced in the history of the Reformation. After the initial impulse of the Renaissance had made possible for Europe of that time a direct approach to the literature of consistent sensation, the Sixteenth-Century phase of the Renaissance, contented itself like the Sixteenth-Century phase of the Reform with sheer delight in words, the emotions they produced and the joy of uttering them. In France, where direct action and the free use of words is mistrusted, restraint was imposed, a bridle was soon put upon this delight. It was led to springs which were thought to be more pure and attempts, successful for a time, were made to get it to drink. In England we have seen that the delight lasted longer, for, when the immediate emotional response seemed to be weakening, there was always the joy of hurling great words through the air in defending the honour of God and in attacking His defamers. But when the second phase appeared it did so with surprising suddenness, overturning the Commonwealth and establishing a new baroque Parnassus.

This second phase appeared earlier in France than elsewhere. Because it had something to do with Aristotle and Horace and because it was not, in some respects, dissimilar to a state of mind which had come into existence in the Rome of Vergil and Maecenas, this second phase in France is called Neo-Classicism. It is controlled by words, and these words are thought to point to a system. That system is a method of action. We are so accustomed to the use of the word reason in this connection that when it appears we banish the thought that action according to reason may be as absurd as it is unusual, or that a man who hesitates to act until he has discovered a method of action, is not particularly concerned with acting. Not until France taught us did it seem obvious that it is reasonable to know how you are going to do a thing before you do it. The Romantics finally got themselves over to the other side of the fence, and it may be of some importance to remember that Romanticism got itself started first in England and Germany, where action is instinctive, and was a late bloom in the formal gardens of French literature. And, although the suggestion may not

be taken as reasonable, it is quite clear that this interest in how to behave found, if not its inception, at least its most fertile soil in France. Method appealed to the French imagination as action had appealed to the English. Yet this method and its connate reason were in the Seventeenth Century a manipulation of words.

The first attempt was to cut down the number of words, the second to rearrange them so that they would fit together and the third to get whatever help could be got from the classics. These attempts were not, though the warning may be unnecessary, listed here in the order in which they occurred in time or in the order of their importance. Both time and importance are, in analysis of this kind, fluid terms. As it is true that the individual has many thoughts and many kinds of thoughts at the same time, it should be obvious that a nation's thought loses much of its significance if we attempt to space it according to the cycle of the seasons. Yet in France each of these attempts refers back to an historic need to hesitate before acting.

2

THE need to get words in order was referred to before as having been implemented particularly by Malherbe, the Salonists and the Academy, and the attempt was made there to indicate the immediate and in some cases individual factors which contributed to it. When we attempt, however, to get clear about the later developments of French imagination and their at times unhappy effects on the imagination of the neighbours of France, the necessity arises to refer this activity to more general considerations. Its most notable quality is perhaps its rejection of a large number of words. Philologers have long been aware of two opposing tendencies which seem to operate in all vocabularies. One tendency is for the vocabulary to expand. It may do so by proliferation. Words break themselves: by the addition of prefixes and suffixes, changes of accent, which preserve the original word together with its conjugate, and by internal phonetic change; or by the impressment of new and strange words from other languages or from dialects which for various reasons

have not enjoyed social respectability. The opposite tendency is for vocabularies to contract. Many of the words which came in by one of the processes mentioned above are rejected entirely. Doublets are regarded with particular suspicion. Words like " kith " and " kin ", for example, which luxuriate in England, are, if the tendency towards contraction becomes strong, rejected by a process which is almost automatic. The causes which control these two tendencies, and particularly the causes which bring one or the other of them into operation, are, like all causes, excessively involved. Clearly neither of these processes can operate until a nation becomes aware of the fact that it has a vocabulary ; until, in other words, it becomes conscious of words as separate from things and conscious too of a particular set of words, the vocabulary, as being particularly its own. Before this consciousness appears, nations have, strictly speaking, no vocabulary, not in the sense that they are ingloriously mute, but rather in the sense that they use any word, new or old, which comes to hand and are not overtly critical as to pedigree.

Periods of verbal florescence and retraction are sharply identified with other movements in the history of national cultures. Florescence, for example, appeared in Greece in the Sixth and early Fifth Centuries and was followed in the late Fourth by the attempt to get the words in order. It appeared in the Renaissance in the Sixteenth Century, and was followed by a similar attempt to get things in order in the Seventeenth. Some scholars have thought to identify the periods of proliferation with national expansion, and although the scale does not show a one-one correspondence, it is useful as a metaphor. The free emotional and joyous performance of verbal gestures gives an impression of expansiveness which, if it cannot be reduced entirely to national expansion in the sense of enlarging the border and imposing national habits upon the lesser tribes, frequently does so impress the lesser tribes that they tend to accept the national habits. Recession of the verbal tide, contraction of vocabulary and the attempt to get rid of all excessive verbiage, has been connected with pressure upon the ethnical group by its neighbours. And this metaphor is useful, for whether

the pressure is actual or not, this contraction gives the impression of operations performed with considerable care. Words are no longer the light things that they were. The ethnical group no longer ululates. Strain and tension has appeared, and the necessity has arisen to modify somewhat an earlier enthusiasm.

The causes for the increase of this tension in France—in a sense the tension is chronic—are clear enough. The reformers, having destroyed the authority of the Church, had failed to supply a system sufficiently consistent to take its place. The Jesuits, making use of the reformers' reason, and the Jansenists, making use of their emotions, were not only embroiled with the reformers, but had great difficulty in getting along with each other. The bourgeoisie and the lesser nobles tended to act as a leven in the culture of France. Added to this were political difficulties which arose out of it and intensified the situation. All of these factors created a series of intense emotional stresses. The first effect was to cause Frenchmen to go over their vocabulary and to come to a decision as to how much of it was really necessary. A period of retrenchment was inevitable. The Germans, who offer an illustrative parallel, lacking this need to get clear before they acted, fought the matter out tragically in the Thirty Years War, and made gestures in the sterile academies of the Fruit-Bringing types. England, joying in the combat, got itself clear by action in the field of trial and error.

3

EVEN more significant is the attempt of France to make its words consistent. Frenchmen are pleased to refer to this attempt by the pleasant term reason. This brings us back again to the question mentioned above, namely, the effects which, under these circumstances, historical and political, as well as the circumstance of retrenchment in vocabulary, the word reason may be thought to have when linked with literature, a term almost as vague, on the literary imagination. To point out that " reason is a word " is not to rob it of its power of effective action on imagination. Yet if we wish to understand this action, we must keep the fact that it is a word constantly in mind.

As a word it tended to operate on other words, draw them into its orbit, and that orbit was verbal consistency. Descartes (who has made this word popular in the fields of science as Molière had made it popular in literature) constantly lets words get between himself and things. His attempt was, it is true, to get a physical explanation for all possible phenomena and that explanation consisted in the phrase " infinitely subtle matter ". Much credit is due to him that he retained the word matter and that, being aware of the difficulties which the rejection of matter entailed, he attempted to get an explanation of emotions in materialistic terms. Yet the addition of infinite and subtle before the word matter raises his conception to a mysticism no less gross than the errors he attempted to combat. In this instance the inconsistencies of his words did not pass entirely unnoticed, yet, by obvious manipulation of the two modifiers, Descartes was able to bring them together. In other fields this verbal scholasticism was no less gross. The endemic literary quarrels with reference to truth and beauty—" is truth beautiful ", as Descartes and Boilleau suggested ; " is beauty truthful ", as the Romantics maintained, or is it " false with a decadence " ; or with reference to art and nature—" is nature artful "—or with whether the purpose of literature is to " give pleasure and instruction " or whether it is to " instruct by giving pleasure ", these are all clearly misunderstandings which arise from varying uses of words with variant references. Yet these were the quarrels which have diverted us all since they first became popular in the Seventeenth Century.

The situation of the physical scientists was somewhat more fortunate than the situation of those others, religious leaders or literary dictators, for the physical scientists were not permitted to use words with reference to physical phenomena with the same freedom that was granted to literary theorists. Scientific vocabularies, which were of greatest use to the scientific practitioners and have exercised an extraordinary distractive influence on both critics and philosophers, were soon evolved. Scientific notation, though cumbersome and in many cases out of date, got itself refined several generations ago. The

process of refining literary terminology making it, that is, sufficiently transparent that it may disclose rather than hide the situations to which it is applied has hardly as yet had its beginning. The facts of literature do not rise up and demonstrate to man his folly, and the nature of the literary experience is such that no matter how wrong our views of it may be, it can still be effective. Our views about it, and this is eminently true of the Seventeenth Century, are recorded in a series of words. If the words are consistent among themselves, they are accepted as a satisfactory account. This internal consistency, however, as we find it in Corneille's *Examins* and Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century criticism, to speak only of the subject which is before us now, involves several factors of the meanings of the key words used. Particularly important in literature were the factors of idea and tone. The argument of a literary composition, that is, the story, or the explicit sense of the words used, was tested with the utmost care; with so much care, indeed, that in 1714 Houdar de la Motte, in his famous letter to the Academy which made a violent attack on rhyme, and with it on various other factors of the literary experience, particularly feeling and intention, maintained that any poet could say what he had to say better in prose than he could in verse. In this instance reason, or a consistent pattern of the explicit meanings of words, was regarded as the only use of literary composition. Most authors, to be sure, did not go so far and certainly the pioneers of Neo-Classicism had a much better grasp of the meanings of literature than Houdar de la Motte. Yet Houdar was not alone in his contention and the existence of this group demonstrates the extent to which the word reason was confined to verbal consistency.

This French contraction of vocabulary and the attempt to make the meanings of words suit each other so that every statement will be clear, that is, will be consistent with every other statement, amounts to an assertion that all words in a stream of discourse may, by being made to refer to each other, appear to be made to refer to some centre. This centre is French reason. It had very definite advantages for a time in the production of litera-

ture. But the literature it produced was not a literature which would easily appeal to nations with other linguistic habits. However much the German and English intellectuals of the late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries were impressed by the France of Louis le Grand, they were never sufficiently impressed to produce plays that threatened for a moment to become competitors with the tragedies of even the lesser Frenchmen, Thomas Corneille, for example. The impression which this curious phenomenon called French reason made upon the nations of the outer darkness had, as we shall see presently, effects entirely different from the impression it made upon the French. The advantage it had for them was, as was stated above, that it gave them a limited field in which they could act without fear.

The second effect of this close concatenation of meanings is seen in the work of La Rochefoucauld and Pascal, who indulged to the limit their talent for precise manipulation of small elements. The central and implied reference to reason permitted La Rochefoucauld to divide his thoughts into fragments so small that they give his maxims an equivocal brilliance. " Hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue." " Repentance is not so much a regret for the evil which we have done as fear of the evil which may come to us," or the first of the reflections which is the key to them all, " That which we take for virtue is often no more than a collection of diverse actions and interests which fortune, or our industry has been able to arrange; and it is not always through valour and chastity that men are valiant and women are chaste." The system in these, as in many others, is clearly the system of definition: one word is defined by others which, as they are not usually brought together, are referred to the centre, reason, and gain their value. Two dissimilar referents of related words are brought together.

Another method is by metaphor, " Fortune never seems so blind as to those whom it does not favour." Or, finally, he contents himself with an observation which by making direct application of one or another of the fictions, gives the effect of penetration. " There is no use in being young without being beautiful, or in being beautiful

without being young." Or, " One keeps one's first lover a long time if one has not yet taken a second." Or, finally, " It is almost as hard to be contented when one has a great deal of love as when one had hardly any." The range of La Rochefoucauld's operations is clearly within the frame set by the Neo-Classicists.

4

THE reference to the classics in literature, as well as in philosophy, was made with an intention in the Seventeenth Century which differed from the intention of the Sixteenth. To say that the Seventeenth Century failed to appreciate the classics is to do it an injustice. But this appreciation followed an entirely different direction from the direction which we see in the Pléiade. The Pléiade, having gained solid benefit from its reading, set out enthusiastically to be just as good. The Seventeenth Century was much more concerned with finding out how to be just as good. Corneille's careful analyses of the rules of Aristotle and others and his application of these rules to his plays with a somewhat simple certainty that the rules are without doubt sound, even when he had to violate them, frequently puts more emphasis on the negative aspects of the rules, " thou shalt not " rather than " thou shalt ", and raises the rules to the point where they can effectively inhibit freedom of action. Whereas the Seventeenth Century thought that the Pléiade had failed because it attempted too free an imitation of the classics, the Seventeenth Century attempted to do its imitation in a method more methodical. It was here that the verbal system broke down. The French Seventeenth Century had carried it to a point which must arouse the admiration of generations still unborn and they were able to do so only because it satisfied so definite a need at that time. It was inevitable that the method should have been pushed beyond the limits suited to it, that reason should have been tested by reason and the consistency of one set of words tested by the consistency of another.

The destruction of reason, or rather perhaps its reformation and expansion, was effected by several forces which began to operate at the beginning of the Seven-

teenth Century, but got controlling power in French consciousness near the end of the century. An examination of a few of them will illustrate the process.

The Reformation of the Church generated a counter-reformation which was effective both within the Church and in Christian Apologetic. The Reformation had insisted that man can work out his religious problems by being " reasonable " and by returning to the Bible. To be certain that they were being reasonable in the right way, men must, according to the leaders of reform, have experience of an inner certainty which in a previous section I attempted to identify with the experience of literature. Yet in despite of the best efforts of public school teachers it would appear that a great many honest citizens are incapable of the experience and a great many others were baffled by both the Bible and the logical and verbal processes which it was thought were necessary to apprehend it. Reason, the reason which the reformers had celebrated as the natural light of all, turned out to be explosive.

Pascal, the first Romantic who was at the same time blood and bones with the Seventeenth Century, spread the seed which was to bear a rich crop. He approached religion in his *Pensées* in the reasonable manner. He pointed out, as how many have not done since, that reason has failed to solve a great many questions. Scientists proceed on a faith that, sooner or later we will get an answer to these questions and will be able then to get the secret of the universe in verbal formulae which will appear to have the certainty of mathematical propositions. Yet, Pascal insisted, all that the scientists know at present is, as compared to what they hope to know sometime, an excessively small number of facts, scarcely greater than one to infinity. The scientists operate by means of faith, faith not only in their method, but faith in their ultimate success. The Christian, he suggested, operates by faith in the same way. The scientist has faith that he will know, the Christian that he does know.

Pascal was, however, not concerned with demonstrating that the Christian is scientific, his point was that the scientist is no more reasonable than a religious person.

Reason has limits, various kinds of reason are not consistent with each other. We are left, not with doubt, but with the certainty that, by reference of these verbal symbols to " our hearts " we will find the satisfactions we desire, not words but feelings are important—not consistency in verbal patterns, but emotional certainties. Pascal drew from this the conclusion that the Christian system, in his case Jansenism, with its emotional emphasis, would satisfy men's needs better than any rational system could. Reason, he says, does not make us have faith, but it clears the way to faith.

This strange Puritan, whose excellent mathematical essays were written in an attempt to discover a system to beat the bank, this French gambler who gambles on a safe thing, offers to bet on the existence of God. A bet, he says, is determined by how much we can afford to wager for the value of what we are likely to win. If God exists the value is infinite in terms of human beatitude, consequently, the gambler will wager everything on His existence. Pascal sets it as his task to demonstrate the truths of religion with as much certainty as he could demonstrate a mathematical proposition. He took note of and gave names to two human tendencies which he thought were contradictory. One of them he called reason and the other nature. In the terms with which this problem has been approached in these pages, we might regard nature as a tendency towards action and reason as a desire to get actions named by means of a consistent verbal pattern. Pascal's nature was diverse and obscure. Reason, he thought, would take care of itself if he could only make the need for religious faith a strong tendency to act. To do this it was necessary for him to perform operations on the word nature. Human nature which had been taken as infinitely diverse had to be shown as really an attempt to reach a knowledge of God. Nature is thus not nature, but a religious instinct, the word has been fitted into the other words in the religious vocabulary and all of its diverse senses have been made consistent with these other words. A great space of time has still to be traversed before the writers of the mid-Eighteenth Century come to accept Pascal's views and to publish them as their own.

Yet he was the entering wedge which broke open the complacency of the Eighteenth Century and ultimately made a re-alignment necessary.

Pierre Bayle assisted in this destruction, although his assistance was towards atheism rather than towards faith. Bayle was undoubtedly one of the liberators of the human spirit and his liberation was performed by bringing various systems of words into conflict with each other. He was a French Protestant who fled the country and took refuge in Amsterdam where he found the attacks of the Protestants only slightly less onerous, though at that time less dangerous to life, than the actions of the Catholics during those days which preceded and followed the Edict of Nantes. Bayle has written pungently on many controversial subjects, but his dictionary is a lasting monument. There was an attempt to bring together in alphabetical arrangement words of interest or of importance to the people of his time. This listing of accounts one after the other, in the order of the alphabet, brought out curious eccentricities in the verbal systems then accepted. His account of Manicheans who believed that the world was governed by two opposing principles, the one working towards good and the other towards evil, may serve as an illustration. Bayle was not content with the authoritative presentation of facts, frequently his facts occupied only a small part of the space allotted to his subject, the rest being taken up by Bayle's explanations. In this instance he attempted to apply the reasoning of the Manicheans to the contemporary controversy on good and evil. After suggesting that if God had the power as well as the foreknowledge to prevent Eve's eating the apple, He was singularly obtuse in not exercising it; he compared Him to a parent who knowing that his daughter was to be seduced at a ball nevertheless permitted her to go, or to a mother who, seeing her daughter make but feeble resistance, fails to rush to her assistance. He then points out that as only those can be saved who belong to one of the churches and make sincere repentance before they die, the devil must win millions of people each year and God only a very small number. The devil, therefore, must be winning in this struggle. From this to the satanist concep-

tion, fashionable for a brief time in the Seventeenth Century, that the devil is the real lord of the universe, and God is an impostor who blackens the devil's name in order to excuse His own weakness, is but a small step.

Bayle was not a satanist, but his publications had two very far-reaching effects. In the first place, by putting the historical and philosophical materials necessary for controversy into the hands of the numerous people who were debating these questions at that time, he further increased the differences between them and cast doubt upon the propriety of the approach to these questions then being employed by Protestants and Catholics alike. By illustrating the incompatibilities of the religious systems, he cast doubt upon them all. His second effect was positive. The collection of so many different kinds of facts in one book aroused great interest and for the moment this interest was less confined to bringing all of the facts into one system than to a collector's interest in getting all of the facts possible together in alphabetical order. Truth was broken up into truths, the world had many patterns, each consistent within itself, rather than one which dominated them all.

5

THE Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, a violent and lengthy controversy which came to a point in 1656, with the publication of Desmarets de Saint Sorlin's Preface to his tragedy *Clovis*, raged through the Seventeenth Century and is still effective. Its greatest influence, however, was in the late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries. In one sense the Quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns might be taken as another example of the conflict between having feelings about books and writing books about feeling. Among the many questions which it raised, such questions, for example, as " Is progress possible ? ", " What are the circumstances which retard or accelerate progress ? " and the like, the most important, from the point of view of literature, was a particular application, namely, " Is modern literature better than ancient literature, and, if not, why not ? " The quarrel turns now, and always has turned, upon an egregious manipula-

tion of words. Reason which is a word, but is usually used as though it were a thing, produces truth, which is another word confused with a thing.

Fontenelle suggested that, as man is reasonable he learns from the past, therefore to-day is better than yesterday, as yesterday was better than the day before. The course of nature is constant and each year should produce an average number of men of genius. (Gray wrote a poem about it seventy-five years later.) If we are not better than the ancients we should be. This brought with it a careful scrutiny of the ancients themselves. Corneille's simple-hearted assumption that the ancients were right was given renewed examination. Many ancients were discarded ; the philosophers were shown to have made many misstatements of fact, and Homer was the only poet who remained unassailed. Even he was shorn of the attributes of universal wisdom and high morality which neo-Classicism had attributed to him. While the controversy was at its height in France, Vico, the Italian, anticipating Wolfian criticism by a century, referred to Homer as the blind ballad singer who sang his songs from door to door for a glass of wine and a crust of bread. If Homer was superior to all others, it was necessary to demonstrate the causes for this superiority. These causes were thought to be Homer's nearness to nature. The dissipations of the court of Louis le Grand were beginning to make themselves felt amongst the courtiers, and as literary imagination courses far ahead of social custom, the writers began to look back to a state of nature as to a period when people used words without worrying too much about their meanings, and when even if you drank too much wine you would awake with the sun, with a clear head and a song on your lips. The natural man was thought to have advantages in the production of literature superior to those possessed by cosmopolite. His language was more simple, the referents of his words were things, not fictions, poetry was thought to be the natural speech of natural man.

When the Quarrel was transplanted to England by Sir William Temple, a further confusion of words resulted. Ancient, which had come to have the connotation of

natural, took on the colour of the word primitive and became identified with the state of society we now consider as savage. In speaking of ancient poetry, Temple translates mediaeval poems from the Icelandic, compares them with poems in the Bible and accords them high praise. The word primitive which Temple appears to have thought he was using with reference to first in order of time, now comes to refer to first in the order of social development. Clearly the confusion is a confusion of words, for although facts existed which might have helped Sir William in his thinking had he been less self-consciously the man of leisure, the interest in them was not as great as the interest in keeping the words in a consistent pattern.

6

PASCAL, Bayle, and the Quarrel may be regarded as symptoms of the transformations that were occurring. Fortunately for them the men involved had no notion of the effects which were to follow upon their conclusions. They were impelled to think as they did by the terrain over which their thoughts were coursing. The stresses of the early part of the century, many of them inherited from the distresses of the Sixteenth Century, recorded themselves in the French imagination, conditioned by linguistic habits we have investigated and historical habits which were of long standing. This record characteristically took the form of " reason ", a limiting of the field of action by a system of rules which were for the most part linguistic. At the same time the vocabulary contracted and the attempt was made to get each word attached to a single thing. Clarity was desired rather than feeling and inhibitions of various kinds were imposed upon feeling. When the attempt to reduce all experience to ideas which could be clarified by words failed, its failure was brought about by an attempt to push the system too far. It manifested itself in Pascal's demonstration that religion is as reasonable as science. As religion and science operate in two different compartments of experience, Pascal's demonstration must be taken to prove one of two conclusions, either that reason is a term without a definite refer-

ence or that neither science nor religion is reasonable. In his dictionary Bayle, by listing those divisions of human knowledge which were of interest to his time, and listing them in alphabetical order, not only showed how inconsistent they were with each other, but made it clear that very definite limits must be placed on the verbal logic with which his contemporaries were thinking. The Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, in confusing nature and primitive and better and worse, made necessary a re-definition of these terms. France was ready for the science of semasiology. At about that time a series of events occurred which interfered with this conclusion. England had a revolution, the English thinkers, adapting the results of French activity to their own purposes, carried them away from the science of meaning into the realm of romantic nature worship but these must be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII

THE DISRUPTIVE ENGLISH

I

WHEN, after the collapse of the Puritan Commonwealth, after the civil wars and the decapitation of Charles I, after the communistic experiments, the shouting and the tumult in the market-places and the churches, after the magnificent jewelled prose of the Anglican divines, after Charles II landed, in the spring of 1660–1, to return to the throne of his fathers, England became French. Never before has the direction and form of a national imagination changed with such suddenness. Before 1657 the language was still the language of the second impulse of the Classical Renaissance, wild, brilliant and unrestrained. Metaphysical poetry, as is shown by Dryden's Stanzas on Cromwell, in which he could compare the pustules of chicken-pox to flowers blossoming on the stem, still exercised some authority over the imaginations of men. The attempt was not to bring together images which formed a consistent pattern of sense, but to choose from the most diverse fields possible the most varied symbols and to bring them all to some unexpected point of reference. Delight in the words and delight in roaming over new fields of experience were combined with the half-expressed question "Well, who would ever have thought of that?".

It is true that the Puritans regarded belles-lettres with a suspicion which in some instances amounted to aversion. In despite of Milton's *Areopagitica*, a defence of free speech and free press which might even now be read with profit by the censors of Germany, France, England and America, the Puritan commonwealth exercised repressive censorship on publications. Yet literature, however harassed, did not disappear from England and a great

many books continued to appear in the English language. Some of them were published surreptitiously, others succeeded in getting a licence and still others were published in France or in Holland. The licensing of books had always been a bother, and this strict censorship was probably no more rigid in its application than the censorship which monarchical governments on the Continent saw fit to impose from time to time.

The suddenness of the transformation from England exercising its imagination on English subjects and in the English way, to England exercising its imagination in the French way, has aroused patriot critics. This transformation, they assert, was not a cultural invasion by France, a kind of cultural imperialism in which English bodies remained free and their minds became slaves, it was an inevitable development from elements in the English tradition which existed as fecund germs in the early Seventeenth Century. Historians like Gosse and scholars of the breadth and thoroughness of Saintsbury have been at pains to trace this transformation from the English tendencies of the early centuries into forms which, if regarded from a point sufficiently remote, are very like the forms which were popular in France. In the comparison of national phantasies this transformation constitutes an historical node and requires a brief inspection.

The qualities of the new literature which may serve as points of reference in this inspection are : first, the general use of the heroic couplet, as opposed to the more varied and complex metrical forms of an earlier period ; second, a complete transformation of the quality of English prose ; third, the development of the comedy of manners ; and fourth, a critical deference, somewhat new in England, which was now being paid to Aristotle and Horace as rule makers, and to their scholarly interpreters.

The English patriot critics assert that, given the conditions of the early Seventeenth Century, a transformation in this direction was inevitable and would have occurred even if the Royalist exiles had not spent a considerable portion of their time in the salons of French ladies. M. Cazamain has recently taken up a similar position. England, it is pointed out, was sick to death of wars and

tumults and uncertainty, it felt the need of simplicity. Reasons of this kind frequently adduced to explain new imaginative impulses rest upon broad assumptions which invite scrutiny. At this moment the English language was not worn out as the French poetic diction of the Fourteenth Century seems to have been. To assert that a nation discards one set of symbols and takes up with another because it is " tired of one " and " desires change " is to invite scrutiny of the meanings to be attributed to the words " tired " and " desires ". In some periods of history, as may appear when the technique for this kind of analysis is adequate, words seem to be used freely in all of their complex functions. In other sequent periods, the tendency seems to be to restrict words to reference to what is being spoken about. The change is too complex to be capable of definition in such terms as " they were tired of one and desired a change ". (Cf. Chapter V, *supra*.) The return of Charles II and the establishment of a monarchy which in theory, though not in fact, had absolute power, operated in England, it is said, to produce the same kind of centralization which was produced in France. The transition, they maintain, from the free action of the second impulse of the Classical Renaissance to action by method and rule, characteristic of the third, or Neo-Classical impulse, is not precisely French, it is a postulate of historical change. This transformation in the quality and substance of phantasy is thus a part of the transformation which was becoming effective in other kinds of human activity.

To a certain extent the statement is correct. It contains that quality of consistency which appeals to the processes we have come to think of as reasonable and it is simple. This simplicity itself should lead us to beware. One of the difficulties with philosophies of history is that they go too far. The existence of transitions of this kind can be clearly demonstrated from other historical periods. The free imagination of Athens did clearly give way before the canons of Alexandria. The comparatively free imagination of early Rome—never as free as that of Greece—was explained and analysed by the rhetoricians of the First and Second Centuries. Instead of writing by

impulse for a large audience, poets came to write by method for a much smaller one. The translation of energy into words, which is one of the characteristics of this change, occurred in the Seventeenth Century and is not unlike the translations in Greece and Rome. Yet, and despite this tendency which appears to be ubiquitous under determinable circumstances, the historical fact remains that France made the change more easily than England, made it at an earlier date and achieved in it more greatly and largely than England ever did. If, then, this transition is a modality of history, the question it raises in our inspection of national imaginations is as to how the imagination of England and France functioned within this mode. Whatever *might* have happened in England, we know definitely what *did* happen. The Commonwealth fell and the Royalists came back from France, the change appeared.

2

THE heroic couplet in England, which is one of the most striking signs of this transformation, has been shown, by Gosse and Saintsbury and a host of others, to have had an ancient and respectable ancestry which is thought to be entirely English. Chaucer, it is pointed out, made a considerable and efficacious use of the couplet, although with him, it is admitted, the couplet was not of the end-stopped variety, was not, that is, in general, capable of standing by itself as an independent unit of metrical composition. The couplet appeared in *Tottel's Miscellany* and was made use of frequently—and what was not—during the garrulous reign of Queen Elizabeth. Jonson's classicism which exercised a restraining influence upon the imaginations of the host of younger poets who regarded themselves as his sons and the love of elegance which appeared among the courtiers and expressed itself in simplicity as opposed to richness, are all pointed to as straws in the wind. The patriot critics, as well as the late Seventeenth Century, point to the poetry of Edmund Waller with pride.

Waller is described by Dryden, and the statement is echoed by many another, as the first who taught us the true harmony of English verse. Dryden said:

> The excellence and dignity (of rhyme) were never fully known till Mr. Waller taught; he first made writing easily an art, first showed us to conclude the sense, most commonly in distichs, which, in the verse of those before him, runs on for so many lines together, that the reader is out of breath to overtake it. The sweetness of Mr. Waller's lyric poesy was afterwards followed in the epic by Sir John Denham, in his *Cooper's Hill* . . .

Waller made great use of the end stop couplet—though he also made great use of other forms. The question, however, is not whether the couplet is a direct importation from France, but rather why did the couplet suddenly find universal popularity.

In the spirit of friendly controversy, one might point out that Chaucer's and Gower's use of the couplet, and particularly their insistence on strict syllables in English verse, were, if not importations from France, certainly an attempt to make English poetry sound more like French poetry than was possible by a preservation of the more indigenous English forms. In the period of free experimentation which followed *Tottel's Miscellany* and lasted through the Jacobean and the first Caroline period everything was tried. The reform of Jonson and the courtier poets was merely one of the directions. The problem was at that time to find a form of verse and a style of feeling which would be suitable to all topics and all classes of men. The rich and elaborate poetry of the metaphysical writers and the grand manner of the prose stylists had as good a chance of survival as simple classicism. If we were to place ourselves in, let us say, the year 1644 when Milton published his *Areopagitica*, and if we were to free our minds from the events which followed in the next seventeen years and if, restricting our view to what had been published in the immediate past, we were to make an attempt to predict the direction which English versification was to take, we would, I think, find it difficult to come to a conclusion. Sixty years earlier there could have been little doubt for Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* was the charter for a mighty host of poets. These, we would have had to conclude, would explore further the terrain which Spenser had opened. But nothing of this kind was happening in that score of years which follows the beginnings

of the civil wars. At this moment English verse might have taken any of several directions. It chose the couplet, and having chosen the couplet, hailed Waller as the reformer of English verse and paid homage to Jonson.

Even though the use of the end-stop couplet was a part of the general cultural transformation which was hastened by the return of Charles II, the uses made of this couplet by English poets, particularly by Dryden and Pope, illustrate further the directions which English imagination will take. Pope had been told in his youth, it will be remembered, that England had as yet produced no " Correct " poet. He regarded the experiments of Waller and Dryden with great respect, and, with a niceness of judgement with regard to the appropriateness of words which was the form his genius took, praised Waller and commended Dryden. Yet neither had attained a correctness which satisfied him. They had not, that is, stood sufficiently far away from their poetry to smooth it down and give it the perfection of polish which Pope demanded. This polish required a very careful balancing of epithets [1] and a precise control of literary echo. The poet was to learn from the past, excellence of expression consists in combining the phrases of one's masters so carefully that in one line, for example, the literate reader will be wafted through a cloud of literary allusions. Dryden's couplet was too energetic. His line is nervous and muscular, it is action within the form, but it is characteristically action. Pope's tendency was to write a couplet which was much more quiet, a static equilibrium rather than the dynamic equilibrium which we find in Dryden. In this matter the invasion of French ideas is of considerable importance. The attempt to limit action by the rules of a method made action a great deal easier for those who had very little to act about.

If the art of versification consists, as a reading of the bad verse of the Restoration must convince us that they thought it consisted, in the production of end-stop couplets containing either single or double antheses, it becomes possible for anyone who has the itch to scribble to build up couplets which, though God knows they are not poetry,

[1] Epithets were Pope's burden which sometimes sank him.

will pass as acceptable verse. It happened, moreover, that the Restoration was singularly poor in poets. Milton, living in retirement and at times in hiding, belongs to the previous generation. Otway, who might have become a poet, and again he might not, is admitted to have been England's best chance. For the rest the composition of verse was left to the professional verse-makers, Dryden and Shadwell and Oldham on the one side and the noble lords on the other, Roscommon, Sedley, and the other gay and dissipated friends of Charles II. The noble lords had energy and charm and ingenuity, but, as their compositions were tossed off in idle moments, they are polite English in the French manner—for in those days it was generally admitted that a gentleman, however dissipated, should be literate—rather than poems comparable to the poems of the courtiers of earlier generations: Sidney, Jonson, Lovelace, Carew, or even Donne, in so far as he was a courtier.

The professional poets, such as Dryden, were in a different situation. Dryden by habit of mind was a scholar and a man of letters. Almost the only way for a man of his temperament to earn a living in his day was by the writing of poetry and plays. His poetry is that of an English scholar, who by wide and careful reading in both English and Latin has acquired an excellent sense of words. His diction is at times that of a philologer, he can pick out words and phrases from Chaucer whose versification he thought was rude, or from Spenser, master of the grand style which influenced our Neo-Classical poetry more than would at first sight appear, or from Shakespeare about whom he maintained a divided mind. He can make use of these phrases to point an epigram or to lighten an observation. The fact remains that as a man of fashion he accepted the couplet as the frame for his operations, as a scholar he embellished it, but he remained always English. His scholarship was not sufficiently weighty to restrain his imagination when a violent image presented itself.

Throughout his life Dryden refers to his intention to compose an art of poetry. This art of poetry was never completed. From the scattered references to it, one can

reconstruct at least its general outline. Yet had England accepted the French manner, had England, that is, found that reason and meditation on verbal consistency satisfied the needs of English imagination as completely as they satisfied the needs of French imagination, the composition of an art of poetry by the man who was the first English poet, both in point of reputation and by natural endowment, would have been inevitable. Dryden, like Corneille, prefixes critical essays to most of his publications. In these essays he examines questions of literary theory and comes to very definite conclusions about them. This is all very French and correct. But that about Dryden's criticism which is English and interesting, is that his conclusions are seldom the same in any two critical essays. In 1668 he publishes his *Essay of Dramatic Poetry*, a pleasant dialogue in which he explains his views of drama and blank and rhymed verse. Rhymed verse, he concludes, is the only proper vehicle for heroic poetry. Verse without rhyme but with measure, a word used at this period in Dryden's career probably with reference to the number of syllables in a line though later it comes to refer to the number of " feet ", is not, Dryden insists, to be considered verse at all. Ten years later, in his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Anthony* to the theatre, he makes a complete change in his point of view. He writes the play in blank verse and although he insists that here he is making the attempt to imitate our divine Shakespeare and warns the reader that he still maintains his former position with reference to verse, blank verse becomes his chosen vehicle thereafter.

The next poet to make use of the heroic couplet with distinction was Pope. Pope, it is true, stuck to the couplet throughout the thirty-four years during which he was recognized as an arbiter of English literary taste. But after 1726, when Thomson published the first of his *Seasons* in blank verse, no English writer of importance made use of the heroic couplet. Statistics in matters of this kind prove nothing, and a great many writers of second or third importance continued to employ the couplet. But, except for the works of Pope and a few of Johnson's compositions, the poems which are remembered

rom that period are in blank verse (*The Seasons*, *The Night Thoughts*, *The Grave*), or in Spenserian stanzas (*The Castle of Indolence*) or of a more complex structure like the *Odes* of Grey and Collins.

The rhymed Alexandrine satisfied completely the needs of French phantasy by setting strict limits to its operation. It would appear that the English heroic couplet, which is a cousin of the Alexandrine, was an experiment which, for the most part, failed. England, impressed by the consistency and simplicity of the French approach, made the attempt to follow France. But the English imagination, impatient of this consistent restriction, rejected the forms which it had taken over. Dryden turned to blank verse and the poets of the second quarter of the Eighteenth Century clearly demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the couplet.

3

ONE or two other questions of metrical theory give further illustration to the quality of English imagination. The question as to the relative value to be assigned to rhymed as opposed to blank verse has already been mentioned. This discussion was not new in England, but its paraphrases are illuminating. In outline the situation was somewhat as follows. Surrey had made use of an unrhymed line in his translation of the sixth book of Vergil's *Aeneid*, which he had published in *Tottel's Miscellany*. His example was not followed. Marlowe was the first to use blank verse effectively in drama and Shakespeare improved upon Marlowe's innovation. From then on blank verse was used in dramatic rather than in non-dramatic poetry. Milton was the first to apply it to the epic. The approximate coincidence of Dryden's discussion of the relative values of blank and rhymed verse, with the publication of *Paradise Lost*, is not without interest. In the meantime the theorists had been busy. The Spenserian letters by E. K. prefixed to the *Shepherd's Calendar* and the general objection to barbarous balductum rhyming, which broke out in the late Sixteenth Century marked an opposition to rhyme on two counts : first, that rhyme was too easy, and second, that it was not sufficiently classical.

The classical poets, it was pointed out, produced their poems without the adventitious aid of a chime on the end of each line. Rhyme, it was thought, was invented by the Goths. If we are about to produce any new poetry comparable to the poetry of Rome, we must in London do as the Romans did. Moreover, Latin verse, which gains its harmony from the precise evaluation of syllabic length, offers a challenge to the poet which is not offered by the mere task of finding rhyming words. Anyone, it was insisted, can do that, and from the amount of rhymed poetry which appeared in Elizabethan England, we must confess that the contention was sound. Daniel, it is true, came to the defence of rhyme and despite various experiments with quantitative verse, some of them successful, the practising poets of England of the late Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries maintained their allegiance to rhyme. Milton's opposition to it appears to have derived in part from his classical bent; if the Elizabethans were opposed to rhyme because it was too easy, the Restoration critics opposed blank verse for the same reason and praised rhyme because it is a more difficult operation. Dryden is quite clear as to the intention of Aristotle. Heroic poetry, he said, must be written in that form of verse which is nearest to prose, but it must be verse. Blank verse is no more than a measured prose, *oratio numeroso*. This point of view was carried further by the Reverend Samuel Woodford, an obscure divine who a few years after the publication of *Paradise Lost* wrote an essay [1] in an attempt to demonstrate that Milton's blank verse was really prose and that Milton's prose was indistinguishable from blank verse. Although he appears to approve of the poem, Woodford insisted upon his own terminology. The transformations of the words, verse and prose, as illustrated by these discussions, are symptomatic of the English misunderstanding of the situation. The question of which form was most suitable was answered by the statement that one form is harder to write in than the other. Literary correctness was determined by ease of operation. The correct form is that which is most difficult and farthest from prose.

[1] Preface to *Paraphrase upon the Canticles*, 1679.

The discussions, whether under Elizabeth or under Charles II, do not appear to have had any great influence upon practice. Indeed, Dryden, having demonstrated by precept and practice that the heroic couplet is the only form suitable for tragedy, belies his contention by turning to blank verse. The discussions did not precede achievement, they followed it, and although poets went on writing what they pleased, and the public went on reading what amused it, the discussion of terms and the senses in which those terms were to be taken, indicate not only a vagueness as to the nature of this reason which men were attempting to apply, but also an indifference to it. Had these gentlemen been convinced that one way was right and the other was wrong, they must have followed the right way and rejected the wrong one. Their conviction appears to have gone no further than the thought that one way might be or perhaps ought to be right, but that the other ways were more satisfactory. English imagination will not be bound by the forms of its expression, though, having expressed itself, it displays a considerable ingenuity in demonstrating that this expression is not only inevitable, but desirable.

4

FINALLY, the publication in 1656 by Cowley of his translation, or rather free adaptation, of Pindar's Odes, and his use in this translation of free verse, casts further light on the tangle of theory and action which snarled itself up in English literature when Englishmen attempted to become French. Free verse had been known in England for about a hundred years and was accepted in France, under the term irregular verse, as one of the minor modes of poetic expression. Yet the irregular verse of France was never as free as Cowley's verse. Cowley consciously attempted to bring into his composition the wildness which he found in his original. Wildness in poetry is one of the characteristic delights of the English Elizabethans. Ascham, E. K., Sidney, Ben Jonson and the egregious Peacham, observed that parts of the Bible were poetry, and were written in a wild and uncontrolled vein as though directly inspired by God. They were rhythmical,

but not metrical. Cowley in his preface to the Pindaric Odes repeats the phrases which had been used by so many of his predecessors in their discussions of Biblical poetry, nor can there be any doubt that he was aware of the fact that his statements were not original. Yet the attempt to write a secular poetry which would have the wildness and fury that had been attributed to the poetry of the Bible was not without importance in the later development of literary theory. The writing of free verse appeared to be even easier than the writing of blank verse, a fact which Dryden deplored,[1] for Dryden pointed out that, whereas the harmony and appropriateness of bound verse can be tested by certain and definite rules, the poet's ear, and that only, must be the judge of the propriety of free verse. If the satire, *Mack Flecknoe*, be excepted Dryden himself did his best work when he was in the sixties in this free form. His use of the couplet in the translation of Vergil on which he was working at this time arouses praise and admiration, but the only poems of Dryden that actually soar are his St. Cecilia Odes, lyric poems written by a sixty-year-old poet.

In the attempt to habituate the end-stop couplet to English conditions, Englishmen attempted to become French. In the early rejection of the couplet, in the discussions of rhymed versus blank verse and in their loving care of free verse, they display their English love of free action.

5

THE condition of prose is less simple than the condition of verse. With regard to this there are two possible points of view. Modern critics are in the habit of asserting that good English prose began with the Restoration. The other point of view, however, is that English prose died with the Restoration. Whereas the attempts of poets to create the simple and balanced form of discourse which

[1] It is an unhappy commentary on the state of letters in the Twentieth Century that English and American critics between *circa* 1913 and 1920, when free verse again became a modality of English imagination, should have regarded it as a new invention and should have without self-consciousness attacked it by the same reasoning which had been used and exhausted two hundred and fifty years earlier.

they had seen in France, came to an end comparatively soon, the prose writers, who were equally interested in simplicity, succeeded in maintaining their position. Sir Thomas Spratt, the first historian at the Royal Academy, stated the position of the English prose writers unequivocally. Their aim, he said, was to develop a flat and plain style of speaking and writing as far as possible removed from the affectations of scholars on the one hand as from poets on the other, preferring rather the language of tradesmen and artisans. The reasons for this strange assertion which, by its identification of prose with matter-of-fact, banishes it from Parnassus, is to be found in the social change which was even then gestating in England (1666). For although the Cavaliers, when they returned, succeeded in re-establishing an aristocracy in England, that aristocracy could maintain itself only by a process of constant and cautious compromise with the Whiggish bourgeoisie. These London tradesmen, artisans and apprentices, who represented much of the strength in the Puritan revolt, were still Londoners and still maintained both their religious and their emotional predispositions. As in religion they had attempted to go directly to the Scriptures, so in the communications of business they wished to go directly to the matter of fact. The Bible and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* were good enough for them. Later Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was added. For the rest, they were suspicious of the delights of poetry and wanted their communication to be as direct as possible. Prose is to be read not for the pleasure it gives, but for the solid information that may be derived from it. The experience of literature is to be found in the Bible. Any attempts of other literature to encroach upon that are to be prohibited. And there were many things about which the bourgeoisie desired information. When, in 1688, it succeeded in getting political power it found itself curious, not only about such subjects as human understanding and education, the reform of manners, but also on the directions in which manners were to be reformed. Addison's prose, for example, was conditioned by the necessity of explaining to the *nouveau riche* of London and the provinces how a wealthy merchant and his wife could make

themselves appear to be gentle without reverting to the grossness of manners of the late aristocratic period. It had a practical purpose, namely, the modification of two manners of action, the manners of the aristocrats, which mercantile London regarded with admiration and envy mixed with strong disapproval, and the manners of the Puritans more natural to these merchants, which tended to invest every action with cosmological significance. Yet despite the fact that one regrets the mortality of the grand and glamorous prose of the time of James and Charles I, and the restriction of prose to plain sense and the flat style, it must be admitted that this restriction discovered new fields of action. By surrendering the factors of meaning of which the earlier masters of prose had disposed, by refusing, that is, to make the attempt to stir men's feelings and assuage them as poetry does, and by confining itself strictly to the giving of information, prose, under William and Mary and their successors, gained for itself a new and a large territory. This territory was soon to be increased. The novel appeared in England.

The novel is the Whig compromise. It is the expression of phantasy in prose. The English novel began, it will be remembered, as an accident. Richardson had been asked to write a series of letters for publication which would serve as model for all that a correct young lady might be in the need of writing about. It occurred to him that the letters would be more interesting if this information were conveyed in letters supposed to be exchanged between members of a definite group. Thus the aim of the publication would be achieved, the necessary information would be conveyed and the sale might be increased. The result was *Pamela*. The topics on which a respectable young lady was supposed to communicate information are largely connected with attempts at seduction performed by the son of her protectress. Preoccupation with behaviour gives to prose phantasy somewhat greater freedom than it had had before. It is, to be sure, limited to a comparatively small social class and to a comparatively small geographical area. But in the construction of the situation phantasy rises above the matter of fact.

The earlier adventures of narrative in England add further clarity to this situation. Defoe, the most effective liar in the history of English literature, presented his stories as facts. His *Journal of the Plague Year* was accepted as an actual journal, that is, notes that Defoe himself had made, until the end of the last century, when investigation showed that Defoe was a child of five or six when the Plague occurred and that the novel is a romance so convincingly told that it persuades us it is history. The *Journal of the Plague Year* is one of the most successful hoaxes ever perpetrated upon a gullible public. The manner in which Defoe proceeded illustrates the intransigent fascination which the world of things in which people act exercises upon English imagination. By this love for things, this minute observation of details which, it appears, would escape any who had not actually been in close touch with them, and also by a certain hesitancy of style characteristic of the man of action who wishes to present a completely accurate account of the events he is describing, Defoe persuades us that this is not imagination at all, this is an actual account of facts which may be of use to us in our practical activities. *Moll Flanders* and *Roxanna*, both of them courtesans, relate their adventures which are recorded by Defoe's careful pen in order to warn other women against a life of sin and folly. Only because they regret their vicious actions so much can they dwell at such length upon the details of them. The direction which English phantasy takes here is a preoccupation with things, objects having extension and weight in a spacious world.

The situation in France was characteristically different. The characters of La Bruyère and the novels of Le Sage and Marivaux rotate about a different centre of interest. There are, to be sure, objects in space and time, for the novel needs to be documented. But the interest of the French novelist was to use these objects as signs which would lead to a prediction of future actions. To this end they give us minute and brilliant descriptions of the way a character dresses, his habits of speech, the changing expression on his face, not of interest in themselves, but elements which when referred to a centre will make clear

the consistency of the character. How does he behave in a given situation and what are the signs that make that behaviour manifest? The distinction is sharp. It is referred to in literary criticism as psychological analysis. Yet characters in Eighteenth-Century French fiction are static, not in the sense that the figures in the books lack mobility like the figures in Corneille's play, but rather that they remain much the same at the end of the story as they were at the beginning. The interest of the novel—and it is probably not a conscious interest—is to demonstrate what they are, not how they grow or change, or combine within themselves the capacity of action in different directions at the same time. In their effort to be consistent, the French tend to maintain that a character is a product of his climatic and racial environment. As these elements are not to be changed, so the character remains changeless and Calvin's predestination is only one expression of this tendency to find symbols which will keep us contented with ourselves and our destiny. However foreign this point of view may be to England, which is much more concerned with what man does than with what man is, it has once again, by limiting the field, won notable victories. Until the Russians invaded our shores with a combination of English action with French observation, no literature had been able to compete with the French in its correlation between things and character. In England no detail is too minute if it serves to convince us that the event actually occurred. In France no detail is too minute if it serves to illuminate a quality of character.

The appearance of interest in the characters of fiction (drama and novel) raises a delicate problem of methodology. Mr. Knight and others have recently pointed out that the study of Shakespeare's characterization does not exhaust Shakespeare's art, and that the tragedies of any author worth reading are not—one would like to add not only—tragedies of character. If the point of view maintained in these pages is accepted, the conclusion must follow that a character created by an author is, because it is a fiction, also a symbol. To a large extent the efficacy of the symbol must result from the adequacy of the fiction. The fiction is adequate if the character has the reality of a

character in history and can be tested by the same kinds of inquiry which are directed to historical account. "Where was Hamlet when he heard of his father's death?" "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" are in this sense relevant inquiries. . . . at least in England. The English interest in character which was consciously cultivated in the Eighteenth Century, although Chaucer shows us it was no new thing, is interest in historical character. Pope's awkward manipulation of the dominant trait in his *Essay on Man,* demonstrates our limitations in the carrying out of a theory. But Ben Jonson's accurate observations of character in action and the psychology of Locke and Hume as well as the observations of novelists and playwrights are evidence of English capacity in the observation of action and notation of impulse. When a character in fiction becomes as real as a character in history, present or past, its symbolic power increases, its functions are similar in complexity to the function of the words by which the character was created. To correct the current critical assumption that characterization is the whole art of fiction is necessary, but to deny that characterization is an important part of English fiction is folly.

Still another factor in the development of English prose needs to be emphasized. The accident referred to above which produced Richardson's *Pamela* was an accident in the English manner. If the invention of a flat prose shorn of ornaments and inversion was of use in the communication of ideas, if *Pamela* was written as a model of behaviour and if Defoe some twenty years earlier had foisted his romance off on to the English public as records of actual fact, this all happened because of the English curiosity about things. The utility of the novel as a pedagogical device was discovered very early. It is easier to teach a lesson by means of a parable than by means of a general statement. Yahoos of the present generation are as susceptible to this sugar-coating as their ancestors were. This is well illustrated by the popularity of books about history or science published under the title, "The Story of . . ." or by romanticized biographies in the Strachey or the Maurois tradition. Novels then, are a compromise

between the need for solid instruction and the desire to be amused, that is, to liberate imagination and purge emotions which are dammed up by the inhibitions of city life.

In these ways then, the prose of the English Restoration became French, first, by adopting the flat and matter-of-fact style in which words will be shorn of all of their meanings except sense or reference to things, then by enlarging the number of things which words may refer to in the essays, and finally, through the novel by making a mosaic of the senses of words, by fitting them all into a story, serving two purposes: first, the story, as it is a record of action, serves to satisfy the needs of action; and second, as action is seldom, if ever, unequivocal, the story carries by this action some of the functions of the grand style which were implicit in it, felt rather than understood, forming an unanalysable complex. The story in France, by contrast, confined itself much more closely to the delineation of character, static in a reasonable world.

6

In their adventures with comedy the English writers of the Restoration built themselves a more lasting monument than the writers of verse or prose, for although the Comedy of Manners, as that comedy was understood by the Restoration, was obscured by the grey fog of middle-class morality and suffered attack and vituperation from the critics of later times, it was, in its combination of French and Stuart wit, an achievement of no mean importance. The charge that the Comedy of Manners was in reality the Comedy of Bad Manners was made against it at an early date, notably by Thomas Rymer, whose work on the immorality of the English stage pained both Dryden and Congreve. Rymer attacked the theatre not only because it fell beneath the high level set by the classics, but also because of the grossness of its manners. England has never learned the lesson which the French acquired in the Middle Ages, namely, how to be naughty and yet nice. When the Restoration wrote comedies on *She Would and She Could*, they meant exactly what the title implied.

Disapproval of this kind of material was encouraged by the Society for the Improvement of Manners and has continued ever since, and that despite the charming defence of Restoration comedy offered by Charles Lamb. Lamb pointed out that the Restoration in reaction against Puritan inhibitions took a joyous and pagan delight in life and that whatever the matter may have been, the intention was not unclean. The consistent disapproval of this kind of phantasy, however, was characteristic of a quality in English imagination which has now become familiar to us. The intensity of action, which is symbolized by reference to sexuality, cannot be treated with levity. Englishmen can laugh at themselves as a nation. In high-spirited innocence they can play tricks on each other, they can ridicule pomposity and agree that ideas are not so serious after all. But though they can do many other things about it, they cannot laugh at sexuality. They take it more seriously than any other nation, and in order that its seriousness may be preserved, they surround it by more prohibitions than others. Sexuality and God get curiously identified and laws against blasphemy and indecency are written in the same chapter. The importance, perverted though it may be, which the English attach to these matters is to be seen not only in the censorship, both private and official, but also in the literary history of a very remarkable pornographic novel. This book was written by the son of that Will Honeycomb who gained immortality in the Spectator Papers as the friend of Sir Roger. The son, it appears, had been sent to Turkey in the Consular Service, had been dismissed from his post and on returning to London had fallen into poverty. He was arrested for his debts. While in prison he wrote his novel which pretended to present, though with considerable detail, the same kind of confessions of a courtesan which Defoe had made popular. The book caused so much offence that he was called before the Privy Council. He pleaded poverty as an excuse and the Privy Council gave him a pension on condition that he would never write a book of this kind again. This is, I think, the only instance where a writer of a pornographic novel has, as a direct result of his efforts, received

a pension from the State. It is of little importance for the moment whether the pension was a reward or a punishment. It testifies simply to the seriousness with which England takes its pornography.

With a view to this situation, it must be clear that the Restoration's Comedies of Manners are offensive to English taste. This offence was, no doubt, exaggerated by the Puritans who generally disapproved of the theatre, and would be less if more people would actually re-read the Restoration Comedies. There is much more in these comedies than the central theme which is seduction. On their return to London with the reopening of the theatres and the introduction of women actors, the dramatists found a great deal to amuse them. With their new views of politeness, gained in Paris, they were entertained by the boorishness of English country gentlemen, the unimaginative seriousness of the Puritans, and frequently, too, at their own affectations of gentility. From Molière they had learned how to combine and blend the elements of comedy and how to describe characters and types. All of this was destroyed by the Whig revolution in 1688. A few comedies of note were produced in the 1690's and Congreve, the mellowest of them all, the most finished and the most graceful, closed his career as a comedian in 1700 with *The Way of the World*.

The life of the Comedy of Manners, or as Sheridan in the Eighteenth Century called it, Laughing Comedy, is seen to have been brief. The Comedy was born out of the wildness of Stuart comedy and was fostered by French reasonable analysis. The absurdity and inconsistency of human nature expressed by epigram and caricature is referred back to an hypothecated *honnête homme*, who was reasonable. The grossness and wildness, in part derived from earlier times, is more largely due, I think, to the English inability to take this hypothesis of the completely reasonable man with great seriousness. The reasonable man was not a frame through which the English imagination could function. The next development in drama demonstrates this clearly.

The Comedy of Manners was followed by the Weeping Comedy, the comedy of sentiment. Here the problems

which are presented by the comic situation were solved not by laughter, but by tears. Love affairs between young people who were neither more nor less important than other young people, were treated with seriousness rather than with satire. Action was restored to an importance of which the Comedy of Manners had deprived it. This attitude towards the stuff of comedy has persisted with brief and pleasant interludes till the present day. Sheridan and Goldsmith brought laughing comedy back for a time, but they were more nice minded about it than the men whom they were imitating.

7

THE writers of verse and the writers of prose and the dramatist are thus seen to have experimented with the French manner and to have either rejected it or introduced such changes in it that it came to be English. The novel and Weeping Comedy exercised some influence abroad in Germany and France; the Weeping Comedy, through Marivaux and Lessing, and Richardson's sentimental novel through various lesser imitators, but particularly through Goethe's *Werther*. These influences would have been impossible without a further transformation which English imagination performed and that transformation made itself manifest in theory, both philosophical and literary. Indeed, inasmuch as philosophy records itself by means of words, it is at times difficult to determine where imagination leaves those fields which are usually fenced off strictly for philosophical speculation and enters the fields of creative phantasy. The transformation which appeared in thought centred about a re-definition of the term " nature " and its various conjugates, " natural man ", " natural poetry ", " human nature ", and the like.

It began early in the Restoration, where Locke at a dinner was challenged to give an account of " human understanding ". The account took him a good many years to complete, but it was finally published in 1693 as his famous *Essay on Human Understanding*. This essay, together with Locke's other essays on education and on tolerance, appeared just after the time the Whigs got power into their own hands. Locke became their philo-

sopher and their theorist. His origins were French, nor is it probable that it would have occurred to him to offer a consistent account in words of the processes of human nature had not Descartes attacked the problem. However, whereas Descartes found it necessary to invent an infinitely subtle matter to account for psychology, Locke began with sensation and epistomology: How do we know what we know? Knowledge is a series of sensations, upon which judgements are formed, it is motion. The mind of a child is a sheet of white paper upon which experience writes. Any child can be made into any kind of a man if we are careful to give him the right experiences. Locke's stand on tolerance, as is well known, is a modification of the position that Milton took. All kinds of action should be tolerated by a wise State. Both of these ideas are clearly English and are to have a considerable influence on later development. If the mind of a child is a sheet of white paper, it is clearly important for us to pay attention to the experiences which the child has. Education must be the business of the State and, by a metaphor which was considered to be a parallel, the mind of man when man is still in a primitive or infant state may be thought of as unformed, to be shaped by the influences which work upon it. European historical writing is a record of these influences.

During these same years the English students of natural science were performing their experiments, much to the entertainment of the general public which failed to see what possible use there could be in the study of falling bodies, or the counting of the spots on butterflies' wings. Samuel Butler had his say about it in a poem in which he describes how a member of the Royal Society discovered an elephant on the moon, only to learn later that the elephant was a fly which walked across the end of the telescope. Swift's satire on the Struldbrugs in the third book of *Gulliver's Travels* is more cogent than bitter. Swift saw better than many of his contemporaries what science, as such, was likely to lead us to, and, indeed, has led us to, namely an emphasis on weights and measures, rather than an emphasis on human nature. However, despite the scorn and laughter of many of their con-

temporaries, the scientists continued to pursue their inquiries, less interested for the most part in what these inquiries might lead to than in the fun of making the experiment. Many of these men were brilliant, but the most brilliant of them all was Sir Isaac Newton, and his greatest achievement was the formulation of the laws of motion, perhaps even more important than Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood which had occurred some seventy years earlier. Newton's laws of motion had an effect which it is difficult for us, who tend to take them for granted, to overestimate. It gave stability, though a stability in motion, to a world which the discoveries of the astronomers were fast reducing to chaos. That Newton's laws were laws of motion and that Newton, together with Thomas Hobbes and many another Englishman, was concerned with the problem of movement and the direction of action in an infinite universe, is as relevant to my contentions as the fact that Pascal's mathematical speculation centred about the chances of winning at the gaming-table.

More important than the discovery of the separate laws of nature, was the discovery that nature has laws. The phenomena of air and earth, of the seasons and the fluctuations of feeling are neither random and haphazard, nor are they dependent upon the consciousness of some god made in the image of man. Pantheism was no new thing in Europe, but the twist given to Pantheism by the English thinkers operated powerfully upon the imagination of England and the rest of the world. Nature, and here the sense of nature got separated from the senses in which it had been used by the Neo-Classicists and the theologians who tended to restrict it to human nature, is seen to be independent of man or in opposition to him. It is eternal and it is thought to be regular. The tides of the sea and the eclipses of the stars can be predicted. Or again, nature makes manifest the action of laws ; all of the laws are not yet known, but we know enough of them, they thought, to make the assertion that the others would be discovered in a very short time. God, the God of the theologians, is either an unnecessary or an excessively limited concept. The handiwork of God which is mani-

fested by the firmament is the operation of these natural laws. God is the laws of nature, as well as the sensation from grass and stream, the sensations of sight and hearing and touch.

God, then, is nature, thought of sometimes as the laws under which phenomena are collected and sorted and at other times as the phenomena themselves, in so far as they have not been too much transformed by the action of man. By a shift in the senses of words, they came to give the old vocabularies a new significance. If God is to be identified with nature, as Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, the son of the great Whig and the pupil of Locke, maintained, several conclusions may be established without the exercise of too much ingenuity. The first of these is that man approaches God by identifying himself with nature. Inspiration can thus be gained by returning to the natural life. The senses attributed to the word " inspiration " in Elizabethan and post-Elizabethan criticism have been referred to. By a metaphor which was taken with half-seriousness, the Platonists regarded inspiration as a kind of fury by which man attained either a higher quality of living or reached a " truth " which was impossible by other processes. As the entire Bible was regarded as the word of God, and as parts of the Bible were recognized as poems, the inspiration of the Bible was divine and here the words " divine " and " inspiration " were not regarded as metaphors, but were accepted as accounts. The identification of God with nature in the Eighteenth Century gave reason to the Platonists and expanded the ideals of the religious section of the community to include all literature. The operation of reason showed that the two words which had originally been used to refer to two different processes, really referred to the same process. This was reason in the French sense, but the presentation of the process itself was English.

Another corollary to be drawn from the Deistic identification of God and Nature, had to do with the vexed question of the relation between artistry and natural endowment. Ben Jonson was the first Englishman to want to kill a man because of a misplaced accent; because, that is, the poet had not adequately filed and polished his work

to make it consistent with the general principles the critics were establishing. The impact of French criticism upon the English imagination gave this principle, that craftsmanship is important in writing, a range which it had not before enjoyed in England. The arts of poetry of the first quarter of the Eighteenth Century went over the ground with many wearisome repetitions. But the idea that poetry comes directly from God to him who identifies himself with nature, was glad tidings to many impetuous poets. It is now no longer necessary to paint the lily's cheek or to gild the rose—who can improve upon the voice of God? It is much better to give yourself to nature and thus to become God's mouthpiece. The complete development of this general position, that is, the working out of the details of it, did not occur in England. The idea had first to be transported to France, where Frenchmen found the words, fitted them neatly together and made the general idea into a programme. But of that more later.

Still another corollary had to do with primitive poetry. Since nature and God are the same, primitive man, who is closer to nature than civilized man, is consequently closer to God. In his poetry we will find God's voice. Primitive was understood in the two senses suggested in the last chapter, either first in point of time, or first in the process of cultural change. Isaiah, Homer, mediaeval Germanic poetry and the poetry of the American Indians were all thought to be primitive. They were the direct expression of nature. They were wild and divine. Again, the development and elaboration of the point of view took time. But interest in primitive poetry appeared in England before it appeared in France and Germany. Addison's essays on ballads, though somewhat half-hearted defences of popular poetry, gave impetus to the collection of ballads and their popularization. The Scandinavian historians who were for a time almost the only sources of information with regard to mediaeval Germanic poetry had long recognized that the ballads were ancient compositions. (Frequently a greater antiquity was attributed to the ballads than modern scholarship will allow.) Olaus Wormius, whose *Historica Danica* was published in 1639, not only made use of ballads, but translated many of them into

Latin. It is from him that Temple gleaned the facts which he was able to misinterpret in so charming a manner. Thus when Addison defended the ballad, others, having read Temple, or if they were scholars having read Olaus Wormius, were ready to make experiments. Mallet's *Henry and Emma*, now regarded as an unfortunate episode, was an attempt to re-write a ballad in the elegant language of the day. Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellanies*, which contained many ballads set to music, became fashionable in the 1720's and from then on many experiments were made in the collection of popular poems which were invested with considerable antiquity, until in 1759 Macpherson published the poems of Ossian which were supposed to have been collected from oral tradition in the Scottish Highlands, and in 1765 Percy published his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. The interest in ballads, which went together with the interest in primitive man, in part grew out of and in a greater part was nourished by the idea that God and Nature are the same, and that the poetry which is natural comes directly from God.

Still another consequence of this identification is a preoccupation with feeling as opposed to reason. Feeling, in the senses in which it was used at this time, may be regarded as any action or impulse to act which is not restricted by a principle that has been put into words. That which has been put into words is reason. That which is not, or cannot, be put into words, is feeling. Nature and the laws of nature were thought to be independent of words, consequently nature expresses itself through the emotions. This brings with it a re-institution of poetry. Poetry, which French reason had tried to restrict to the communication of ideas, now found that feeling, tone and intention, the old factors of meaning, implicit rather than explicit feeling, had been restored. Lyric poetry, first with the nature poets, who too frequently made poems into sermons about running brooks, and later in the graveyard poets, who chose their gloomy subject because of the opportunities it gave them in the presentation of mood, became increasingly popular as the Eighteenth Century progressed in England as well as in those portions of

France and Germany where English influence was being felt.

Finally, when the idea was completely developed, the identification of nature with God and feeling with the experience of God and natural poetry with the voice of God, was to give poets that false position of importance which the Romantic poets enjoyed in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries. We shall watch the operation of this point of view through Rousseau and the German Romantics. For the moment, it is of importance only to point out that the idea was developed most powerfully and received the greatest popular support in England.

The processes whereby these ideas were popularized through Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke, Atterbury, and other Deists are obscure. The contribution of Pope is of particular interest when we come to understand that men in general and Englishmen in particular, invest their words, not with one, but with many meanings. Whether Pope's *Essay on Man* is a metrical version of a Deistic prose essay which had been given him by his friend Bolingbroke, a version making use of terms which Pope himself either half understood, or misunderstood, is of less importance than the fact that the ideas are, in their general structure, strikingly similar to those contained in Bolingbroke's posthumous work. Pope's use of the word nature in this essay—nature as the guide and inspiration of man—is significantly ambiguous. To assert that Pope thought of nature only as human nature is to ignore many passages—God is the soul of nature, for example, which:

> Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees.

Had Pope himself not been confused on the subject he would have made his explanation much more clear than he did. And, presented as it is, with the finest metrical virtuosity England has yet witnessed, it became part of the substance of English imagination. Whatever Pope intended the word nature to mean, if, as is doubtful, he intended it to mean anything in particular, a large number of his readers, as later developments show, took nature in the somewhat complex sense of the laws which govern the

recurrence of phenomena, landscape in the sense of those who love nature and emotions which are independent of reason in the sense of refreshing oneself in nature.

Now, at last, Englishmen have a formula which will justify their activities. The motions of nature are not accidental, they follow a regular course. These profound propulsions which Englishmen appear to have experienced from the earliest time, are, in sober fact—and Wordsworth made the fact very sober indeed—divine and moral. The principle has been discovered which will justify impulsive action.

CHAPTER XIII

REVOLUTION IN FRANCE

I

THE processes whereby reason destroyed itself and produced the French Revolution and the Romantic Movement have been touched upon lightly in the preceding chapters. In Eighteenth-Century France the process continued, but with great acceleration. At the time when the other nations in Europe, indeed all the nations in the world including China, were becoming aware of the achievements of this method of attaching words to phenomena and arranging them in a consistent pattern with interlocked meanings, France became aware of the rest of the world and turned to England with particular interest. The rationalism of Voltaire and Montesquieu, Diderot and D'Alembert, as well as the primitivistic emotionalism of Rousseau, derived, directly or indirectly, from England. This rationalism is the application of the achievements of English experimental science (Newton and Boyle); of English sensationalism (Locke); and of English application of these to more general problems (Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Collins). The events of the Eighteenth Century may be taken as illustrations of the general point I have been informally attempting to explain, namely, the differences between the French and the English imaginations and the particular effect on these imaginations of the literalism accepted as a general point of view by the Classical Renaissance.

England supplied topics, but the French method continued to be the frame of French achievement in the Eighteenth Century. Although the French qualities of Voltaire and Montesquieu are generally recognized, an examination of Rousseau will show that he, too, is rational in his filtration of earlier interpretations through his per-

sistently schizophrenic personality. The process began, as we have seen, as early as the middle of the Seventeenth Century. Not only the reforms of the Jansenists, who in their early history are well characterized as " Protestants who believed in the Pope ", but the particular speculations of Pascal, the most brilliant light of Porte Royal, served to indicate the limit which must be set to the consistent pattern of words. This pattern, Pascal pointed out, fails to cover everything. To insist that what we do not understand does not exist is a violation of the meaning of the word knowledge. To maintain a faith that those things which now do not, some time will fit into our consistent pattern of reason is to admit that the word faith has justification, even in a reasonable system. But if we have faith in the demonstrability of things as yet undemonstrable, we might save ourselves a great deal of effort by simply having faith in God. The hole which Pascal, by this kind of ambiguity, succeeded in making in the armour of the rationalists, both directly by calling their attention to the limitations of their method and indirectly by giving the general public a reason for experiences which, though they were not reasonable, were none the less real, was further enlarged by the activities of others.

These activities took two directions. The first was the attempt of the scientists (and in France these were, in general, speculative scientists) to examine phenomena which had not hitherto been connected with the Christian religion. Religion was more closely knit than before to the rational system and the independent emotional elements in the religious experience came more clearly into view. The second effect, whether it came directly from Pascal or indirectly from the state of mind out of which Pascal emerged, is to be seen more clearly in England than elsewhere, and was to rehabilitate emotion as a legitimate element of experience. With emotion came phantasy, the projection or completion of it, and thence a revival of literature. The two streams were by no means separate throughout the Eighteenth Century. They crossed at several points. But at frequent intervals they clashed and the historian witnessed the tumult of feeling and thinking of the 1750's and 1760's, 1789 and the Romantic Move-

ment. Whilst Bayle was working on his encyclopedia, which although it made the substance of reason available to all, demonstrated too the incongruities of reason, Fontenelle was producing his books on astronomy and on the oracles. They were, as historians have observed, written for the ladies, but they were also read by many gentlemen. Fontenelle's popular astronomy may well be compared with recent books on the subject. Although his conclusions were in no sense profound, they appeared to be to the badly-informed ladies and gentlemen of his time. The immensity of the universe was opposed to the pettiness of man. The task of reason in bringing these infinities of facts into a system was seen to be greater than it had at first appeared to be. The demonstration of natural law and the constant application of the canons of consistency and probability further strengthened the conviction that the events of " nature ", that is, that the phenomena reported by our senses, are not haphazard matters of chance, but that they are ordered and sequent. " All is a part of one stupendous whole, whose body nature is and God the soul," sang Pope, whose digestion of these facts was none too good. And some eighteen years earlier Charles Gildon, a hack writer, bringing together English and French authorities reported stupidly, though with conviction, that rules were reason, reason is order, and nature is order, therefore we need no longer be concerned by the controversy between art and nature. Equally significant in the development of reason and its self-destruction is Fontenelle's book on the oracles. Here, in a dissertation which displays a considerable learning combined with a pleasant gift of clear and orderly exposition, Fontenelle gives the reasons why we should have doubts as to the supernatural inspiration of the pagan oracles. His famous assertion in the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, that the course of nature is orderly, permits a carrying over of his conclusions about the oracles to speculations about Christian mysteries and prophecies. Fontenelle himself was very careful in his statements, but the demonstration of the misunderstandings which led the pagans to believe in oracles was rapidly and destructively applied to Christian mysteries.

2

DURING the first thirty years of the Eighteenth Century, English influences made themselves felt strongly in France. Marivaux, with his Comedy of Tears, submitted to the influence of Steele and his Sentimental Comedy. Periodicals in France were designed to fulfil the same functions as the *Spectator* in England. The poetry of Milton had reached France and hosts of enlightened Frenchmen were watching the English experiment in democratic government and religious tolerance with the greatest interest, whilst amateurs in science were corresponding with English scientists. Many of the Protestant French and Protestant English had met in Holland in the late Seventeenth Century and from the ideas of these insurgents are to be traced tendencies which later came to be of importance.

The event which more than anything else called the attention of France to developments in England, was the years which Voltaire spent in England as an exile. These years are a fortunate historical accident, for had Voltaire's snobbish vanity not been wounded by the indifference of his host, the Duke of Sully, when Voltaire was thoroughly spanked by the Rohan, he would not, on his arrival in England, have been prepared to receive the achievements of English democracy with so open a mind. As it was, the events of the immediate past had shown him that whatever influence he might be able to exercise amongst the aristocrats of France, his social position must either be that of a dictator or of an inferior. The social structure made it impossible for him to be an equal. We cannot regret the humiliation which Voltaire suffered, for this humiliation clarified the situation for him. Had it not been for this, he might well have remained a smart young man at the dinner tables of the great, making witty, and, at times, cruel epigrams on the folly of his contemporaries, and he might well have become that most tiresome of all bores an "old beau". But Voltaire was conscious of himself as a great man, even in the moment of disillusion, when the Duke of Sully laughed tolerantly while the rowdies were avenging what they affected to consider an insult. He demanded the satisfaction which gentlemen of those

days thought due to them, and was neatly put away for six months in the Bastille and permitted to leave only when he gave his word that he would not attack Rohan. In this mood he went to England. It was, to be sure, the England of George I and Walpole, but it was also the England of Addison and Pope, Swift and Bolingbroke. He attended the funeral ceremonies of Newton, he became acquainted with the works of Milton and Shakespeare, as well as the polite poetry of the age.

> It was [says Lanson, writing from the French point of view] the time when the ineffaceable originality of English wit, disguised itself best under the decent taste and regular ordering of which our (French) classic masterpieces supplied the model. That which Dryden and Addison had from France induced him to taste to a certain extent their English qualities.

The scientists opened a new world to him. He was always too much of a publicist and too much taken up in the French manner with reason to concern himself greatly with the careful and patient collection of facts necessary to experimental science, nevertheless he was to maintain a laboratory for a good many years after his return to France. Although he refused to look for fossils whilst in Switzerland, because he feared that they might strengthen the views of those who believed in the historicity of the great flood, he was to spend many hours in his laboratory, patiently cutting off the tails of newts in an attempt to transplant them to other parts of the body. In England, it appeared, everybody was a philosopher. The equal balance of power between Whig and Tory, the wealth of the bourgeoisie, and the participation by men of letters in affairs of state, delighted both the worldling that was in Voltaire and the rationalist, who thought that the patters of reason might supplant the authority of God. He was strongly anti-clerical even at this time. In his *Œdipe* he had asserted that the entire science of the priests is based upon our credulity. The tolerance which he found in England appealed strongly to these tendencies. The variety of religions which he found was, as he said later, a guarantee of freedom : " If there were only one religion it would exercise a despotic control over us ; if there were

only two religions they would provoke civil wars, but since there are thirty religions, there is peace." The English, he said, are the only people in the world who have been able to control the power of kings by resisting it.

As it is unjust to Voltaire's genius to think of him as a scientist, and that despite the fact that he was probably more closely in touch with the science of his time than most of the men of letters to-day are with theirs, it is equally unjust to refer to Voltaire as a philosopher, and that despite the fact that he was one of the half-dozen writers who stand out in the pre-revolutionary days as voicing the ideas which were to overthrow the French monarchy. French philosophy had gone almost as far as it could with the work of Descartes. It was he who had discovered the method which liberated and at the same time controlled French imagination. The works of the thinkers who followed Descartes were manipulations according to the Cartesian methods, particularly mathematics and history. Mathematics appealed, and still appeals, to this nation which finds its satisfactions in the fitting together of symbols. But the language of mathematics is its own language and through it phantasy expresses itself by tortuous symbols all controlled by the postulates neatly listed at the beginning of a demonstration. History is a more open field. The facts are generally known, what is needed is to fit them together. When new facts need to be acquired, as in Voltaire's monumental *Siècle de Louis XIV*, the process of gathering them is the fascinating process of gossip. The stuff to be acquired is from memoires and correspondence. The talk of the salon must be fitted together to form a consistent whole. The literal meaning of small statements must be rearranged so that a larger statement, equally literal, will emerge. Thus the Eighteenth Century in France became the great century of historiography. Montesquieu had examined the greatness and decline of the Romans, taking his account up to the time of Charlemagne. From there Voltaire took it, and brought it down to his own day. In the Histories, more than in any other of his activities, we see Voltaire's genius at its best. The Histories grew out of his general ideas. These were touched upon with

sufficient force to serve our purposes in his *Metaphysical Treatise*. The existence of God is here proved by the necessity of the first cause. The cause is indifferent to the effects it produces. The entire world must be a chain of cause and effect. And in his later book on Newton he ventures the somewhat dangerous opinion that all ideas are capable of demonstration.

At the time when Voltaire turned his thoughts seriously to history, historical writing, as we now understand it, was unknown. The strictness of the censorship made an impartial discussion of events impracticable if those events touched closely the ancestors of the reigning house. [Kings object to having it pointed out that their grandparents were idiots or madmen or bastards.] In the second place, the relations between history and religion were still thought to be very close. Not only was it as impolitic to speak badly of God as it was to speak badly of kings, but the idea that the world is God's book made impartial examination of the world difficult for pious men. Finally, inasmuch as history was written for kings and for the guidance of men of state in solving modern problems, historians tended to focus their attention upon the lives of military leaders.

The best history before Voltaire was the Seventeenth-Century composition of Bossuet. Bossuet was the tutor of the Dauphin, a convinced churchman, man of the world, and a brilliant controversialist. In his four-volume history of the variations of Protestantism, which, it must be remembered, was written only some hundred and seventy years after Luther nailed his theses to the church door of Wittenberg, he made an excellent case to prove that the Protestants had as much difficulty in finding " truth " as according to the Protestants the Church had met. Bossuet's *Universal History* was intended as a text-book for his charge, the Dauphin of France. Bossuet had at least one advantage over his successors. He had a unifying conception of the causes to which historical variations may be reduced. Those causes are the acts of God, and, as at a time when Catholicism was fighting for its life it was as important to keep the Dauphin a good Catholic as it was to teach him history, Bossuet presented his charge with

the best and most pious history that had yet been written in modern Europe, all tending to show that God had the Catholic Church and the Catholic kings of France under His special charge. His book is not the book of a fanatic. He well knew the variations of Protestant thought and had come to have a great respect for Protestant skill in controversy in an age when the misstatement of a fact unloosed powers of invective undreamed of to-day. Nevertheless, the general thesis of the book was not calculated to bring repose either to the anti-clericals or to those others who thought that the mysteries of God's action, whether in the performance of such a miracle as the Virgin Birth or of such another as the destruction of an enemy, could be reduced to a series of causes and effects made visible in a physical world and neatly ticketed with words. As the Protestant Church was under the necessity of finding an authority as potent as the authority of the Roman Church which had succeeded in establishing itself as the inspired interpreter of " truth ", and had attempted to do so by making an immediate approach to the Scriptures, so the rationalist historians in their examination of the past resented the authoritative and sometimes arbitrary attribution of all events to the will of God. It seemed to them that a series of causes could be found which would be more sensible in that they might be referred more directly to the senses.

The question had been raised in the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns : " What are the causes of historical variation, that is, why is one period in history more brilliant than another ? " This in turn may be reduced to the more immediate question of, " Is it possible to predict or account for the future or how can I prepare myself most readily to meet any situation which will arise ? " The French answer was characteristically, " It's all due to the weather." Differences between nations are due to differences in climate. Warm and sunny Greece produced a warm and bright Homer. The northern nations, less fortunate in their climate, produced a more sombre type of genius. The implications of the metaphor were not worked out until the time of Madame de Staël in the early Nineteenth Century, nor applied logically until

the middle of the century when Taine made them the basis of his historical speculations. Nevertheless they have been clearly stated in the work of Fontenelle. Climate affected peoples, and history is the records of these effects. God is, for the moment, pushed one step further away from man. (See Chapter VII, § 12.)

This, then, was the situation which conditioned the historical thinking of Voltaire. His first history, that of Charles XII, was by way of being an experiment. His general propositions do not yet emerge clearly, despite the fact that Voltaire succeeds in presenting the character of the theme and the character of the people and does so, strangely enough, without any great use of the local colour or specific detail which makes history live. The conclusion, as Voltaire's biographers have pointed out, is that the greatness of Charles XII brought about the ruin of Sweden.

The *Century of Louis XIV* is Voltaire's achievement in history, despite the fact that it, too, is something of an essay. It is a logical history. It is analytical. The general ideas are split up into their parts. Chronology, the sense of time, which is the historian's modality, disappears, and out of it all emerges a picture of a nation symbolized by its King. Here Voltaire observes that nothing but the names remain of those who led armies into battle, nothing human remains of a hundred battles.

> The great men of whom I speak to you prepared pure and durable pleasures for people who were not yet born, a canal which joins two oceans, a picture by Poussin, a beautiful tragedy, a new truth, are a thousand times more precious than all of the annals of the court or all the accounts of victory and defeat in war. The great men come first, the heroes come last. The great men are those who excel in giving pleasure or in service, the heroes are the men who sack the provinces.

This was, for modern times, a new approach to history. It was followed by the *Essay on General History and on the Customs and Spirit of Nations from Charlemagne to our Own Times*. Here these principles were carried further. The direct approach to the Bible and the comparisons of its literal, as opposed to its other meanings, had demonstrated the inconsistencies of Biblical history. In an

attempt to justify these inconsistencies, other histories of Biblical times were examined with great care. The world had grown large and round since the Bible was written. The Jesuit missionaries reported that China was a flourishing nation at the time of the Patriarchs. Consequently the Biblical account of creation was for a time put in its proper place, and Voltaire attempted to sketch the history of mankind rather than the history or biography of God. Even more important in its effects on later literature is Voltaire's assertion, which anticipated Balzac's famous *Preface to the Human Comedy* by some eighty years, that he wished to discover how people lived inside their houses. Despite his interest in general ideas, he put into his book a large number of details of the kind which later are to become the substance of novels. Through it all runs the tolerance of the rationalist. Human misery is caused by ignorance (superstition) and wars. Variations in history are the cumulative effects of infinite numbers of small causes. Misery is due to not being clear about things, to misunderstandings, to the use of multiple rather than single referents, to the intrusion of emotion. If words could be made clear, and consequently thoughts, misery would vanish and serenity would take its place. Who knows, Voltaire may have been right.

The positive results of Voltaire's thought derived from his belief in cause and effect. The chain of causes constitutes the laws of nature. God and the laws of nature are the same, morality itself is natural. A system has at last been established, complete in itself and independent of outside authority. Once we have knowledge of facts or, from our point of view, once names are attached to phenomena, we will understand them, and put an end to our misery. The French Revolution was prepared. The Encyclopedia and Rousseau, a series of bad harvests and the cynical exploitation of the people by stupid rulers were still necessary before the French phantasy became sufficiently powerful to recognize these reasons as causes for action. It is significant that when the French do act, they act with a violence which is never found in individuals accustomed to action. They rush into the street and *sans culottes* they set about wholesale destruction.

3

THE contribution of Montesquieu, though less popular, was equally significant. After a preliminary essay, *The Persian Letters*, built around the idea of what would intelligent Persians think if they saw Paris, Montesquieu turned his attention to the composition of his masterpiece which is inadequately translated as *The Spirit of the Laws*. By profession Montesquieu was a jurist, by race he was French (Picard), and by both he was a rationalist. Montesquieu turned the attention of his readers from speculation as to the logical implications of individual laws to the nature of law itself. Already in his essay on the Romans, Montesquieu had made the attempt to get at the literal meaning of historical fact, without the hypothesis of a directive intelligence. He had shown, and the demonstration was of the utmost importance for later times, that the early Romans were pious and industrious, the later Romans luxurious and dishonest. Luxury came with the conquests by Rome and Rome fell because she had conquered the world. The *Spirit of the Laws* is an elaborate application of these and similar ideas. As Barckhausen has shown, this book which contains so many excursi, many of them complete dissertations in themselves, proceeds through a logical analysis of laws and the causes of laws, regarded not only in their legal, but in their more general phases. As general laws are inevitable connections deriving from the nature of things, so human laws are the expressions of human nature and human nature is itself affected by two general causes, namely climate and the social environment. In history effects are cumulative, all that is must have been. Individual action thus becomes unnecessary or if it is imperative, it will be wise to see that it follows the laws of nature. The limits which French reason sets to individual action are thus narrowed.

4

THROUGHOUT the Eighteenth Century we hear a great deal of discussion of nature. At first nature was accepted as a term generally known and perfectly understood. In criticism it was used to refer to those factors of meaning which

were not literal, ordered and regular. The writer who succeeded in communicating these meanings was said to be " all nature ". He was praised or blamed according to which of the two kinds of meanings the critic was capable of perceiving. In France whilst Descartes was knitting literal meanings into a net, the term nature was by another group of writers (though they were Cartesian in their impulses) restricted more or less consciously to human nature. The Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns opened the matter up. The development of science, particularly in England, Newton's meditation on the nature of movement and the general identification in England by Shaftesbury and the Deists of natural law with God and the consequent assertion that those who live nearest to nature live nearest to God, tended to bring the word more closely into relation with the activities of the rationalist. But the word had dynamite in it. For if we admit that all that is, is a mass of effects from determinable causes, then these other kinds of meaning, these resurgent emotions, sudden tears, are the effects of causes. They, too, must be fitted into this pattern of literal meanings and if the pattern has as yet no place for them, they must be pursued independently until a place is made. Their existence and their right to it is clearly demonstrated by antecedent speculation.

Thus when Diderot, the rationalist, announced that he was a man of nature he took the final step which destroyed rationalism. As a man of science, he was concerned only with the literal, real and immediate meanings of phenomena. Whereas his predecessors and associates, Voltaire and Montesquieu, for example, had sought to formulate a general proposition which would account for all of these meanings and show their relations to each other, Diderot rejected even this authority, this substitute for the God of the religious. Cause and effect, to be sure, were absolute, but the chain that they formed was not necessarily reducible to a proposition and consistent within itself. Nature and society were opposed to each other. Morality is a word. Human action is an effect of an infinite number of causes. And with it all the man who, more than any other, was responsible for

the great encyclopedia was concerned with the observation and collection of individual facts, less in experiment as action than in experiment as the ticketing of phenomena. The door is now open for Rousseau, not that Diderot was an effective instrument in Rousseau's development, but rather that the conclusions which Diderot formulated are sufficiently representative of the spirit of his times to explain why Rousseauism became popular.

5

THE formulations of Rousseau set the world on fire partly because they were restatements of ideas that the world had already been made familiar with in the works of Rousseau's predecessors, and partly because of the intense and insane energy with which Rousseau stated them. That Rousseau was obviously mad, does not detract from the effects which his formulations had upon his readers, or the corrections which they introduced into the French method. It took a madman and a revolution to re-create French literature. Had he not been mad, he could not have persisted so long in the conviction that because whatever he did was right, whatever anyone else did was wrong; and as France failed to give him the success he craved, society was wrong. His desires, the desires of a Genevan brought up in a Calvinistic atmosphere, must have come, since he was unable to offer a better explanation, either from God or nature. And in the Eighteenth Century of his time, it made little difference how you defined either term, so long as they were kept together. Since Rousseau is natural and Rousseau is good, therefore nature is good, therefore natural creatures, savages, and peasants are good. The characteristic oppositions of Rousseau are: Natural man is good, happy and free; Social man is evil, unhappy and a slave; Civilization is not nature. Thus Rousseau uses reason to destroy reason. It is an artificial construction based upon reason. The pattern of literal meanings is incomplete because it appears to be self-evident. To the conclusion that only man is vile, Rousseau added the corollary that consequently all man's works are vile. The reading of books strengthened the system of tyranny under which man

lives. Reason leads to injustice, therefore reason is evil. Rousseau did not expect to see his principles applied as literally as his followers in the German Storm and Stress and in North America thought to apply them. He still believed in continuing to live in civilization if civilization could be sufficiently modified to recognize his type of goodness. Natural man, however, was set up in opposition to civilized man. He was good, pure, and pious. Because he lived close to nature, his virtues were constantly refreshed.

Rousseau's revolution completed the destruction of the system which had been able to maintain itself for 200 years. Voltaire, wearying of science, had exercised his phantasy in the attempt to bring the small literal meanings together to form an historical consistency, clear and immediate and comprised within itself. Montesquieu, by following the same methods, elaborated the function of environment and strengthened the idea which others, both before him and at the same time, were formulating, that man is the effect of his environment and man is natural. Rousseau took these conclusions and explored their implications : the result was that if man is natural, reason is unnatural. The violent emotions of nature, being the effects of causes, have a right to expression. They cannot express themselves in the formulae which have been provided for them. They must be expressed by other symbols. Rousseau capitalized the English discovery that there are sermons in brooks, but found the sermons to consist in the feelings which the brooks aroused in him. As a Frenchman, he capitalized the English tradition. The things he saw and the feelings he felt were primarily important because he saw them and felt them. But the effect of this sense of importance was that he gave it a place in the systems of reason which were being developed. This place was so large that for the time it threatened to destroy the reason not only of Jean-Jacques but the reason of all of Europe as well. In setting the limits to one kind of action, Rousseau pointed the way to another. For this reason the French have detested him and from this point phantasy steps over the borders into Germany.

The arrangement of things in a system and the organiza-

tion of words according to their literal meanings exercise a sanction over the emotions of men. If we are not to be reasonable, what in the name of common sense are we? By appeals of this kind an agrarian political structure succeeded in maintaining itself in France long after France had become a notable commercial competitor with England. Due to a variety of causes, not the least of which was the fact that the rulers were no longer interested in the literal senses, the French people came in 1789 to an appreciation of the trap into which they had fallen. Action is the only antidote to logic. When logic has led the French people astray they resort to action of a particularly violent and obnoxious kind. They go out into the street, tear off their clothes and chop off the heads of their opponents.

On the tenth Thermidor Robespierre, still clad in his blue coat and brass buttons, but no longer immaculate, lay in an anteroom awaiting the decision of the Assembly. He and the events which brought him there justify the contentions of these pages. He was a logician. In him the milk of human kindness curdled into words which are no longer susceptible to analysis. For months he had dominated the Assembly, not by appealing to its emotions but by giving it reasons for its violent action. Sudden death was of less importance than the development of a logical situation. Good friends were consigned to the guillotine because only by their death could the new world be established. Even the violence of the French mob was given justification by the logic of words. France was never more French than when she destroyed herself.

F. THE NEW CATEGORIES

THE French attempt to attach one word to one referent had impressed Germans as strongly as it had impressed the cavalier English ; and early in the Seventeenth Century attempts had been made to acclimate it. These were interfered with by the Thirty Years War, but when Germany had somewhat recovered from that cataclysm, the attempts were renewed. Developments in England, however, were more useful to German phantasy than the experiments of France. The English need for action could be made to serve the purposes of the German feeling about God more easily than the attempts of the French to substitute words for things. The struggle between the Anglophiles and the Francophiles was bitter. Victory was brought to the former by the publication of the first sections of Klopstock's *Messias*. Klopstock's ardent supporters and followers then proceeded to clear up the terminology. Largely under the influence of the English, the rules of literature and the verbal categories were set aside in favour of new verbal entities which had to do largely with feeling. Lessing vigorously attacked the French system and the imitators of French authors, and defended with equal ardour Shakespeare and Milton. Herder contributed new analyses of " savage man and savage language " which demonstrated the factor of feeling he thought to find in every social ethnic complex which was not " civilized ". Kant meditated darkly on " Pure " and on " Practical " Reason.

The Storm and Stress saw the need, but the absence of an adequate analysis of the function of language made it impossible for them to give adequate answer to it.

The movements which follow are a working out of the position here achieved. The German search for the Blue Flower was a demonstration, at times violent, that reason was not adequate to all situations. The romantic hero was the man of feeling who was too good to live. He was destroyed by the petty rationalists and with that came a confusion as to the functions of feeling itself. The poet, who it was seen was occupied with the ordering of feeling, was thought to be similar to the priest who was occupied with the same task. The confusions between " nature " and " God ", the equivalation of these terms, and the confusion between poet and priest, produced among writers delusions of grandeur as pain-

ful to them as it was to their friends. As this tremor subsided without the development of an adequate linguistic technique, the tendency to identify words and things increased. Particular themes appeared to have value.

In much this sense English romanticism was introduced by discussion of " rustic life " and bad social psychology, reforms of language, comparisons between the " real and the unreal ", development of the " too good to live " psychosis and general dissatisfaction with the current verbal system. The system of referents was rearranged and the new arrangement gave satisfaction for a time.

In France the development was less rapid and more systematic. De Staël and Chateaubriand introduced the propositions and the practice. The romantic school undertook large reforms of language and rhetoric. The Germans engaged in a general retreat along all fronts. The wide referents and large functions which language seemed about to undertake under the Storm and Stress and in part achieved under the First Romantic School were restricted. Nationalism became a modality of imagination and the pervasive feeling about God which was characteristic of the early years of the romantic revolution got itself restricted to a more intimate feeling about the God of the German people. The need for this was clear, as language had not developed sufficiently to offer a notation for feeling and as feeling, if not controlled and ordered by means of language, overleaps the ordered referents which language since the Renaissance has been able to keep generally in a disciplined system.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GERMAN EXPLORATIONS

I

THE reformation of the Church was fatal either directly or indirectly to almost half of the German people. When, after the conclusion of peace, the Germans set about re-building their cities and planting the fields which had been drenched with the blood of enthusiasts, German phantasy found itself occupied with matters of immediate importance. As we have seen, some of the poets turned to England, or Italy, or France for inspiration, while others, filled with pietistic fervour, continued to sing hymns which projected their immediate experiences of God by means of symbols chosen from direct sensation. This literature, when it is significant, is very significant. It deals with symbols which, as they are not dependent upon social experience and derive directly from individual feeling, are not bound, as other poetry is, by the transitions of custom and the occultations of fashion. Yet when a survey is made of Seventeenth-Century Germany the central stream of literary imagination, though it is at times deep, is not particularly broad. The secondary streams have sparkle but as they fail to drain any large area of German consciousness, they lack significance.

If the considerations which have been advanced in the preceding pages are found to have general relevance, the causes for this situation are to be found in the particular constitution of the German psyche and become relevant to the several speculations which serve as a thesis for this account. The Reformation, by the denial of all senses in the Scripture save the immediate and literal sense, did not reduce these others—the anagogical, tropological, allegorical, generally moral and emotional—to non-existence.

Its function was rather to return them to a more central position in the experience of literature and to do so by ignoring their formal existence. The attempts of the Church to devise a formal and logical technique which would elucidate these senses and fit them into its pattern of interpretation had served in effect to sharpen their specifications, that is, served to bring them up to the level of the literal sense. This, as we now know, is, in one way at least, a violation of the process of significs. For these peripheral senses owe their effectiveness to their operation upon feeling. The Reformation returned them to feeling, and the difficulties of the religious wars arose directly out of the fact that, as feeling serves as a basis for action, it becomes necessary to elucidate the feeling and to substitute another technique of interpretation for the rejected technique of the Church. This led rapidly, except in the cases of men and women who for reasons obscurely connected with nervous structure were particularly apt in their responses to the verbal religious stimulae, to a complication of theologies in which the emotional functions of these extra-literal meanings became obscured. The current of pietism, it is true, runs brightly through German literature from the earliest days to the present. But just because of the difficulties in elucidating the pietistic experience, because the qualities of emotion appear to become snuffed out as soon as an attempt is made to reduce them to a pattern comparable to the pattern which may be called the literal sense, the symbols for this pietistic feeling were rapidly exhausted. Their central referent, God or the experience of God, was at the same time too abstract and too familiar to serve as a general projector for the somewhat chaotic and disintegrated feeling which sought for projection.

Problems of this kind seldom rose to importance in France. In France the literal sense of a communication —its good sense, its right sense, or its common sense, the French have developed a large vocabulary to refer to it— is grasped by a process so immediate that it is almost instinctive. Whatever peripheral meanings there may be in a composition are elucidated by explication. Emotions which flash into being as a result of the impact of contra-

dictions in the literal sense were not tolerated before Victor Hugo and still cause painful un-ease to right-minded French critics. The question is not yet decided as to whether " La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaë " is a line of poetry or nonsense and as to whether it can be poetry unless you are able to attach a name to the daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë, give an account of the processes whereby she became their daughter and her relevance to the literal pattern of that which went before and comes after. The recent French controversy over this line turns upon a characteristic process of French phantasy, for in France, particularly since the Sixteenth Century but also, as we have seen, earlier, literal sense is an end ; whereas in England and Germany it is a means. That this insistence on literalism should have satisfied the French so completely that it could bring about the destruction of French poetry in the Eighteenth Century is significant when France is compared with Germany. For in Germany literalism was not only ineffective in its operations on pietistic poetry, but at a very early date in the Eighteenth Century the Germans seized upon ideas which had developed out of English sensationalism and Deism to serve them as guides in recapturing those graces beyond the reaches of reason, which the English saw darkly, and recaptured only after extensive experiment.

Put briefly, the German problem of the Eighteenth Century, when freed from other bewildering problems of an historical order, was to discover the processes whereby an intense and pervading emotionalism could be projected by means of symbols which preserved at the same time a sufficient literal consistency to keep them within the system of language. When the plain sense of poetry is completely destroyed and words are used, if it were possible to use them so, without any literal reference whatever, poetry becomes music. As long as the poet is relieving feeling in himself and stimulating it in others and is doing so by means of words, that is, the symbols which are usually used for the communication of ideas, these words must maintain some connection with their referents. The connection may be, and frequently is, slight, and the kinds of connection possible in this kind of poetic mani-

pulation will provide an interesting chapter in the history of literature ; but for the purposes of comparing imaginations, it must suffice to point out that German poets, from the earliest times to the present, have been less concerned with literal than with other senses, largely emotional. The French, by contrast, are characteristically concerned about the reduction of all peripheral meanings into the literal. For this reason, France performed a service historically in the transition from Classicism to the Nineteenth Century. In the search for literal meanings and in the reduction of all other meanings into the literal, French reason supplied writers with a frame and discovered new meanings hitherto unsuspected, which served to hold down and within the levels of communication the verbal processes necessary in the production and experience of literature.

2

THE Renaissance of German literature in the Eighteenth Century was rapid and brilliant, and so unexpected as to give some slight justification to those German critics who regarded it as the miraculous and special act of God, careful of His chosen people. Yet an examination of the processes of this parturition will make clear that adulteries of the most commendable kind fostered it. In the beginning of the Eighteenth Century German literature and language were culturally at the cross-roads. The popularity of Luther's dialect and the fact that all Germans were reading his Bible and singing his hymns, had, in a sense, begun the process of refining the German language and of standardizing it to the extent necessary to produce an effective literature.

The process was necessary. Considerable obscurity still envelops the question of the relation between sound and sense in literature. Various opinions have been maintained, for example as to whether sounds are stable psychic stimuli and whether, an " e " sound which is produced by the tensing of the vocal cords, comparatively rapid vibration, and a tensing of the tongue toward the roof of the mouth, is connected inevitably with an affect, or whether it is not. Yet it appears to be obvious that, as

the poetic experience is in some way connected with rhythm, that experience is disturbed if a word is accented on one syllable in one line and on another syllable in another line, or if its rhyme appears to change at the whim of the author. Whatever may be the relation between sound and sense then, some standardization of pronunciation is necessary before a literature can have a spread over a large territory which presumably contains a number of variant dialects. The process of standardization was carried out by formal edict in France, by experiment in England and was seriously interrupted in Germany by the religious wars.

Consequently a problem of a merely historical kind faced German writers at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century. How were they to refine, that is to standardize, the German language? The example of France was just across the border. Nothing seemed simpler than to follow the French system, a thought which was all the more inevitable because the French language was the recognized medium of polite society. What *is* perhaps surprising, is that the Germans of the literate classes should have felt any impulse to create a literature in their own language. Yet if the qualities of German literature which have been noted in this account be kept in mind, we can see why the Germans should have felt a dissatisfaction which it was difficult for them to express with a language used effectively by the French phantasy for the solution of its own emotional problems. The Germans did not explore the question in its minutiae. Historically we can only take note of a very strong determination amongst men of variant temperaments to make a German literature. Among some who saw the problems of phantasy through a fog, the determination was to make a German literature which would be in quality and function as nearly like the literature of France as, with the use of the German language, was possible. The school of Gottsched arose. Others, who were farther removed from the French influence than Gottsched and who were subject also to stimuli of a different order than those which worked upon this professor of literature in the University of Leipsic under the wing of the Saxon court, shared the determina-

tion to create a German literature but they sought symbols different from those which had served France so well. These symbols were found in England.

3

In order to trace the conflict between the Francophile rationalist Gottsched on the Saxon plains and the Anglophile Bodmer and Breitinger in the mountains of Zurich, as well as to watch the search, never more clearly displayed than in the German Eighteenth Century, whereby a nation seeks for and finds the symbols suitable for its phantasy, it is necessary to glance again at several imaginative nodes which had made themselves visible in the dynamics of English imagination.

English imagination had no better sense of where it was going in the Eighteenth Century than it did in any other. A country in which peers of the realm can belong to the labour party, in which Pope, the rationalist, could sing enthusiastically of nature and remain indifferent to landscape unless it was painted, and in which Spenser, the bright flame of the Classical Renaissance, could produce his masterpiece in terms of mediaeval allegory, is clearly more interested in action than in direction. Any symbols are likely to be useful and most of them are. In consequence of this, England, as we have seen, went ahead in a way which seemed to be, but which never was entirely suitable to its purposes. The English developments out of rationalism were experimental and had all of the brilliant virtues of the English compromise which kept rationalism at the same time that it celebrated its opposite. Not the least of England's claims to our respect is that England succeeds better than any other nation in keeping the cake that it has just eaten.

The particular cake which, when produced in England, satisfied the appetites of German imagination must now be glanced at from the German point of view. They were, as we have seen, English elaborations of " nature " regarded as universal law which got themselves expressed in the landscape poetry of Thomson and the graveyard poetry of Young, Blair, and Gray. Another expression is interest in popular poetry which was liberated by the

publication at various times in the English Eighteenth Century of collections of old ballads, or of poems which were written in imitation of old ballads or were supposed to have been derived from ballads. The development of these phenomena fits into a syllogism which is too neat to be true and therefore should give warning to us that we must be on our guard against it. It is useful for exposition, and once grasped, the necessary restrictions upon its application can be made when specific instances arise.

When the scientists, both experimental and theoretical, succeeded in demonstrating the ubiquity of " cause and effect " ; the identification of one referent to the term " natural law " with one referent to the term " God " was a short step and as nearly inevitable as any historical step can be. One of the consequences was that the emotions which are commonly associated with the word " God "— awe, respect, reliance, veneration, and that most comforting of all feelings, that whatever must be will be, and that we are in God's hands, got themselves attached to emotions about nature and natural law. It followed from this, that natural law manifested itself through the natural phenomena from which it is derived. As in its operations through human intelligence natural law suffers refraction, civilization appears to be opposed to the operation of natural law. Only man is vile. Nature is divine. To this may be added the habit of careful observation of details, which, in part, helps to explain the rise of natural science and was again greatly stimulated by the development of natural science.

The observation of detail is clearly opposed to an interest in general ideas which characterizes French literature at this time. The French tendency has been to analyse the general proposition until the specific detail is accounted for. The British delight in detail led, under the impact of French rationalism, to the proper placing of the detail in the general scheme. For a time this satisfied England, and throws light upon the popularity of Thomson's *Seasons* and Defoe's novels. Thomson and the landscape poets had to get the details attached to general ideas. The dichotomy in Thomson is clear. The thing is presented in terms of its reason. The delight is re-

fracted toward morality. Landscape becomes an allegory and one of the peripheral meanings of religious experience is brought back to a central position and is at the same time given a much broader scope than it had had. The landscape poets were philosophical, *qua* ethical, and the graveyard poets were ethical *qua* philosophical, and both were making the distinction between things and the literal rationalistic programme into which things were supposed to fit. The effect of Thomson in England was great. His effect in Germany was revolutionary.

In much the same way the influence of Milton and Shakespeare impresses itself into the pages of the history of English literature and erupts into Germany. Milton was by politics and temperament the poet of the middle-class Whigs. From the moment the Whigs came into power Milton made himself felt in England. The influence is certain but it is not clear, despite Dr. Haven's careful and well-documented study, how the emphasis in the Miltonic achievement came to be shifted from emphasis on thought and reasonable control which Milton recognized constantly, to an emphasis on feeling, and in Milton's imitators very vague feeling, which is now accepted as one of the points in Miltonic poetry. Nonetheless the shift did occur, and although the mechanisms whereby emotion gets itself recorded are obscure, this shift had, doubtless, something to do with the exigencies of British phantasy which subordinates the rational pattern to the needs of action. In any case Milton's epic was all about God and the discussion of God was sublimated by innumerable individual beauties drawn from the sensations of man experiencing irregularly in the midst of nature. Milton was taken over by the Germans, and taken over not as the classicist but as the poet of feeling.

4

WHY these various tendencies offered as radical a liberation to the German imagination as they did needs to be examined with some care. The factors I have mentioned as coming from England and imported into Germany have two faces. They are symbols which were seized by the German phantasy. As symbols they referred to what was generally

thought to be truth. The universality of natural law, the identification of this with God, the nobility of savages, the consequent divinity of primitive poetry, whatever philosophers and ethnographers may make of them, were accepted as phrases which pointed at demonstrable relations, demonstrable, that is, in the senses in which that term has been used in these pages. They were thought to symbolize referents. These phrases were " ideas " or " thoughts " and with one of their faces they spoke to the rational understanding. But with the other, that darker face which was to be celebrated in innumerable romantic songs of songs they spoke to feeling, bringing back again factors of meaning which the French Seventeenth Century had banished.

Neither Gottsched nor his opponents understood this, although the opponents had some rudimentary sense of it. Gottsched, the professor of literature, was under the necessity of reviving German poetry. He established, or tried to establish, effective academies. He wrote textbooks of literature and, although he was no poet, he attempted to produce poetry. He thought that the roughness of genius had to be refined by, " a true penetrating fundamental and general understanding ". Before writing the author must choose an instructive, moral idea which is to be the basis of everything. This is then embodied in a general action which becomes specific when the characters are given their names. " Poetry is as instructive as ethics and as pleasant as history. It teaches and amuses." Wondrous accounts of gods, of unusual heroes and extraordinary people are admitted only in so far as they promote the end which the poet has in mind. Epic poems teach a moral lesson. The moral of the *Odyssey* is, that the father of a family should stay at home if he wishes to avoid difficulties. (Extraordinary thought !) Tragedy presents famous persons. Comedy presents the bourgeoisie. The point is not, Gottsched avers, that the great ones of this world never commit follies which would be amusing to the general public, but rather that it runs counter to the respect which we owe them if we present them as ridiculous. Barons and marquises were permitted only occasionally in Gottsched's

comedy. He translates Addison's *Cato* and, taking his cue from abroad, excuses Cato's suicide which would be improper by classical canons, by observing that Cato suffered from an excess of virtue. Thus without knowing it Gottsched introduced in classical form the formula which is to become popular amongst later writers, of the romantic hero who is too good for this world.

The qualities of this point of view which titillate us as heirs of the Romantic generation, derive their absurdity less from the fact that they are false as statements of how poetry functions, than from the fact that they are irrelevant to the functions which poetry has performed for us since the Romantic Movement. A good many poems do give instruction at the same time that they give pleasure, and a good many poets, Dante, Vergil, Tasso, Spenser, and Milton set about the precise formulation of their general idea before they began their composition. The presentation of noble characters in ridiculous situations does work painfully upon us (the madness of Lear). This much, among other things, must be said for Gottsched's analysis. The rejection of this analysis was by the imagination rather than reason. France, which needs these restraints, made excellent use of them. In Germany they were dead timber.

Gottsched was successful in maintaining his thesis until a few writers who were more sensitively in touch with the needs of German phantasy made their appearance. This happened in the late 1740's, and with a dramatic suddenness the tide turned against poor old Gottsched and he was laughed to scorn. It was not until a hundred years later that a biographer appeared who attempted to do him justice. Yet even now, German historians cannot speak of Gottsched without irreverent titterings. I do not wish to imply that the thesis which Gottsched was defending could possibly have been effective in Germany, or even that Gottsched was possessed of the delicacy in analysis seen, for example in Corneille's *Examins*, which is necessary to make the proper distinctions, and put each element of sense in its proper place. The kind of sense he was dealing with is too alien to the German imagination to be manipulated effectively by his hands. Yet Gottsched

stood at the cross-roads. He saw a need and, offered symbols for its satisfaction. Although the general tendency of Germany is to turn towards England rather than France, the symbols which Gottsched offered were still to have their effects transmuted in the works of Wieland who was still a youngster when Gottsched was at the height of his power and transformed and reinspired in Goethe's *Iphigenia* and Schiller's *Bride of Messina*. Classicism, as we shall see, came into Germany with a difference, but its coming was not entirely independent of the reforms of this heavy enthusiast with his red night-cap, whom Goethe, whilst a young student at Leipzig respected, and, as was then the fashion, ridiculed.

5

THE right direction was discovered by Bodmer, Breitinger, and their crowd in Zurich. These drew their symbols from England. The *Discurse der Malern* was a magazine constructed in imitation of the *Spectator*. It began the lengthy analysis of literary theory and particularly the identification of poetry with painting, which, because it was directed at a central problem in the experience of literature and yet misapprehended the implications of this problem, is to provide a long and somewhat tiresome chapter in the confusions of Eighteenth-Century thought. The central problem raised by these enthusiasts is the relation in the experience of literature between liberal statement and feeling. That something was wrong was clear. Feeling, if it had a place in the theories of Gottsched and the French, occupied it surreptitiously. The English landscapists had, by philosophizing about nature, introduced emotion. The Zurich critics attempted to get clear about it all. As the landscapists wrote descriptive poems one relation became clear. Poetry is thought to be painting with words, and a picture is a poem in colour. The referents of the single words in a poem are now the objects of sensation; and particularly those things which painters can present. They are not a symbolic relation between things which will make a consistent pattern; they are the things themselves. Nothing is true but the actual sensation. The referent of the poem as a

whole is there for the purpose of producing a feeling. Nature, in this case landscape, is the source of all. The poet, they thought, had the advantage that he could paint an idea at the same time that he was saying a picture. " Imagination ", now an element somewhat refined from the wildness with which the Sixteenth Century regarded poetic theory, was reintroduced into psychology as a function of the mind and is to create still further confusion, not only for the Germans but for the English as well. An account of this function is presented by the Zurich School under the title, " Concerning the Right Use of Imagination, or the Improvement of Taste." In this and other attempts the Swiss group was not far removed in point of view or purpose from Gottsched. Their difference was in symbol rather than in intention.

The real break occurred with the production of the German translation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Gottsched's first response was thinly disguised scorn, which was soon fanned into definite antagonism. " *Paradise Lost* ", he said, is " Monstrous imagination, high-stepping diction and incorrect judgment ". The fight was on. Breitinger produced a dissertation on metaphors, Bodmer an essay on the wonderful in poetry and its connection with the probable and Breitinger again, a *Critical Art of Poetry*, which was in direct opposition to Gottsched's book under the same title. Here the question of truth and poetry, which the author calls " poetic truth ", is given further ventilation.

> The poet [says Breitinger] does not trouble himself with the truth of reason. The probable is enough. . . . This is true in so far as things and imagination are true. It is built upon the testimony of these, and he who takes it ill of poets that they build on these, must accuse nature that she has not made them consistent with reason. This is as much as to say that nature did not make men into something more than man. However, the poetically true is not without a certain reason and order. . . . In itself it is not inconsistent.

" The sun goes down " is given as an example of this poetic truth which is generally acceptable.

> The poet [he points out] who devotes himself to a presentation of the wonderful is in one sense the grossest of liars. In another

> he is not, for poetry presents an elevated reality, and although it remains fast to the limits of the sensible world, the creations of imagination must reach out over the level of the every day.
>
> The true, or the probable (*wahrscheinlich*—the word is frequently used in two senses) is everything which, by means of the endless power of the creator of nature is possible, everything which is not in contradiction with the first and general principles.

In the face of these expressions two observations may be in order, first that German romanticism came into being as a result of a misunderstanding of words, and second, that the tendency of the Swiss critics was to bring their own experiences into the same logical pattern which had served the earlier rationalists. The expansion of the word " true " and its use to cover the senses of the word " actual " is clear. And, as words are only words, and can be given any senses we please, no serious objection can be made to these Swiss elaborations. Yet were it not for these elaborations, the armour of consistent rationalism could hardly have been cracked. What may appear to be significant is that these elaborations, once made, were completely accepted. Phantasy took control of the situation and as soon as the inhibitions were quieted by the statement : " What you really object to is something very different from what you think you are objecting to," or more specifically, " Truth is what is and not the pattern into which it fits. Emotion is and therefore it is true," German phantasy was given a clear course through which it swept, leaving its nearest competitor several lengths behind.

Not less interesting is the method whereby this apologia for feeling was identified with reason. Again, by an exploitation of words, the term " inner consistency " is made to serve, and as the inner consistency of the kind of terms under discussion is to be found by a manipulation of the hidden meanings of the terms, particularly those that have to do with feeling and tone, this inner consistency can never be demonstrated with the neatness which the rationalist critics had demanded. Indeed, the ordering of feeling which has come to be accepted as a function of poetry is, it may be, an elaboration of one of the referents of the term " inner consistency ". To achieve this, the

ordering of ideas and communication of thought has, in current criticism, been subordinated. Inner consistency may be and frequently is achieved by a disruption of the sense. This is not true of necessity. Poets who destroy the cogency of their accounts in order to strengthen the consistency of the feelings to which their poems give order cause bewilderment amongst the critics. These bewildered protests are evidence of the persistent hold which Seventeenth-Century logical clarity has succeeded in maintaining. The consistency was felt and the followers of these critics, still a potent and noisy party in the Twentieth Century, were loud in their asseverations that as soon as we attempt to reduce these hidden senses to a pattern of words, we destroy them, and the inner consistency disappears. The difficulty is real, and teachers of the present generation who profess to teach the appreciation of poetry are, as they are entirely innocent of knowledge that any other kind of consistency has ever been examined, left in their approach to the problem on an unstable platform, their legacy from Bodmer, Breitinger, and their contemporaries.

Theory encouraged practice. Already Brockes, aroused in part by Pope but to a greater part perhaps by Thomson and the graveyard poets, had in his *Earthly Joy in God* announced that natural phenomena are the sensible impressions of eternity, whether that eternity be God, beauty, or truth. Dust motes, violets, storm and stars, were symbols for God's goodness and His creative power. It is true that his eye faints and his soul gasps at the immensity of the universe, but in this immensity he is able too to see the individual. Sweet and acrid mingle in the perfume of flowers; the woods is a sea, reflecting green clouds. Brockes, however, was not well received. He came before his time and his development is unequal. In the meantime Schnabel, inspired by *Robinson Crusoe* and developing a theme that had already been announced in *Simplizissimus*, established a type which was to continue for a good many years, namely the adventures of shipwrecked mariners who lived truly close to nature. It is true that Defoe gives us a description of natural man, but his attitude towards Friday is not entirely respectful. For the

Germans this theme offered unlimited opportunity. As landscape was the reflection of God and aroused emotions which are strong and appropriate, Günther, sentimental and pietistic, but with more than an occasional image drawn from observation, seeks in it, and occasionally finds, the expression which satisfies and liberates his imagination. In saying farewell to his beloved, he announces that he wishes to wander in the woods, to flee from man, to " girren " with the orphaned doves until a grave of laurel will be softer than her heart. None of these writers, either because their own powers were inadequate or because the connections between feeling and thought had not yet been made, found the formula which was to liberate German poetry. Haller, in his landscape poem *The Alps*, comes closer than his predecessors in presenting pictures in such a way that the emotional response will be immediate. He sees not only the wild types of mountain scenery, but also the more gentle panoramas.

6

THE event of greatest importance occurred in 1747, when Klopstock, an undergraduate in the university, published the first three songs of his Miltonic epic, *The Messiah*. This is a peculiar poem with a more peculiar history. It is a direct effect of Miltonism in Germany. Its theme, the salvation of man, is near enough to the religious preoccupations of the German people to enable the poet to make use of these new devices which were beginning to elicit interest. The causes for its popularity are, in addition to the fact that it is competently done, two, namely, the introduction into Germany of a new verse form, and one that was badly needed, and the full exploitation of an emotionalism which approaches music in its technique : complaint, exclamation, tears, sobs, and a passionate stammering. The feeling is presented as too great for the literal sense of the word. Albeit the act is unconscious, inner consistency is exploited to the full.

The introduction of hexameter into German poetry in opposition to the French alexandrine, was Klopstock's great technical contribution. Throughout his life Klopstock shows that he had a better ear than eye and that he

was sensitive to an extraordinary degree to the possibilities presented by the music of language. The deadly and monotonous repetition of stress in German accentual verse, the hammering of the accented syllable, followed by the much weaker inflectional ending, serves well enough in hymns where the musical note strengthens the inflection. In the hands of a bad poet it makes intolerable verse. In *The Messiah* Klopstock solved the difficulty by the use of the classical hexameter as adapted to the needs of accentual verse. The lines flow and murmur. The iterations are modulated. The succession of two unaccented syllables increases the weight of each. This sensitiveness to the sound of German is further illustrated in Klopstock's later *Odes*.

The events which helped to make Klopstock a figure in German art are not without importance. When the first three songs of *The Messiah* had been published Bodmer's enthusiasm knew no bounds, and he invited this shy youngster to Zurich and surrounded him with every honour, including a number of the prettiest girls of the district, because, as he said, " the heart of a girl is a view of nature into whose labyrinth a poet must have gone often if he wishes to be a deep scholar ". When Klopstock's Fanny showed herself to be cold to him, Bodmer wrote to her, " A respectful shudder comes over me when I think, Mademoiselle, what a glorious rôle fate has offered you. Through it you will participate in the work of liberation." Klopstock, more interested in sound than in sense, found himself unhappy in Zurich and went to Denmark, where in the court of Christian V, and in the company of Evald the poet, and Mallet the enthusiastic historian, the Germanic poetry of the Middle Ages of a date much earlier than the *Parzival* which, by the way, the Zurich group rediscovered and re-published, was open to him. As he completely misunderstood the metrical structure of this verse, he thought he had discovered a kind of primitive poetry which was wild and untrammelled, the poetry of the bards. He experimented with this form and although he was somewhat influenced by the quasi-cum-primitive affectation of the Ossianists, he achieved better, no doubt, than he understood. *The Odes* which followed his experi-

ments with bardic poetry, give us German imagination freed at last and set in its right course. *The Odes*, however, were published many years after the sweet accents of *The Messiah* had fallen upon German ears. In this interval, Lessing, Herder, and Wieland had, each in his own way, contributed to the formation of the tradition within which Goethe and Schiller were to operate. Klopstock brought Milton and music to the aid of German phantasy. Although he misunderstood it and was incompetent in the writing of epic poetry, he was pointed to with pride as a justification of the ideas of the Anglophiles.

When Wieland, at the age of fifteen, read *The Messiah*, he wept " bright tears ". As a neophyte, he experimented with various forms to find French influence in German literature. In his *Don Sylvio von Rosalva* he undertook to write a quixotic satire on the unbridled enthusiasms of his contemporaries. His *Adventures of the Abderites* was a pleasantly humorous account which falls somewhat short of satire, of the vagaries of the German village. For Wieland, internal consistency was not quite enough, nor could unloosed emotion, though it pleased him, be accepted with complete seriousness unless it could be made to fit into some real pattern. Consequently, he found himself most at home in his revision, indeed re-creation, of the late mediaeval romance, *Huon de Bordeaux*, which he brought out under the title of *Oberon*. Here, in this shimmering, gossamer nonsense, accepted as nonsense, the operations of Wieland's logic were directed towards introducing a plausibility which the larger emotions of his contemporaries failed to satisfy. That he succeeded to the satisfaction of his own period is to be concluded from Goethe's enthusiastic praise, " As long as poetry remains poetry, gold remains gold and crystal remains crystal, this poem will be loved and admired as a masterpiece of poetic art."

Further explorations were carried on by Lessing. The symbols of English literature had set the tone, the theories of Bodmer and Breitinger had begun the elaboration of conclusions which were to be drawn from this tone, Klopstock by means of it, through it, and by grace of a sensitive ear, had re-constituted German poetry and Wieland,

reasonable and subtle, had attempted to set limits on the extremes to which German enthusiasm was likely to go. Lessing appears in the pages of history as a rationalist, nor are the historians entirely mistaken. The task his rationalism set for him was to combine the advances already made, to examine more carefully than the Swiss of the early mid-century had been able, to examine the implications of these theses which were to give scope to German feeling. As a rationalist, he was against Gottsched, and Voltaire and Corneille. " I have yet to see," he once observed, " a piece of Corneille's that I could not have done better." Before Lessing, the German people had been impressed by France, but not sufficiently to instigate a general imitation of French methods. With Lessing begins that active opposition to French Classicism which is still potent. If, as a rationalist, he was against the rationalists, he was at the same time for the English, Shakespeare and Milton, Richardson and Macpherson. His first successful play is a bourgeoise tragedy, *Miss Sara Sampson*, the characters are all bourgeoise, the play is actually written in prose and as it is clear that no tragedy could ever occur to members of the German middle classes who had hitherto appeared as clowns in the theatre, the action of the play takes place in England.

Throughout his life Lessing attacked and reasoned; but he attacked reason in order to find a more satisfactory basis for it. Poetry, he observed, is not painting. The medium of poetry is time and the medium of painting is space. Poetry shows things becoming, painting shows things become. From *Laokoön*, Lessing turned to dramatic theory. The task of the dramatist, he observed, is not to give an account of feeling, it is to create it. In historical drama the events of the past are presented, not for the sake of their historical truth, but as a means to arouse our feeling. Here, as elsewhere, Lessing enlarges the distinctions which we have already noticed in Switzerland between truth taken as a consistent pattern of the literal senses of words and truth taken as an emotion of which we approve. Every genius, he said, has the criterion of all rules born in him. Yet Lessing's acceptance of the consequences of this was not complete.

Rules are still necessary—the reason must still function, but now as an aid to the imagination—less to give it refinement and calm than to give it freedom. And very soon, after the publication of *Laokoön*, the Storm and Stress, which had gained new strength from Rousseau, was to discard " truth " altogether as it came to give its approval to all feelings.

From the point of view of those who came after, Lessing stopped much too short. The Storm and Stress rejected him as a rationalist, and sneered at the clearing up which he had undertaken. The consequent tendency has been to put Lessing too much on the side of the rationalists, and to overlook the contribution he made. These contributions were solid. He succeeded in giving a justification to the progress of feeling which it had not had, and although the Storm and Stress would doubtless have come without him, it is improbable that the First and Second Romantic Schools would have succeeded and failed as brilliantly as they did had it not been for Lessing. He saw more clearly than others the possibility for catching up the hitherto unconsidered functions of sense and the possibilities of fitting them to a pattern, which, as it enlarged the scope of rationalism, gave justification to feeling.

The stormy spirit of Herder was in eternal opposition. He was a brilliant youngster who came into history at the time when the yeoman's work of preparation had been completed. He was a prophet, for whom the past and present were eternal. Rousseau gave him his breath, and the current tendencies of Germany his body. As a writer he was prolific and his theme was the medley of ideas about nature, emotion, God, genius, and primitive man which have been under observation in this section. For him, feeling was the eternal reality and because it was strong it sought out the symbols which might give it justification.

In his dissertation on the origin of language which was crowned by the Berlin Academy, he observed that amongst animals, as well as men, passions express themselves in sounds. Primitive man in the midst of nature connects his language with physical things ; primitive language is

thus filled with images drawn from the landscape. Feeling is the basis of all sense, consequently, analogies appear between sounds, images and feeling. In this Rousseauistic strain, Herder develops his thesis. Civilization, as had already been observed by Bolingbroke, tames us into sense ; the literal analogies gain greater importance, the feeling lapses. Abstraction appears and feeling disappears. In his *The Oldest Record of the Human Race* Herder offered an account of the Bible in which this book is called " The Voice of God Speaking Through a Privileged People ". His attacks on his contemporaries, whose feelings are not as vivid as his own, have the violence of a fanatic enthusiasm. He had to scream, he observes, if he were effectively to demolish the " evilest and the emptiest of all current vices, rationalism ".

The achievements of these scholarly or pseudo-scholarly speculations were immediate. Reason, or at least the reason of the French, was annihilated. Kant, the Professor at Königsberg, shocked by English sensationalism and terrified by the enthusiasms of the Stormers and Stressers, set about the production of his *Critique of Pure Reason*—the words " critique " and " pure " in the title are significant even if " critique " is taken in its proper sense as evaluation. It is an attempt to save something for consistency, and to build the metaphysical bridge which will keep the ultimate and unanalysable " thing in itself " in some connection with common sense. In the meantime the Storm and Stress burst upon Germany.

7

Probably the Storm and Stress is more important as an historical phenomenon than it is as a literary achievement. What came out of it that is still memorable are the earliest compositions of Goethe and Schiller, but Goethe and Schiller rapidly drifted away from the extreme point of view to which the Storm and Stress gave both a position and a definition. After the Storm and Stress it became necessary to take an attitude towards the opposed ideals of head and heart, thought and feeling, or, as I have been using the term, the literal sense as opposed to the peripheral senses of words and events. The labour of the

years which had preceded had been directed towards an elucidation of this opposition.

The opposition of these modalities had been stated ever since the beginnings of the Renaissance and some attention had been paid to it. After the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, attention had been directed towards giving it clarity and bringing it into reference with other general ideas. The labour had gone on in England and France and Germany. Positions had been taken; but the positions had not been mutually exclusive. It was reasonable, for example, to imitate nature because both nature and reason were orderly, or because through natural man, the laws of nature give themselves clear and direct definition. Rousseau broke this compromise and, by taking his stand immediately upon feeling, though he justified feeling by reason rather than simple assertion, he made possible the further developments in Germany in which feeling was accepted as the one, the only and the obvious modality, needing no justification and unalterably opposed to reason. Or from another point of view, the rationalists in France had attacked superstition as an infamous evil which keeps humanity enslaved. For them "superstition"—though it is used, particularly by Voltaire, with various referents—was belief in the significance of the irrational, particularly of events which would not fit into their pattern of literal senses. The Stormers and Stressers attacked reason as the ultimate evil—for reason restricted the meanings of events and denied the value of the peripheral, the felt, the emotive senses. These, to the Germans, were of the greatest importance. The transition from French rationalism to the German Storm and Stress came in Germany immediately through the efforts of Lessing, Herder, the Swiss theorists and their contemporaries. The transition came by small degrees and a vast amount of documentation would be necessary in order to trace it step by step; and with the documentation an insight into the meaning of words which is not yet implemented by a technique adequate for its prosecution. Yet it would seem that only by some proposition of this kind is it possible for us to understand why Lessing, the foe of the rationalists as Europe understands them, should

have been attacked by the Storm and Stress as the rationalist leader.

The position of the German historians with reference to the events of the first seventy years of the Eighteenth Century throws further light on the general thesis of these pages. If the quality which seems to emerge with greatest clarity from those productions of the German genius which not only the Germans, but the world at large, accept as best, is a meditation on the nature of a mysterious God in a mysterious universe for the purpose of liberating feeling, the developments of the Eighteenth Century present us with the factors which enter into that meditation. The materials that have been presented thus far, now give us the opportunity to clarify the term somewhat. The characteristic theological preoccupations of the Germans from Wolfram to Nietzsche, are, it is true, connected with the idea of God. But the value of the idea is to be found in its peripheral rather than its central meanings. The theology is a theology of feeling. God is the symbol from which this feeling radiates and the feeling itself is too powerful to be confined within the limits of dogmatic hermaneutics or traditional exegesis.

What Germany has been looking for, if the historical development of its literature be examined in large, would appear to be less the fixation of an idea of God amidst the consistencies or inconsistencies of experience, the elucidation of the literal meaning of the word " God " in a pattern which includes the literal meanings of all other verbal symbols, than the search for an approach to phenomena that would enlarge the quantity of feeling which German phantasy traditionally associates with religion. As this search makes use of words either as its object or as a means of recording itself, and as words, whatever their other functions may be, have literal meanings, that is, are connected in one way or another with sense, the intense energy which has gone into German scholarship has frequently been misunderstood. It has often appeared to the French and the English that German thoroughness has collected too many facts for the purpose of establishing a thesis which is too slight to require this elaborate structure. The energy and frenzy with which

the collection has been carried on has amazed us. In Germany it is to be taken as a symptom of bewilderment which trusts that in some place and in some way these peripheral meanings will come to light. If we can only collect enough symbols the mysterious promptings of the heart will clarify themselves. The world, even the world of and for the Germans, does not work out as it should. The man of feeling, the ubiquitous hero of German novel and drama who comes to the front in Lessing's sketch of Faust in his Seventeenth *Letter on Literature*, stays until the tumults of Romanticism have somewhat calmed themselves and reappears in the analytical dramas of Grillparzer and Hebbel to speak again as Zarathustra, never succeeds in functioning in the world of fact which, whatever the uses of feeling may be, needs must set hard limits to events. As we shall see, German imagination unceasingly belabours the reasons for the failure of the man of feeling. In view of these considerations, the movement of thought instigated by Gottsched, Bodmer, Wieland, Lessing and Herder is generally referred to with justice by the German historians as the " Aufklärung ". It is the " clearing up " of the obstacles which beset the approach to this central question. Inasmuch as the clearing up was performed reasonably, the term is adequately translated by our word rationalism. Yet the implications of German rationalism are, as we have seen, far from the implications of French rationalism which attempts to set limits to things, or of English rationalism in which sensations are given order for their own sake.

The Storm and Stress touched the red core of the question. Genius, or primitive genius, or creative forces are presented in opposition to reason and order. Shakespeare and Ossian are the prophets. In France and England at this time, the increased popularity of Shakespeare is a commonplace of history, but his position in Germany was a special one. Throughout the Eighteenth Century Shakespeare had been the standard by which schools were distinguished in Germany. His name was a battle-cry and his works were a rallying-point. When the Germans refer to " our Shakespeare " they do so in a particular sense, not only with reference to the magnificent

translation of Schlegel and Tieck, but also, and more particularly, to the position he occupies in the liberation of German imagination, to the service he performed, not only in the clearing up of the question, but in presenting the modality of imagination which satisfied German needs. Lessing, Herder, and the Storm and Stress fought for Shakespeare as no groups in France or England fought for him. Having conquered in his name, he is theirs in a more particular sense than he is English. England produced and nourished him ; but he created, as nearly as one man can create, the corpus of German literature.

Feeling and instinct were set up as the sources and standards for all action. Shakespeare and Ossian are the manifest concretions of feeling and instinct. Reason, rules, and civilization were the eternal enemies. Man must return to nature, the noble savage is the ideal. Genius is the mode through which feeling and instinct operate.

> Geniuses [says Lavater] are the light of the world, the salt of the earth, substantives of the grammar of humanity, human gods, creators, destroyers, demonstrators of the secrets of God and man, translators of nature, prophets, priests, kings of the earth.
>
> Genius is fecundity of the spirit, inexhaustibility, primal force, elasticity of the soul, or, it may be called simply, creative gift, instinct. It will always remain the unlearned, the unborrowed, the unlearnable, the unborrowable, the inimitable, the divine, the inspiration. . . . Genius flashes, genius creates, genius does not arrange, as it cannot be arranged, it *is*. . . . It is that which is sensed but cannot be desired, that which one has at the moment of wishing or desiring without knowing how. . . . It is super-nature, super-art, super-knowledge, super-talents, its way is always the way of the lightning or of the storm winds, or of the eagle, . . . But whither and whence one knows not and its footsteps will not be found.

If language and the processes of language were different than they are, German imagination would here have found that for which it was seeking. The supremacy of feeling in the exclamations of these young men and its utter independence of all other functions of meaning are here absolute. But phantasy, whatever its psychology may be,

does not exist independently of the symbols through which it operates. A large part of the German phantasy had even then, in the work of Bach, began to express itself through tone which operates independently of sense. But that part which was to continue to make use of words for its projection, found that the literal senses of words, however subordinate they may be in the production of the experience of poetry, were ineradicable. It is very well for the German historians to observe—and after them how many others have befogged the issue by the same observation !—that Herder judged literature by his heart rather than by his head and thus helped to redirect the attention to those elements which distinguish the experience of literature from the experience of science in at least its rough outlines. Yet the fact remained that words have sense and the problem remained as to how the sense strengthened or distorted the feeling. The contributions to the solution of this problem of the ideas about God, nature, natural man and the like, were here of great value. As natural man felt rather than reasoned, the balance of the two factors of meaning is more likely to be maintained in primitive or folk poetry than in the poetry of civilization. If God is feeling, then the generation of feeling is the regeneration of man. But these questions must be examined by the Romantic schools.

CHAPTER XV

DIE BLAUE BLUME

Germany 1770–1805

THE thirty-four years between 1771, when Klopstock published his first collection of odes, and 1805, the year in which Schiller died, were momentous. If at this time all of Germany did not discover the directions which German imagination was to take in the future and the symbols which would satisfy that imagination, it is nevertheless clear that two Germans, Goethe and Schiller, did discover both the way and the symbols and that a host of others, stimulated by the masters, following them and breaking away from them, made the way wide and clear.

The appearance of an active literary movement with its controversies on general principles, and particularly with that assurance which is only possible when a group of writers is either exploring a new direction or is fairly certain that it is on the right road, presents to the speculative historian problems of considerable difficulty. It is clear, for example, that all of Germany did not share the enthusiasms of the Stormers and Stressers whose excitement reached its height between 1770 and 1785. It is also clear that the nascent first romantic school whilst setting itself directly in opposition to " the flat common sense " of the burgher rejected at the same time large sections of the Storm and Stress ideology, as well as the ideology of Goethe and Schiller. A great part of what was produced during these years has now become unreadable, and that despite the essential charm which is to be found in its intention and despite the tone which is at times extraordinarily brilliant. Yet if we confine ourselves, as we must, to the history of literature itself and regard only the fact that these books were written with an

enthusiasm which at times amounted to madness, and in some instances were read with an enthusiasm which resulted in madness, the effectiveness of the literature produced in these thirty-four years is seen to have been great, even if this effect had been confined to the comparatively small circle of novelists, poets and dramatists who participated in the movement.

The effects were not confined only to these. They reached out into the imaginations of the German people who found themselves again possessed of a literature which, whatever its relations may have been with the literatures of France and England, gave them greater satisfaction than either. With the imaginative afflatus which accompanied the literature of this period, came a release of other emotions. These, when driven against the political events of the time, served to produce the two Germanies generally known and understood in England and France: the somewhat sentimental and peaceful Germany which Madame de Staël loved and Henrich Heine objurgated, and the highly disciplined and somewhat violent Germany of Kleist's *Prinz von Homburg*, Nietzsche and Prussia, somewhat too much insisted upon by the writers of the last thirty years.

That both of these Germanies are actual is obvious, and if the suggestions of these pages be accepted, we should not be surprised at the bewilderment of the Germans before our condescending acceptance of the one and our repudiation of the other. The Germany of the blonde beast and the Germany of the beer garden are expressions of those qualities in the imagination which, during the Eighteenth Century, struggled for and ultimately found expression. The one is a somewhat ruthless denial of the actuality and value of those aspects of reality which failed to fit in with and satisfy the needs of imagination. If the world is not what it should be, we will behave as though it were. The sentimental Germany is that portion which does find satisfaction in emotional expression, and if that expression is rejected by France and England as being too facile, the rejection may be due to the fact that our emotional needs are different. None of these statements should be taken as an attempt to explain German ethno-

graphy or as a formula which will, even by implication, define what Germany "really" is. The reasons why imagination takes the courses it does lie beyond the limits of these pages which attempt to offer no more than as a working hypothesis a speculative chart of the currents of national phantasies.

But the effects went beyond Germany. The romantic search for the Blue Blossom, the philosophical systems of Fichte, the Schlegels, Schelling, the literary achievements of Goethe and Schiller and the enthusiasms, in part nationalistic and in part Utopian, of the crowd of writers who surrounded these others, were translated into France and England by Madame de Staël, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Quincey and many others. From them are to be derived the French romantic school and that in English literature which is still valuable of at least half of the Nineteenth Century. Thus some understanding of the events in Germany at this time and of their historical origin will give reason for a number of events which occurred later.

I

The work of the years which preceded was by way of being a preparation. The attitude towards words that had been made popular by French classicism was acceptable neither to Germany nor to England. The failure of this attitude in Germany was, as the early theorists indicate quite plainly, that words used in the French manner were shorn of their meaning. The French attempt to take words as counters for things and to restrict one word to one thing,—preferably a thing which could be seen, touched or tasted, and to disregard or even deny that words had further referents,—imposed upon Germans a limitation which was found to be unnecessary because it was unreal. For them, the real meaning of words lay, not in the literal references but in extra-literal meaning, particularly feeling and intention, with tone included in so far as it reinforced the intention to destroy the literal meaning or to penetrate beneath it to other peripheral meanings.

The experiment of the Zurich school, of Klopstock, the

corrections of Lessing, the reinterpretations of Milton and the elevation of Shakespeare into a symbol by which the romantic generation was to conquer, were, all of them, symptoms, both of the unease which French literalism produced in Germany and of the determination to find an anodyne. With psychology what it was in those days, and without an adequate technique in the navigation of meaning, German scholars and poets undertook the somewhat lengthy exploration of the things which words referred to and the uses of these things in satisfying the appetites of imagination, rather than the more immediate exploration of the relations between verbal symbols and the kinds of reference for which they are competent. The theoretical failure which attended this exploration is seen in Kant's mystic constatation of the ultimate and unknowable thing in itself which is accepted as an ultimate reality. For many writers of the romantic schools the thing in itself becomes the kernel of emotion, the " I " out of which emotion develops, for which language was incompetent at that time to offer a notation. The theoretical failure, however, was accompanied by a practical triumph, bad theory produced effective poetry, and if the childishness, the gropings, the multiform absurdities of the German romantics and pre-romantics were necessary to give us a Goethe or a *Götz* we must be humbly recognizant. That a better theory might have produced an even more significant literature is, of course, beside the question.

A brief sketch of the events of the period may help to make the situation clear. Two years after the publication of Klopstock's first collection of *Odes* a large part of the German people was astonished and delighted by Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* and the next year by Goethe's *Werther*, Bürger's *Lenore* and Herder's *Oldest Record*. The years 1776–80 witnessed the publication of Klinger's *Storm and Stress*, which gave the period its name, and half a dozen other wild compositions, which showed that the infection was spreading. The achievements from the point of view of Herder have already been discussed. The contributions of Goethe are of considerable importance.

Goethe's *Götz* marked an epoch no less than Klop-

stock's *Messias*. If Klopstock demonstrated the general directions which were to become important during the childhood and youth of Goethe and Schiller—it was published a year before Goethe was born—Goethe's first drama was to bring the attention of German writers more sharply than had been done before to the precise symbols which were to satisfy their imagination. The immediate and literal referents of these symbols were the late Middle Ages, as the Middle Ages were being misunderstood at that time, and revolution. The peripheral referents were the needs of emotional expression frequently miscalled individualism and the tragic conflict between men of feeling and men of reason or between emotion and sense. This conflict is to run through the literature of Germany from this moment until the present. Whether the symbols are chosen from the Middle Ages or Classic Greece or the Persia of Zarathustra the conflict is pervasive, imminent in all German literature.

Goethe intended his *Götz von Berlichingen* to be a dramatized story. Shakespeare, as interpreted by Herder, and Herder himself, were the godparents. Götz is a German noble who breaks his oath of allegiance to lead a revolution against the emperor. The hero is noble, upright and honest, inspired by all the virtues, surrounded by a small group of similarly virtuous supporters and opposed to all that is evil and self-seeking. But the world is not what it should be, the noble hero and his cause perish, the emperor and the Church, as representing worldly wisdom, institutions which take things as they are and by means of things as they are satisfy their personal and collective ambitions, are triumphant. The success of the play was unprecedented, and unless we accept the point of view which inspired it, difficult to explain. Götz had very little chance in the beginning and this is due not only to the character of Götz, but to the difficult situation in which he found himself. It might also be urged that the violation of his oath and the bloodshed which ensued, which indeed Götz knew must ensue, is neither commendable in Götz nor desirable in any other officer of state. Finally, if we regard Götz' opponents as political officers rather than as the nasty, un-

pleasant and reasonable creatures they appear to be in the play, we must admit that they too did no less than their duty. The emotions which produce revolution are hard to unravel, but the fact which wants pointing in connection with Götz is that an exposition of Götz' emotions was accepted as justification for his actions. The man of feeling should struggle against the worldling; the worldling whose actions are inspired by the consistency and obviousness of literalism, is the opponent who, though he always triumphs, must be attacked, even though the attack cost us our last drop of blood. By paths that are similar to these, the inner emotional urge pours itself out and takes control of the literal and reasonable implications of the situation.

An even more spectacular development in this emotional infection came with the publication, in 1774, of Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. In a series of letters which begins in the spring and ends in the autumn, young Werther who, for good and sufficient reasons has been sent to the country with the hope that he would regain some of his common sense, gives an account of the progress of his emotions. These emotions have to do with his delight in landscape, referred to here as nature, with his reading first of Homer and then of Ossian, and these three emotions are brought to a point in his love for Lotte who, as her affections are already disposed of, can give Werther no more than a sympathetic but platonic friendship.

The novel has definitely two themes. The first and most obvious is the destruction of a noble young man because the facts of life are too hard for him. Werther commits suicide because he cannot get Lotte. The other theme might be called atmospheric. It is an account of the progress of feeling from its beginnings in the freshness of spring to its final decay in the gloom of winter. This progress of feeling is symbolized by the general seasonal changes, by Werther's reading and by his unhappy love affair. The discovery of both of these themes was a contribution of the greatest importance. The first theme, which is again a restatement of the theme of Götz—the noble character done to death by the hard and unsym-

pathetic world he lived in—was accepted somewhat too literally by the European public. Not only was the story universally read and wept over, but an epidemic of suicides resulted. Naturally Goethe was very much shocked at this reception and he seems to have spent a considerable amount of his time trying to persuade young men in love that they should not commit suicide no matter how noble they were and how evil the world was in which they lived. Goethe's position here is significant. Not a little of his greatness is to be seen in the ways by which he relieved his own emotions through the imagination. The story of Werther is, in many of its details, derived from Goethe's own experience and his love for a Lotte who was already engaged to be married. The immediate stimulus is said to have been the suicide of a young officer who, like himself, had been in love with a married woman. But having explored the situation by means of his imagination, having suffered vicarious death through Werther, Goethe had found the emotional expression that was necessary to him. He failed perhaps to appreciate the fact that the experience of readers is less intense than the experience of the writer and that the mechanism of symbolization, and consequently release, operates less completely with the reader than it does with the writer. Had he himself experienced the situation with an imagination which was less intense the book would have served as a less powerful stimulus to his readers. As, in the case of some psychotics, the book served to arouse an emotion which it did not relieve, release was possible only by action.

Not less significant, both for the time that was and for the time that came after, was the account of the relation between nature and feeling that constitutes the second theme. When, on the tenth of May, for example, Werther has presented a brilliant description of the landscape as he lies in the long grasses near the falling brook, in the darkness of his wood which admits only a few beams of light, when he has described his impression of the thousand manifold leaflets of grass, the wimmering of the small universe between the grass blades, and when he feels close to his heart the countless figures of the little worms

and the little insects, he feels the presence of the Almighty who created us in His own image, the breath of the all-loving who, floating in eternal bliss, bears and maintains us. He regrets that he is unable to breathe on to the paper those things which live in him so warmly and fully, that it would be the mirror of his soul as his soul is the mirror of the eternal God. He fears that he will be destroyed by it (*Zugrunbe gehen*—peripheral meaning, be grounded by it, or go to earth as a result of it). He will be destroyed by the power of the glory of these appearances. In this account I have done violence to the feeling which Werther here presents in order to make the symbols as here presented. These symbols are symptomatic.

This is no abstract and general identification of the laws of nature with the laws of God, although the identity is here asserted. The theoretical identification, that is, the assertion that the literal referents of the words, " Laws of nature ", are the same as the literal referents of the words, " Laws of God " was an unimportant preliminary even if, which is doubtful, it was conscious. The stimulation produced by the phenomena which Goethe and his colleagues observed and reported is much more an identification of the powerful and obscure operations of their own feelings with the universal and obscure phenomena which their senses brought to them. The literal identification of words with their referents is imposed by creatures who use words. In this is to be seen one of the reasons for the revolt of the romantic generation against the operations of reason. Again in Werther as in Götz, the characters who are reasonable and sensible are presented in an atmosphere of displeasure.

Bürger's *Lenora* appeared in this same year. Soon after, it was translated into all European languages, including the Russian, and produced many imitations. It is a significant symbol of the quality and direction of European imagination of that time and particularly of the German imagination. The poem in ballad form is based upon the theme of the spectre bridegroom who returns at midnight to take his beloved away with him and who, after an adventurous journey, takes her to the grave where she is received by ghosts. The romantic attempt which

English readers are most familiar with in the forms presented by Wordsworth and Coleridge, to give reality and potency to that, in experience, which is unreal and mysterious, and conversely to envelop the experiences of everyday with mystery, is well illustrated in this composition. The formulation of the idea, however, is German, and its most successful applications are to be found in Germany. Similarly the publications of the Stormers and Stressers which included Herder's collection of folk-songs, between 1778 and 1779, served to give currency to the symbols with which we are now becoming familiar. The Faust who has explored the limits of reason and sells his soul to the devil in order to penetrate the mysteries of nature, the folk-songs which record the simple imagination of simple people who are indifferent to the pattern of reason and consistency and live naturally close to reason, serves to generate the kinds of feeling which, it would appear, lie near to the surface amongs German-speaking people.

The years 1781–90 were full. Schiller presented his first successful play, *The Robbers*, in 1781. In 1787 his *Don Carlos* showed that his imagination was taking a new turn and Goethe's occupation with *Iphigenia* at this time showed that he, too, was seeking for a more satisfactory arrangement of his symbols.

The Robbers is, like Götz, a revolutionary drama in which the noble gangster is the hero. The need to revolt against a reasonable and organized, though very cruel, social system is again justified. The struggle between feeling and knowing is the central point of the play. The theme appears again in Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* (1784), in which a noble young man who is in love with a noble girl who is unfortunate in being from the lower classes, is done to death by the intrigues of a petty court. The tragedy is the tragedy of feeling unable to adapt itself to the exigencies of practical living. The great tradition of European literature takes this situation as tragic. The new emphasis introduced by Germans is in the tone with which the situation is presented. The reasonable older generation and the intriguing, but realistic, younger generation, are presented not as actualities but as enemies.

Socrates, having broken the laws of Athens, is content to die by those laws. The German romantics having broken the laws, die with rebellion in their hearts. The theme reappears again in *Don Carlos*. Once more noble creatures are willing to sacrifice everything for the good of humanity, and once again, intriguing realists produce the tragedy. In *Don Carlos*, however, the emphasis is shifted slightly but significantly. The world is not yet ready for the noble experiments here proposed, and in *Don Carlos* Schiller is willing to accept the situation. The task of the idealist henceforth must be to prepare the world to receive its own liberty. Two years later the French revolution startled all Europe and seemed to the Germans of this generation to herald the regeneration of mankind towards which they had been labouring. The excesses of the Revolution showed some of them once again that emotionalism, even that kind of emotionalism which wishes only good for itself and an equal good for its fellows and thus is as disinterested as feeling can ever become, will not by itself and unaided reconstruct the social order. Schiller became a professor at the University of Jena and Goethe, tiring of his duties as prime minister in a small principality and his slavery to the elderly Frau von Stein, fled to Italy where he recreated classical antiquity in the image of romantic ideology.

The lesser writers of this time turned from Goethe and the classicized version of the *Iphigenia* which he brought back. Indeed the period 1787–90 marks clearly the beginning of those differences which grew up between Goethe and Schiller on the one side, and the younger romantic generation on the other. As emotion by itself was not sufficient, Goethe sought new forms and symbols through which it might be expressed. His *Iphigenia*, though it is written in blank verse and though the unity of time is observed, is not on Goethe's part a defection. He remains as aware as before of the appetencies which German literature must satisfy. His Greece is no more the Greece of Euripides than it is the Greece of Racine. It is the Greece which he sought with his soul, a Greece of shady groves, white temples, a Greece of intense feeling in which the honesty and womanly nobility and love of

Iphigenia, by their sheer beauty, solve the dramatic situation. The classicism of *Iphigenia* is the classicism of that still greatness and quiet simplicity which Wackenroder was the first in the Eighteenth Century to define, a Greece as far removed as possible from the Greece of history or the Greece of Neo-Classicism.

2

GOETHE'S *Faust* fragment (1790) and his *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–6) and Schiller's *Wallenstein* (1799) and the dramas which followed, complete the list of productions which it is necessary to take into account in tracing these explorations of the German imagination. Goethe was preoccupied with the problem of *Faust* from almost his earliest days until the last part of the drama was published, in 1831, the year before his death. Through the various transformations of this story it is possible to trace the varying outlines of his imagination, from Faust, the violent hero of the Storm and Stress, to Faust the philosopher. Like Faust, the Germans who were preoccupied with the story, and not Goethe only but a host of others from Lessing on, were trying to strike the balance between thinking and feeling. Faust is not only a historical rejection of Eighteenth-Century rationalism and the substitution for it of romantic emotionalism, he is the bewilderment of the Germans themselves, whose immense learning fails to give them satisfaction, as their equally immense feeling fails to discover an adequate expression which will not, at the same time, be self-destructive. A considerable amount of expression was supplied by literature and the extent to which this literary expression is confused with physical action is not without interest. The later first part of *Faust*, for example, ends with Faust's sufferings over the madness and death of Gretchen, whom he has seduced. This episode is brought back by Goethe's critics to his unhappy student affair with the country girl Friederika Brion, whom he loved and left. As a result of this and other incidents, German moralists have objected to Goethe. The German critics, however, are never weary of pointing out that Goethe's suffering for this action is clearly shown in *Faust* and elsewhere. The

presentation of an emotion is accepted as restitution for a wrong. The confusion between feeling and acting is clear.

Goethe made still further progress in dynamic balance by the composition of his *Wilhelm Meister*. The book took a long time to grow and is a great deal more—or a great deal less—than a novel. Whether it is more or less depends largely on how much story you require. *Meister* is programmatic for a great deal of German romanticism. It treats of the great theme immortalized by Eschenbach, the transition from wild and romantic youth incapable of meeting the situations presented to it, to final maturity and understanding. Although the romantics translated this inner meaning into its opposite terms, they were delighted by the early and the mid portions of the book, the emotionalism of the hero and the use of the mysterious in the figures of the harp player and Mignon, eternally homesick for a land of childhood, as well as by the combination of art forms, the use, that is, of art itself as a symbol for the needs which art satisfied.

Schiller's productions of this period show a greater maturity of grasp, mellowness of judgement, but maintain the general themes with which he had begun. Wallenstein, a mature romantic hero, is still the leader of the people in revolt against the forces of tyranny and reason which surround them. Jean d'Arc, the divinely inspired leader, acting by impulse, is brought to doubt her own inspiration ; but she too falls before the court of reason. Marie Stuart, the warm and passionate representative of feeling, is done to death by the reasonable and cold-hearted Elizabeth. Wilhelm Tell is the only successful revolutionist. The theme is ubiquitous : feeling in conflict with reality, a reality which turns it aside and causes its destruction.

Inevitably Schiller, who approached his task with greater coolness in formulation and perhaps even greater heat in conception than Goethe, was led to meditate on the problem. The result of his meditation is recorded in his Essay " Über Naive und Sentimentalische Dichtung ". The impulse for the essay may have been a particular contrast between Goethe and Schiller themselves. The distinction upon which it rests, which had been made

thirty-six years earlier by the Englishman Young, is the distinction between what modern slang refers to, without much accuracy, as introversion and extraversion. Schiller observes that some artists appear to create spontaneously —they are the mouths through which impressions collected from many sources find words and find them by instinct. Other poets succeed in " imitating nature " only through the interposition of " ideas ". The naïve poets are represented by such figures as Homer, Shakespeare, and Goethe, and the thoughtful poets by Vergil and Schiller. The appeal of nature, Schiller observes, " is the still creative life, the quiet spontaneous work, the being according to its own laws, the inner necessity, the eternal unity with itself ". Nature is what we were and what, by means of art, we may become again. Thus far Schiller sees with great clarity, and thus far he has given an account of the word " nature " which describes the uses it had for the people of his time. When, however, he continues that the thoughtful poets stimulate us by means of ideas, whereas the naïve poets go more straightforwardly to work, he is, in his use of the word idea, introducing a very large verbal picture which, like all metaphors, is in part true ; but in a large part misleading. For again, the ideas with which Schiller and the other rationalists are operating, were both in their genesis and their structure vastly different from the ideas of the classicists. His term, " inner necessity ", is itself either a contradiction or a deflection of meanings. If it be understood to refer to the consistency which in the experience of literature is established between the peripheral senses, that is the pattern of feelings which phantasy satisfies, inner necessity is an adequate description of the psychological state. If, however, it be equivalated with reasonable demonstration it amounts to little more than the attempt to state the unstatable.

3

WHILE Goethe and Schiller were formulating for themselves with increasing clarity the problem which they faced as German artists and were, with one success after the other, demonstrating to themselves and the German pub-

lic that their formulations were accurate, the generation which is referred to as the First Romantic School, was coming into being. As is frequently the case in Germany, the factor which permits us to call the writers of this group a School, is its opposition to the formulations of all who had gone before. Some of these people began their careers as ardent admirers of Goethe, and others as ardent admirers of Schiller. As soon as they had become old enough to walk on their own feet, however, they turned against their masters in an attempt to find symbols which would be more satisfactory as vehicles for and stimuli of feeling.

Kant had been willing to leave the thing in itself as mysterious and unknowable. For Fichte the thing in itself was his individual ego. The ego is not only the feeling and phantasy of the individual, it is the creator of the outer world in which the individual lives. The effect of this principle upon the young people was very great. The theological implications soon cost Fichte his position in the University of Jena. When he announced that the most certain of all certainties is to be found in the moral order which is itself God and that we need no other God and can create none other, charges of atheism were brought and confirmed.

In the meantime, the theologian Schleiermacher had presented his romantic theology. For him religion was a state of mind, or, more accurately, a state of feeling. " God ", he thought, " speaks through two voices, art and nature." And by this statement he recaptured for German Protestantism that which it had lost in the Reformation. The experience of religion and the experience of poetry were thus identified. The trap in Schleiermacher's announcement and the trap into which many a good poet fell, lay in its implications of the function of the poet. These implications were inherent in the thinking of the time, and tended to put the poet in a position which most of the youngsters who fell under Schleiermacher's charm were unable to maintain. Schiller had contended that the function of art is to restore to us the state of nature which reason has destroyed. Rousseau, and later Herder, had shown that primitive man was inspired by

nature. Shaftesbury and later Fichte had shown that the state of nature was the state of God. The implication which was drawn from these iterations was that, as religion and poetry are similar, the function of the poet is to act as an intermediary between man and nature. As he derives from nature, he partakes of divinity. He is a leader and the instructor of man. His is a particular sanctity. The excesses of Bohemianism which, when they are not due to poverty, date from this period, are due to the sense that the poet has sanctions because of his divine office which are not granted to other people. His divinity is by a further confusion of words connected with the feelings which he manipulates. As he is the priest of feeling, his feelings need to be cultivated with tenderness and his excesses need to be excused. Clearly some of these implications are mere confusions of meaning, the sudden shift from " the experience of poetry is like the experience of religion ", to " Therefore the poet is invested with sanctity " and others are the confusions derived from the particular construction of the poetic experience which the German theorists and poets were the first in modern times to get clear about.

Few, I think, will be found to doubt that one of the ...eanings of poetry is its meaning as feeling and one of the functions of poets is to stimulate and to calm feeling. Yet this is not to attribute to poetry functions which it is badly able to perform. The experience of poetry is an experience which must be induced circumspectly ; only, as it were, under doctors' orders. To administer large doses of it as the Romantic poets attempted to do, is to produce an emotional state which may be indistinguishable and in many instances, as an historical fact, was indistinguishable, from dementia. The German Romantics failed to distinguish between those members of the general public who needed and those who did not need poetry. For those who need poetry, poetry of the kind the German Romantics were producing has offered the relief which has kept them sane.[1]

Fichte was followed by Schelling and he by the Schle-

[1] Mr. Eliot's misunderstanding of this fact was the subject of his recent American lectures.

gels. Life itself was to be made poetry. That which is important is the feeling of the poet and not the effect of that feeling upon the reader. The poet is the master of life, his task is not to create poetry, but to maintain the poetic experience within himself. The points of view may be indicated by random citations:

> The relation between the true artist and his ideal is religion.
>
> Religion is not only a part of culture, it is the centre. He whose goal is art and knowledge, whose life is love and culture, is on the way to the highest religion.
>
> To romanticize means to give a high meaning to that which is common, to give a mysterious appearance to that which is usual, to give the known the value of the unknown and the appearance of the finite to the infinite.
>
> The magic of life is an unsolvable secret.
>
> Let stories be told without coherence, but with associations like dreams, poems which are only euphonious and filled with lovely words, but without sense and connection, at best a few understandable words, like fragments out of the most diverse objects. True poetry can, at best, have an allegorical general sense and an indirect feeling like music.

That this might be taken as an account of the expressionistic or surréalistic aims which have been presented recently, is not surprising. But what is surprising is the attempt of these authors to give a social or universal application to these principles. As frequently happens in the history of literature, although the statements are accurate, the reasons which produced them, their intentions as well as their tone, are inadequate.

Perhaps the most representative writers of this generation were Hölderlin and Novalis. Novalis died young and Hölderlin died mad. The compositions of Hölderlin of importance here are his *Odes* and his fragmentary novel, *Hyperion*. The *Odes*, which take part of their form and feeling from Klopstock, are among the best in German poetry. That they are so little known outside of Germany is due in no small part to this fact. He satisfies so completely the needs of German phantasy that his poems

are found to be inexcusably obscure by foreign readers. They are the suffering of a lonely man and man's inability to make real the fictions which were then current in Germany, and this inability to return to the life of nature gives to him an exaggerated sense of his insufficiency. He concludes one of his poems with the statement, "A son of the earth am I, made to love, to suffer." His own sorrows are universalized, the unity which he attributes to nature complements the lack of unity in himself. Despite his appeals, no one can lift from his forehead the sad dream that hangs there. The novel *Hyperion* is in much the same tone. Again, the romantic hero, with commendable emotions, with platonic love for his mistress Diotima, with equally platonic love for his friend and his love for the people of modern Greece, participates in the Greek wars of freedom. His friend has fallen in love with his mistress and dies. The mistress dies too. Hyperion comes to Germany where he lives like a hermit close to nature.

The simplicities of Novalis are no less inadequate for us who are unable to share the intense German need for feeling than are those of Hölderlin. As a young man Novalis fell in love with a thirteen-year-old girl, Sophie, who died two years later. Novalis's *Hymns to the Night* were the result of the emotional crisis which this event precipitated. The impact of personal feeling upon this young man of the romantic era, generated by far the best poetry preserved to us in that tradition which the Graveyard poets in England and Germany had made popular. Sophie became identified with the Virgin Mary, and later, when he fell in love again, with Julie, his wife. The emotion took charge of the situation. Life had become a poem. The associations were those of the dream.

The novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is further development and illustration. Henry has the same dream of a blue blossom which his father had before him. He is unable to rest until he has found the blossom. He sets out through the Middle Ages to find it. He meets all manner of people, tests himself in various experiences and finally discovers it. The blue blossom is the symbol of poetry, the solution to all emotional problems, the bringer

of complete peace and satisfaction. It has remained so, a symbol for the eternal nostalgia of German romanticism. The relations between these novels and Goethe's *Meister* are clear. In both of them the hero struggles towards self-consciousness. Meister's wild experiences lead him to a sane and mature acceptance of the world he lives in. But Hyperion withdraws to a hermitage and Heinrich satisfies himself with emotionalism symbolized by the Blue Blossom.

Jean Pauls' *The Titan* presents the theme in a more exaggerated form. The hero is a wild romantic. His friend is equally wild. Between them they succeed in destroying a very charming and sweet girl, who is worn out by their emotionalism. The hero later meets a woman who has the same emotional intensity as he ; and succeeds in disposing of her too. In the end, for no good reason, except Jean Pauls' desire to think of his creature pleasantly situated, the hero discovers that he is the son of a king. As ruler of a kingdom he has the opportunity to express himself with even less restraint than he did as a private citizen.

The transition from this to popular nonsense is quick. Novalis had been serious when he asserted " In a true poem everything must be natural and at the same time wonderful. Everything poetical must be like a Märchen. . . . All of nature must be strangely mixed with the world of spirits." Tieck's novels and plays are a development of this thesis. In the *Blond Eckbert* extremes of reality and unreality are mixed. Eckbert's wife tells of her experiences with a witch to Eckbert and his friend. The friend shows that he knows the story already. The wife dies of humiliation. Eckbert kills the friend. Later he kills several other people, only to discover when it is too late that these others are only apparitions and it is really only his friend. Reality and appearance, feeling and fact, sense and emotion are indistinguishable. Romanticism has brought Germany the symbols Germany needed for the liberation of its phantasy.

4

AN additional word or two may be added in explanation of two romantic tendencies which are frequently said to be essential. These are romantic mediaevalism and the romantic nostalgia. As we shall see in a moment, Madame de Staël succeeded in fitting these into a system. Despite the German philosophers, they were not a system in Germany. The return to the Middle Ages was to be expected under the circumstances. The Reformation having shorn language of large parts of its meaning and parts which were peculiarly essential to Germany, the Germans in their attempt to reconstitute meaning returned to a culture which had existed before the Reformation. The idea of the Church which those of the romantic generation who joined it have left for us, is very different from the idea we find in Dante's *De Monarchia*. For Dante the Church was a system, but for the romantic generation it was an emotion. Events had, for them, an allegorical sense in much the same way as they had in the Middle Ages. But they would have hesitated long before they would have attempted any more complete elucidation of these meanings than they presented in the statements quoted above. We frequently forget that the return to the Middle Ages was never entirely separate from a return to Greece, but this return for the romantic generation is a return to a different period in Greek history from the period with which Neo-Classicism has made us familiar. It is a return to primitive Greece, prehistoric and legendary, to a Greece which is misinterpreted by the same terms that were used in the misinterpretation of the Middle Ages. Other countries might serve just as well and many were explored in succeeding periods, particularly Persia and India. The romantic nostalgia is closely connected with this Mediaevalism and Hellenism and may indeed be taken as the cause of them. The Middle Ages supplied symbols with which this nostalgia was satisfied. The nostalgia itself is in part generated by the conflict between the individual and the world of hard fact which surrounds him. Other nations, the French for example, have solved this conflict by setting imaginary limits to the fact, by operating

within these limits, and then by attempting to construct still others. The Germans, more concerned with the feeling which the limits generated than with the limits themselves, coolly overstepped them, or in an imaginary rage, overthrew them.

That the centre of German tragedy, whether amongst the romantics or later with Grilparzer and Hebbel, remains the ultimate inability of the hero to find his own place in the world, testifies to the reality of this situation. But if the situation be explored further, romantic nostalgia may be seen to be closely associated with the linguistic problems which we have been discussing. It is that which remains when the obvious meanings of words have been plotted. It is inexpressable only when it is unexpressed. A psychology which was inadequate and philological postulates which were only one stage removed from the barbarous made it impossible for these people to apprehend the relation between words, things and feeling. The success of the German romantic writers is to be traced to their appreciation of the functions of poetry in the ordering of emotion. Their failure is due to the difficulty they met in adapting words to the needs of emotion. The difference between the two is romantic nostalgia. Since some symbol is needed to balance the equation, Novalis's Blue Flower may serve as well as another.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ENGLISH ROMANTICS

THE arts show change but seldom culmination. The poets of the Eighteenth Century who, it was thought, would be read by unborn generations—men like Thomson and Young—are now passed over in silence. In view of the fluctuations of historical taste, literature might be thought to be the least stable of the arts, impermanent in quality and the plaything of the spirit of the time. Yet the alterations of taste either do show or may be made to show a kind of restricted character. The needs which literature seems to satisfy do not change according to the same caprice which makes or unmakes the reputation of a poet. When the Whartons wrote their books deploring Pope and admiring Spenser, they marked, it is true, a change in taste, which had been in process for a good many years. Englishmen who were having a very good time writing a large number of books on a variety of subjects were demonstrably not aware of the implications of this change even to the extent to which the Germans were aware of it. Pope had described nature in heroic couplets, Gray, the most classical of the neo-classic poets, occupied himself with the publication of the ballads, wrote odes on primitive poetry and translated, in his way, old Icelandic poems into English. The Germans had engaged in battle, the participants had been forced to declare themselves for or against the several issues which were in conflict. No battles of this scope occurred in England where every man is free to operate with ideas or feelings.

I

THE change defined itself in 1798 with the anonymous publication by Wordsworth and Coleridge of the *Lyrical Ballads*. The small circle which read these poems was

made immediately aware that something new was happening in England. This novelty, however, was less in the separate points of view that were presented, either by the poems or in the famous " Preface ". The novelty was rather Wordsworth's mistaken impression that he was doing something new, and in the tone with which he made his announcement. The *Lyrical Ballads* was an event. The young men were taking a stand, the stand was on a platform of ideas, each plank of which had been taken from older English criticism. They were inspired by ideas which had come from Germany. Their revolutionary ardour was in part a reflection of the French Revolution. Even though their immediate influence was slight, whether on the general public or on other poets in England, their publication marked an epoch.

The development of English romanticism is tantalizing. The five poets who by tradition are permitted to define it most adequately (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats)—with Scott added as a sixth who came before and after, can be seen to have contributed very little that was new, except the quality of genius which is not novel as an historical phenomenon but which succeeds in carrying with it wherever it goes a fresh surprise. The ideas which our romantic poets disposed of, the thematic symbols by which the ideas were communicated and the feelings which were in part cause and in part effect of ideas and symbols had been a part of English phantasy long before they had appeared in Germany to create the struggles there which we have been examining. The romantic poets cannot be said to have rediscovered the English traditions, for these traditions had never been lost. Wordsworth himself, in his famous " Preface ", shows evidence of some fear that he may be setting up a man of straw for the pleasure of demolishing it. But whereas English poets before the Romantics had all fields before them, the Romantics introduced a schism which limited and re-directed the movement of imagination and was closely associated with the problems of meaning that have here been under review.

Yet throughout, the schism was English, always a compromise, seldom a consistent revolt. Despite Words-

worth's insistence that books may tend to weaken the force of feeling, in his " Preface " he is clear that the poet is a thoughtful man at the same time that he is a man of feeling. The Romantics retained all avenues of action, but they made the attempt and it was a more vigorous and insistent attempt than had been made in the past, to direct the avenues of action towards one centre. The function of poetry, though it is confused with truth, and bespattered with morality, is to arouse feeling, and having gone so far they then proceeded to demonstrate that feeling is in some way connected with truth, with morality and that by an experience of a powerful emotion a reality is reached which is not to be gained by other means.

The terminology of these writers is clearly figurative and suffers greatly from the authors' disabilities. The need felt was to free themselves from the kinds of literalism which had been expounded for the two odd centuries which preceded. " Truth ", " beauty ", and penetration to a mysterious " thing in itself " called at times " reality " and at times " God ", are terms which, while they maintain their connections with precedent literalism, serve inadequately to define the particular experiences which the English poets were concerned with explaining.

And, finally, although the materials of poetry used by the Romantic poets were characteristically English and were presented with new and individual emphasis, they were introduced seriatim, rather than all in a lump. Wordsworth concerned himself with language and the making of common things into objects of wonder, Coleridge with imagination and the reorientation of mystery, Byron brought history into poetry and capitalized the Romantic poet's inability to get on with the world as he knew it. Shelley's Utopianism expressed itself under the influence of Godwin and the French Revolution, in revolutionary terms, and Keats, improving on many of these tendencies, did more than his colleagues in the manipulation of themes taken from primitive Greece and in the elaboration of characteristically English traditions.

2

IT may be well to inspect the works of these authors in their relations with the materials already at hand. In the *Lyrical Ballads* the points of view which Wordsworth presented may, if we eliminate his metaphorical discussions of truth, science and feeling, be reduced to three. First, to choose incidents and situations from common life presented to the mind in an unusual aspect. Second, to present them in the language really used by men and, third, to show that the feeling gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling. Poetry is an overflow of emotion.

The first two of these, namely the subject-matter and the language, are clearly related. If incidents from common life are to be chosen and are to be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect, some attitude toward language must be taken that this effect may be achieved. Of that, more later. What Wordsworth seems to have been presenting, however, as his first and most unique contribution—and, indeed, what we know was the division of subjects proposed by Wordsworth and Coleridge when the book was under discussion—was the choice of incidents from common life and the way they were to be presented, as Coleridge was to make choice of incidents from the occult and to present them as common or actual. It was, then, in the choice of subject-matter that Wordsworth was most concerned and this choice of subject was presented as something new in England.

As a matter of fact it was not. Interest in " humble and rustic life " had been current in England for a good many decades before Wordsworth was born. If one of the functions of poetry is to stimulate and allay emotional excitement, the question might well arise—and indeed did arise—as to why humble and rustic life should be much better adapted to this function than life that was not humble and rustic. Wordsworth's intrusion here of social psychology, that " the essential passions of the heart find here a better soil in which they can attain their maturity " is not only borrowed from Rousseau and Herder, but is inaccurate. It introduces confusions from

which neither our grandparents nor we ourselves have yet been able to get free. If Wordsworth was here saying, " I am choosing humble and rustic life because it is easier to treat, because, in brief, it offers a more convenient set of symbols wherewith I can relieve my feelings or because most people know very little about humble or rustic life, because the rustics who do know about their life do not read poetry and therefore cannot bring checks to bear upon my statements ", he was expressing a personal preference which, though queer, is unobjectionable because it was a statement of feeling rather than an account of a situation. If, however, his statements be taken to imply, as his development of them suggests, that in humble or rustic life " the Passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature " and that the life of the farmer when compared with the life of the merchant or scholar or poet is stronger in its feeling *because it is the life of the farmer* and that the symbols through which that feeling expresses itself are for that reason more suitable to poetry he is, as Coleridge very soon pointed out, getting himself sadly confused.

This kind of confusion among the English romantics is of importance for two reasons, first because it illustrates how issues of meaning become confused both in poetry and in talk about poetry and second because of the position these statements and similar statements hold in the history of English literature.

It is quite probable that Wordsworth really had the first of these alternate interpretations as his impelling motive. No matter what statements he actually makes about humble or rustic life, the later development of his poetry shows that he made use of it, when he made use of it, largely as a convenience. Whether he could have made this use of it without the German romantic writers and precedent English speculations must be examined in a moment. But, as it was at hand, the imagination, considered as always in these pages as the state of mind which precedes those verbal expressions we call poetry, seized upon it and found it extraordinarily satisfactory. This great satisfaction which contemplation of humble life afforded was first confused by the terminology which was

in the air ; then by a transformation of meaning was taken to be in itself competent to arouse the experience of literature. If the rationalists had made the attempt to give order to the things symbolized by words and to give support and communication to this order, they, as they left practical and experimental science to enter into philosophy and deism, had tended to leave the things words symbolized and substitute for these things ideas and fictions. When men saw that the ordering of these in terms of cause and effect, of greater and lesser, of genus and species, excluded from them uses which were actual though not relevant to the purposes of reason, they attempted to make these uses relevant to other purposes, the purposes of emotion, for example, or poetry, or " the laws of our nature ". This, by a confusion of meanings, brought the assertions of Wordsworth and his kind that these uses led to the same permanent " truth " which had been the result of the other uses which ordered the referents of words.

Thus this confusion in Wordsworth's own statement of the processes whereby he came to write the kind of thing he wrote leads into the other historical confusion which made the romantic kind of poetry possible. Humble or rustic life itself or symbols chosen from humble or rustic life can be thought to have particular power in poetry, only if the referent of " humble or rustic life " is given some particular place in the general order of similar referents. We can easily doubt as to whether the life of the farmer or shepherd has all of the charms attributed to it by the romantic generation. To make note, however, that the tradition of pastoral poetry, from Theocritus to the present day, is a tradition of city dwellers and attempts to find, by an act of the imagination, correctives to the dissatisfactions of city life and that Wordsworth's attempt was to find similar satisfactions was only to make note of one aspect of the experiment.

A comparison between Wordsworth and other Pastoralists can leave little doubt that one of the satisfactions Wordsworth derived from his poetry was the eternal and traditional satisfaction of the *genre* itself. Yet this comparison will also make clear that Wordsworth's use of his symbols was very different from the uses made of them by

the earlier pastoralists, Marino, or Scudéry. The provincialisms of Spenser are different from those of Wordsworth and in this difference lies the question. The magic of Wordsworth's kind of humble life was not the magic which retained the amenities of civilization, satin garments for parties and silken threads for fishing, it was a magic which derived from throwing over this humble life a new kind of meaning, placing it in a position which was not for the Sixteenth or Seventeenth Centuries the normal position in the list of similar referents.

This new position had something to do with the following propositions: that the life of the lower orders differs from the life of the scholar as " nature " differs from " reason ", consequently that nature is connected with feeling and reason is separated from it. Further, it carries the implication that as the function of reason is to discover the laws of nature, the laws or processes of nature—whatever nature may be—are inherent in feeling, and are not inherent in reason which is frequently equivalent to civilization. As has been shown in this rapid survey, the uses of terms like " reason ", " nature ", and " civilization " are to a very large extent semantic confusions which result from semantic expansion. Words like " nature " and " reason ", which are always vague, were, by the rationalists of the Seventeenth Century, given a little more precision than they had had before, although the confusions in the work of even such a man as Descartes are notable. When they were taken over from the professional philosophers and applied by professional critics, both to the experience of literature and to the symbols which induce this experience, they were forced to submit to expansions which resulted in the situation before us. In the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns Fontenelle remarked that as nature is always the same, we should have a constant supply of genius and the chances are that each year will produce its quota. If we do not have a constant supply it would be well to discover the cause. This cause, the French observed, was in part climatic and in part social. The ideas variously conjugated were taken up by the English and so popularized that Gray could observe that any country churchyard no

doubt held its mute and inglorious Miltons. A further conjugation was that, as the quantity of men of genius remains constant, our way of living, particularly our living in cities, acts as a deterrent upon genius. The idea was given strength by another current which flowed into it: if Homer was a greater poet than Vergil, it was because Homer lived at a time when the arts and sciences had been less developed than they were when Vergil appeared. Temple and his crowd of pretty young men who concerned themselves with the demolition of Bentley asserted that no good poetry was written after Aristotle discovered the rules. Homer was a great poet because he was primitive. He lived close to nature. Emotion, not reason, was his guide. Then, by an expansion, men came to the thought that all savages were poets. Temple, always a gentleman and so very frequently wrong, thought that mediaeval Scandinavian poetry was primitive. Addison defended the ballads, and this, in the later English romantic movement, led to confusions which we shall have to look at.

In the meantime still another stream sprang up to water the gardens of imagination. Shaftesbury, who liked to take early morning walks, permitted himself rhapsodic expressions of his pleasure. He derived from landscape a kind of emotion which he had failed to find elsewhere. Thomson, following him, exploited this emotion.

A fact which is frequently misinterpreted in the history of English literature, is that Thomson has a dual significance. The Eighteenth Century approved of *The Seasons* because Thomson found moral lessons in the phenomena which he was describing. The Twentieth Century approves of them, in so far as it approves of them at all, because they reintroduce " nature " into English literature. The difference is striking. For Thomson landscape was ostensibly a theme for reason, for the Twentieth Century landscape is actually pleasant in itself. But a poet's tone is not a certain guide to a poet's impulses, although it may be of great service in helping us to interpret the interests of the period in which the poet lived. When Thomson was having emotions out of doors he was having emotions about things in much the same way as

Pope was having emotions about things in the *Rape of the Lock*. Thomson is not to be blamed for failing to have concluded that English readers will always prefer emotions about things to emotions about such fictions as the brevity of life, and the blessings of liberty. English emotions about these are in a sense an expansion of the central demand of English phantasy in that death means a stopping of action and liberty means an increase of its scope. For these reasons fictions of this kind have succeeded in maintaining themselves even when they have failed to create poetry. But more important than all for later generations, was the misinterpretation of Thomson and the getting of the habit of finding meanings in the hitherto unconsidered trifles of daily life. It was this importance, greatly expanded by later poets, which served to reinforce the ideas about the ubiquity of genius and the probability that inasmuch as our friends in the club are obviously not geniuses we might find one or two hidden away amongst the lower classes.

In the second decade of the Eighteenth Century " the world " had got itself greatly stirred up about a natural genius which it thought it had discovered. Young's letter on original composition which appeared at a very difficult moment, a few months before the publication of *Ossian*, when England was trying very hard to get its ideas clear about how unintelligent one has to be to be a poet, urged men to leave the rules and to return to " nature ", by which Young meant at the same time landscape and emotion. The poems of Ossian gave great impetus to this kind of thing as they were presented as fragments of primitive epic poetry. Dr. Hugh Blair, a minister of the High Church in Edinburgh and later author of a rhetoric which must have greatly increased the confusion in the minds of many young English lads about what poetry is and why people think it important, served as a kind of godfather to the *Poems of Ossian* by prefixing to the edition of 1763 a preface which he called a dissertation. Here he ventured to discuss the particular application of these ideas to the conditions whence we may expect to observe the flow of pure poetry. In a state of nature—and it is possible that Wordsworth may not have been aware that

he was echoing the learned Hugh Blair's phrases—men are supposed to have bigger and better emotions than they have under those other conditions, whatever they may be, which are not natural. In the meantime, Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, which contained translations of mediaeval Scandinavian poetry, was getting to be known in England. During these years Percy and his friends—Grey, the Whartons, Shenstone—were at work on the first serious edition of the English ballads, to be regarded from now and henceforward, not as amusing songs with singable melodies, but as remnants, torn and frequently badly preserved from the corpus of ancient poetry produced by man in a state of nature. Cowper was thinking of his new translation of Homer which would present the arch-poet as a child of nature, rather than as a child of man. In the meantime it will be remembered that Rousseau had taken his stand for nature, regarded now as that which is not reasonable and at the same time that which is rustic.

In 1749 Bishop Lowth had delivered his Latin lectures concerning the poetry of the Hebrews which found an English edition in 1754. The Bishop's purpose was to examine the Old Testament in the light of the innumerable comments which had been thrown off about it during the Renaissance as a work of literature. Clearly the Bishop's ideas could not become popular until some identification had been made between savage life and God. This identification had been popularized by the ideas that man living close to nature lives close to God. The Bible thus retains its divine inspiration, and is, at the same time, literature.

During these years, too, the Germans had been busy. Herder was just beginning his speculations about primitive language, his interest in the poetry of the lower classes was greatly increased by Percy's ballads and his views of mediaeval and primitive literature which have been presented by Klopstock—himself not entirely uninfluenced by the author of the *Northern Antiquities*—and Bodmer and Breitinger. Through the agitations which have already been reviewed, Schlegel came to make the assertion which we find in Wordsworth's " Preface ", that poetry

is the glamour which surrounds the unconsidered trifles of every day. Poetry is not the things themselves, but it is the state of mind which these things induce. The feeling should justify the symbol through which the feeling projects itself. Thus when Wordsworth turns to rustic life for his themes he is impelled to do so because the word " rustic life " with its implications of noble savage, state of nature and state of God, Homer, and natural inspiration, have given rustic life a particular position in the semantic scale. The words he uses to give justification to himself are echoes of words used by both his German and his English predecessors.

The tone of the book is German and if Wordsworth had written only the *Lyrical Ballads*, he might stand as the most German of English poets. The fact that he is so slightly known in Germany is due to several causes. One of them is the reason why German romantic poetry is imperfectly known to us. It is more difficult than other kinds of poetry to put into translation. The flatness of the diction and Wordsworth's apparent pleasure in the commonplace impelled him to use a language which was similar to the language used by his German contemporaries. But this pleasure in the commonplace, with Wordsworth introduces a distinction. When Wordsworth announces that he " measured it from side to side " he is doing something very different than Goethe did when in one of his most charming lyrics he lets Mignon announce that her guts are burning (" es brennt mein Eingeweide "). The Germans are indifferent to this vulgarity and if the vulgarism succeeds in arousing the emotion they are satisfied. Wordsworth was not indifferent to bad taste, he delighted in it. It marked that difference between himself and the rest of the world which was later to be the cause of his ruin as a poet. The general formulation of the principle that this commonplace is the true matter of poetry gave further scope to the English love of action. It was not only liberating, in that it gave them a new kind of action; but in its ability to shock persons with better taste made the poets more clearly aware of the action itself, proved to them that they were returning to nature, and thus again by

a heaping up of illusion gave still greater pleasure to the act.

3

WORDSWORTH'S ideas about the uses of rustic life as poetic symbols did not of a necessity bring with them this radical use of language. Percy had been interested in ballads but had seen fit on occasion to modify the language in which the ballads were written. Whatever the sources of Macpherson's *Ossian* may have been, and it seems probable that he had at least a very few authentic manuscripts, the personages of his poem were, to the Eighteenth Century, primitive, and yet were represented as using a language which, if it was not the language of the Eighteenth Century in its more formal moments, had very little in common with Wordsworth's language of the emotions or of the lower classes. The choice of words which Wordsworth allowed himself in these poems was a more radical departure from the traditions of his time than the subject matter he was pleased to define. The language was, it is true, a consistent, but it was not a necessary, accompaniment of his thesis. It is difficult to see how he could have made use of this kind of language had he lived at an earlier or a later date. The affectations which he permits himself are affectations similar to those popular in Germany at that time. They are the immediate revolt against what critics have been pleased to refer to as poetic diction.

Poetic diction is a literary device which deserves to be better understood than it is. It was the habit of the late Eighteenth Century to abuse it as insincere and pompous, by which the critics no doubt meant that this diction when it had become conventionalized, failed to stimulate the emotions which the poets appear to have intended that it should stimulate (insincere) and that the words frequently appear to have carried more feeling, or attempted to carry it, than the situation warranted. However in understanding a literary fashion, it is not necessary to regard it at its worst. The phenomenon of poetic diction was not unique to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. As a process whereby the imagination makes use of verbal

symbols, it is not without interest. At all times in the past the rise of poetic diction has been due to various causes. One of these, for example, is social and is to be seen in the attempt which the differences of opinion of the Seventeenth Century poets make clear, to devise a manner of writing in the vulgar tongue which will be suitable to occasions of social importance, which will, in brief, avoid vulgarity. For some reason which social psychologists may one day elucidate, particular and specific things are vulgar. Consequently, one of the tendencies to be noted in poetic diction is the avoidance of the particular and a predeliction for the general term. This was the specific direction poetic diction took in the Eighteenth Century. Its progress was the more rapid because of the misunderstandings of meaning mentioned above.

If the meaning of a word is to be seen only in its particular referent, the thing it points to, and if poetry has something to do with emotion and, finally, if the peripheral meanings (emotions, tones and the like) be excluded from the referent, it must follow that a class of things is more powerful than a single thing. " Finny folk " is more powerful and less vulgar than " fish " because in the " poetic phrase " we avoid the particular and have not only a pathetic fallacy but we have a great many fishes. That this tendency to generalize is part of what is commonly referred to as the " Classical tradition " is true only in part and if re-interpreted. During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries particular things got their meanings because they were parts of classes and thus served to illustrate the laws of nature, these regular recurrences of phenomena in time and space by cause and effect. Yet this tendency, this desire to get things in classes, stimulated, particularly amongst the English scientists, a great interest in the things themselves. The conflict between the things themselves and the difficulty of getting adequate and sufficiently large classes to keep them in, led to the particularism which we have noted in the work of Diderot. But the expansion of the classes to include phenomena such as feeling, led to a reorientation of ideas about things. The uses of poetic diction if the question were sufficiently important to go into, could be

seen to have been parallel with these general fluctuations of intention.

The breakdown of poetic diction, regarded here as the use of a general term with an epithet, or of a single symbol which when expanded includes a class, was a part of this general movement. Wordsworth deserves, perhaps, more credit than he has received for his attempt to make consistent application to the situation which faced him of the elements of linguistic theory which were at hand. It is to be noted again that this consistent application was made in England by an Englishman. The English sense of things here reasserted itself with violence against ideas which had been imported and were not satisfactory.[1]

4

A RE-EXAMINATION of the " Preface " must, I think, lead to the conclusion that Wordsworth's description of poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling derives its importance from his use of the metaphor " overflow ". The entire process by which Wordsworth proceeds to establish the referents of this phrase is the process of the English psychologist, and the contribution of the " Preface " is that Wordsworth here gives order to a process whereby either he created his poetry or a process whereby we can think of poetry being created. The emphasis is on the act of doing. Wordsworth is here unusually precise.

> I have said [he reports] that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity . . .

After this identification Wordsworth examines the process in greater detail:

> . . . the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradu-

[1] Milton's poetic diction is striking and ubiquitous, but only when Milton nods can it be objected to as pompous or " insincere ". This is clearly shown by Wordsworth's later use of Milton. Milton was using poetic diction solely and in the English tradition as a means to an end.

> ally produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment.

Again, in rough outline, the purpose of poetry as described by the Englishman is similar to the purpose which we have seen attributed to it by the German. Both are operating with somewhat vague fictions that have to do with emotion and pleasure and excitement, but the English operation is in acting; the German in being. The German is concerned with having the experience of poetry and is indifferent to the manipulations which produce it, although he is fully aware that some manipulations will not produce it. Whereas the Englishman, tempted constantly by his need for action, presents an analysis which is as complete as could be expected when we take the man and his time into consideration. It is worthy of remark that although Wordsworth was much exercised about poetic diction and notes that the emotions produced by words and things may be powerful, thus showing that he is capable of distinguishing between words and things, he did not push his inquiries further into a more adequate examination of the ways in which the emotion aroused by contemplation of emotion makes use of words to ease itself.

5

THE contributions of Coleridge were made in part in that small section of his work which was put into writing by Coleridge himself and is found in its characteristic outlines in the *Biographia Literaria*. No doubt his most precise thought on the subject was presented in his *Table Talk*. It was through the *Biographia Literaria*, however, that Coleridge came to be known to the general public. The three great notes which he strikes here are his accounts of the origin of the *Lyrical Ballads*, of the work of Wordsworth, and of fancy and imagination. The ideas for the last of these, whether or not they were taken from

the German philosophers, and the question raised a great fuss some eighty years ago, are in tone and intention, as well as in content, thoroughly German. It is significant that the account of imagination was broken off in the middle of the chapter. It is, Coleridge suggests, material for a book which he will undertake later. The book was never written.[1] In so far as the distinction was made, either here or in his *Table Talk*, it constitutes that kind of distinction between fictions which is of importance to philosophers. Coleridge himself seems to have been made aware of the fact that he was here discussing two words. Later, when he turns to a discussion of the states of mind the words " fancy " and " imagination " may be thought to refer to, he offers more solid food.

The attempt to write a series of poems in which the incidents and agents are supernatural, and to interest the affections by the dramatic " truth " of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real, was again German in origin. In making the attempt, Coleridge tapped another reservoir of symbols which, like those we have been discussing, were suitable to the phantasy of the period. For by the twisted thought of that time, the supernatural is natural. Its naturalness lies not in the fact that it is encountered every day but in the fact that our emotion, were we to encounter it, would not differ in kind from emotions which are familiar to us. Here again the feeling gives justification to the incident, rather than the incident to the feeling. But the choice of supernatural material had still another advantage. It was not reasonable in the senses in which we have been using the term. The words did not point to things which can be arranged in spatial, temporal or causal series. Consequently, the qualities of feeling in the symbol could be reduced to the reasonable orders of earlier times only with the greatest difficulty. And, by continuation, the peripheral meanings were liberated.

Nevertheless the extraordinary insistence that poems should have a plain sense is made clear by the attempts to allegorize the " Ancient Mariner ". If the broad im-

[1] *Coleridge on the Imagination*, by I. A. Richards, is, I understand, now in the press.

plications of the word " meaning " which we have here been applying, be found acceptable, certainly one of the meanings of the " Ancient Mariner " is that that garrulous gentleman experienced considerable discomfort because he violated a moral law. Yet the acceptance of this allegory as part of the meaning need not in any sense exclude the other and more immediate meanings. The greater number of meanings a poem has the more powerful may we expect its effect to be. Coleridge is remarkable in that, despite his German inspirations, he behaved in a characteristic English fashion by operating at the same time with all the possible elements at his command. The adventurous sea voyage has stimulated English imagination from the earliest times. This is recounted in the form of the ballad, felt by most readers of the period and understood by some of them as primitive poetry, the natural expression of natural man and so forth, and is welded to a carefully wrought allegory in which action by impulse is shown to be determined by factors which, though they escape analysis, still illustrate the logic of cause and effect.

In this peculiarly slow exploitation of the symbols by which things and words are restored to their emotional effects torn from them by the Classical Renaissance, the contribution of Byron was history and *weltschmertz*. The possibilities of history had been touched upon by many of Byron's predecessors. Voltaire had used them to demonstrate his several hypotheses. The English of the Sixteenth Century had used history as a field through which their imagination might range. Scott, by placing himself in an historical period, enlarged the present. For Byron, however, history became peculiarly English. For the history presented by these others had been a static history, a history seen from within the period and an addition to the present. Byron, writing from the point of view of the present, set history in motion. More than any of the others he exploited time and space. He moved through space, and time rushed past him. In each episode he catches the particular modulations of time which the place where Byron happened to be had imposed upon it. He was a wanderer, both in living and in imagining.

The sense of world pain from which Byron thought he was fleeing, but which he was actually pursuing, has already been seen in the works of Novalis and Hölderlin and Tieck. This aspect of Byronism is clearly un-English, nor were the English long in making their disapproval of it clear. Its relevance to the comparison of literatures may be found rather in the symbols it made use of in its expression than in its origin or existence. These symbols were the movements of history and the symbol of flight and pursuit, action which reaches to the far parts of the earth.

Although England rejected Byron the man, while expressing interest in Byronism, the Continent expressed immoderate interest in both the man and the poet. For Goethe, Byron was the symbol of the romantic generation, represented by Euphorion in the second part of *Faust* as the child of Faust, the Middle Ages, and Helen, Classic Greece. An equal popularity on the Continent and a greater popularity in England was achieved by Walter Scott, and achieved by similar means. The rhymed narrative, dealing with mediaeval themes, was Scott's original contribution and the source of the first wave of his popularity. His mediaeval novels are not dissimilar to his poems. Both make great use of mystery, magic and adventure. He attempted, he once said, to show how an average English gentleman of his own generation would have behaved in the periods in which he sets his novels. The world he here describes is, in many of the senses of the word, fantastic. It has very little to do with the Middle Ages and is, in effect, an embodiment of the several confusions which have been examined above. The influence of Scott on the Nineteenth Century is another story.

The contributions of Shelley and Keats, though they were no less important in illustrating the directions of imagination than those mentioned above, may be passed over briefly as they are of the same kind and serve the same purposes. Both of these writers were English in their sensationalism, although Keats was a careful artist and Shelley was not; the one trying to get the most out of his words, and the other frequently using many more

words than were necessary. Neither limited himself in his choice of themes or the kinds of feeling which he sought to arouse. Their imaginations ranged from prehistoric Greece, through the Middle Ages, paused with particular pleasure in the Renaissance, but were not scornful of their own time. For each, poetry was emotion, or more generally action imagined, an avenue of escape lined with lovely things which delighted the senses. In their writing, the English imagination found itself once again freed from the limitations which the middle and later Renaissance had attempted to impose upon it. Wordsworth, despite his genuinely romantic theories, was checked by his morals, Coleridge by his intelligence, Byron by his oratory. Shelley and Keats laboured under none of these limitations. Shelley's views of revolution are hardly more than instruments through which his imagination can act. Keats' failure to bring his *Hyperion* to a conclusion to satisfy him was due, in a large measure, to his attempt to make the poem say something rather than do something. Those portions which are most effective are not the ones dealing with this boy's ideas. They are the portions dealing with things and sensation, gilded by his adolescent imagination. Truth is, of course, not beauty, but the emotions which Keats derived from either were identical and that is all you know or need to know.

CHAPTER XVII

DIFFICULTIES IN FRANCE

BETWEEN Boileau of the Seventeenth Century and Baudelaire of the Nineteenth, French literature appears to have changed its function. Although both Boileau and Baudelaire were French, Boileau represents what French as well as foreign critics seem to accept as the French tradition more clearly than Baudelaire. If the contentions advanced, with perhaps excessive iteration in these pages, are acceptable, the changes which came into French literature during this hundred and fifty years will be seen to be changes in the nature and function of language, particularly in the nature and function of that language which is used for imaginative satisfaction ; and these changes must themselves be subject to the needs which appear to be intransigent in France.

I

THE process of change proceeded through four stages. After the Malherbian reforms of the Seventeenth Century, capital was made out of the precisions to which, as had been newly discovered, language might be subjected. Racine turned them to advantage, but as the possibilities of precision came to be more clearly understood, imaginative structures found themselves without support. Imagination was projected in the Eighteenth Century less through poetry and drama, which depended for their power on the construction of fiction, than upon historical and psychological speculation—most highly imaginative when applied to satire. Boileau and Racine represent the first stage, Voltaire and Montesquieu the second. In a sense the French Revolution marks the third, and in much the same sense the French Revolution was a violent objection to the ways in which words had come to be used in

the Eighteenth Century. The hunger of the people and the folly of the rulers were effects of a linguistic situation which exploited the one and deceived the others. But it was long after the Revolution before linguistic habits could be revolutionized. Before 1789, for example, the literature of France was implemented by the drawing-room; killing the salonists may have silenced them, but it did not change their language, nor did it at once supply a new vocabulary which would be much more satisfactory than the one against which the French were raising violent objections. Robespierre was a symbol and a token. Between the Revolution and Hugo's *Cromwell*, two figures appeared whose significance must be examined in a moment. De Staël and Chateaubriand, the one by her ideas, the other by his sensations, undertook the task of reform. In the work of the French romantic school, which, however romantic France was before 1827, does not seem to have been given factual or legal reality until Hugo's fighting manifesto was published, the fourth stage was introduced. But even this, despite the violence of its action, failed in a very definite sense to understand its problems until Baudelaire succeeded less by his formulations of theory than by his practice in composition, in bringing poetry back to France.

If the name poet be applicable both to Boileau and Baudelaire, it must, I think, be generally admitted that that name will refer to abilities of very different kinds. If there is any sense in historical sequence—and feeling that there may be sense arises perhaps from one of those tricks which language plays on us—it may be that a closer examination of the linguistic operations performed by the writers named above will give a unity to phenomena which appear to be excessively diverse. The suggestion here made is that the Classical Renaissance, for reasons which are not at all clear, made the attempt to restrict the meanings of words in such a way that each word has one meaning. The operations of the logical proposition whether in the form of pure logic, the hypothetical deductive of Descartes, or the mathematics which delighted the natural scientists, may be taken as symptomatic. If some A's are B's, then some A's are not B's, and some B's are

not A's, and not all A's are B's and some B's may not be some A's. The form of the logical proposition, the definitions of terms, the simplification of language, appeared to supply a structure in whose compartments all experience might be sorted. Yet this structure could maintain itself only if the referents of the terms were sharply distinguished, if the meaning of A be constantly the same. Some A's are B's, for example, only if the term A refers always to the same thing. If the referent of A, however, happens to be a complex, if at one time it happens to be recognized as in a sense B, but happens to be felt as something else and happens to be used for still a third purpose, this simplified structure will fail to satisfy any needs except those of mathematics, or mathematical analysis.

This kind of simplification was satisfactory to the French people largely because it was unanswerable, because it made clear to them where they stood and made clear to them what, in any given sense, were the possibilities of action. When nothing is beautiful but truth, " beauty " gets itself defined in terms of adequate and self-evident deductions from a logical proposition. This was the method of Corneille, which enabled conversation to be carried on without acrimony, but with considerable brilliance. It had the added advantage of elegance which in the drawing-rooms through which it flowed was regarded, as elegance so frequently is regarded in a community in which fears and ambitions of various kinds are characteristic emotions, as an avoidance of reference to the particular, as " the leg " is much more elegant than " your leg ", " limbs " are more desirable than either. That the snobbery of the Seventeenth-Century country ladies and gentlemen who crowded into Paris fostered this linguistic tendency was undeniable, but one may question the statements that can be made that this snobbery and love of elegance was the cause. The attempt to make language logically precise has occurred too often in history and is too widespread throughout the Renaissance to have been derived from any such simple situation as mere snobbery. It has obscurely something to do with the linguistic process itself, but the effect of the tendency, by

neglecting feeling and abolishing ambiguity is ruinous in poetry.

The bankruptcy of the Eighteenth Century is evident. When poetry written in this vocabulary is effective it is the modulation of a proposition, a story, or an account of a situation. Whatever richness there may be in poetry, whatever meanings, that is, remain after the work of analysis, are derived from the richness of literary allusion. For if the poets of this period were not men of feeling, they were to a very high degree literate. If the composition was a reasonable process, one of the reasonable activities was the culling of good lines from old poetry. The meanings of these lines had been clarified by elaborate exegesis, but an exploration of the variant ways in which the same idea could be expressed as had been made popular by Erasmus's *Adagia*, is a source of pleasure. Nevertheless these precisions, because they were unanswerable (if B is not the meaning of A, what in heaven's name is the meaning, and if you do not use words in the same sense, in what senses *are* you using them), set limits to experience. As we have seen, the breaking down of these limits was begun in England, was justified by the Encyclopedists and verbal logic and vitalized by the Germans.

France continued to struggle, the energy of the people erupted in a revolution and expressed itself not only in mass murder but in the verbal formulation of new programmes. The limit was perfection, but it was a perfection well defined in the propositions of the Jacobins. With the rise of Napoleon a new world had been made but the old vocabulary remained. The forging of the new vocabulary was largely the work of two persons, Madame de Staël and Chateaubriand.

2

GERMAINE NECKER, Baroness de Staël, is a symbol of the confusions of the time. She thought like Voltaire and felt, or wished to feel, like Rousseau. As a member of a Swiss family, she was somewhat more subject to international influences or, to put it more accurately, was more

aware of the conflict of cultures, than most of her contemporaries (the limitations of her internationalism are evident in many places, characteristically in her ignorance of German on her first visit to that country). Her mother was a noted *saloniste* and the strongest impression Germaine made in Germany was that of a great lady of the old régime. Germaine was not only voluble she was garrulous. Two hours of her company sent poor Goethe to bed. She was prejudiced and opinionated, badly read and in many senses an amateur of literature and a passionate hostess to literary men. She was sentimental but operated with propositions.

Her two books, *De la litérature considerée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* and *l'Allemagne* made an epoch. Though an interval of ten years elapsed between the publication and though their reception in France was very different, the two taken together may help to give us some idea as to how the language of France got itself clothed again and covered up the nakedness to which the classicists and rationalists had reduced it. Madame de Staël was interested in playing with propositions and with general ideas. This was her Voltairian heritage, and her heritage too from the days when as a small girl she had assisted her mother in the entertainment of Grimm, Turgot, Buffon and the rationalists.

The abstractions she dealt with were covered by such words as " literature ", " religion ", " freedom ", " greatness ", " morality ". Like Perrault and Fontenelle, she defined the relations which she imagined exist between these abstractions. She arranged them historically as well as she could. She concluded, taking her cue from Montesquieu, that liberty, virtue, glory, greatness, do not exist singly, but that where the one is found, there also will be the others. Each is a function of the other. In periods where these exist great literature too will appear. The great literary periods are the periods of liberty. These periods do not merely happen. The human spirit is capable of perfection. She has run through " the revolutions of the world and the succession of the centuries ". Each is an improvement on the other. The gradual progress of the human spirit has never ceased.

The Romans were greater than the Greeks, France has been greater than the Romans, the future is rose coloured. This is the optimism of the liberal, the application of the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, to the situation of her own day.

But if there is a connection between the abstraction which Madame de Staël refers to as literature and these other abstractions, there is also a connection between literature and climate. The south is supposed to be warm, sunny and bright. The north is cold and obscure, Rome is pagan, France is Christian. France has committed a great error by attempting to make use of the forms and rules of southern and pagan literature. The northern peoples outside of France have discovered more readily than the French the true conditions of literary beauty because they have been frankly national and Christian. The literatures of the Italians and the English, the Germans and the French, show marked differences. They are not to be judged by one standard. Each is to be judged by its own. Beauty is not universal, it is national. It will be definable, not by one formula, as Boileau had suggested, but by many formulae.

The procedure of this talented authoress was safely within the limits established by the Eighteenth Century. Differences exist between national literatures, each literature is good in its way, therefore there must be different kinds of goodness. By proposition and deduction the way was prepared which led to the propositions contained in the book on Germany.

The most famous of these propositions, taken from Schlegel, is a further development of the opposition between north and south, which Madame de Staël refers to by the terms " romantic and classic ". The north is romantic. The south is classic. Romantic literature only is still susceptible of being perfected, " because having its roots in our own earth, it is the only literature which can grow and vitalize itself anew : it expresses our religion, it recalls our history, it makes use of our personal impressions to stimulate our feelings ". In another place she discusses the rules of literature and their connections with the taste of the drawing-room.

> Some people declare [she says] that language was fixed on a certain day of a certain month and that from that moment the introduction of a new word came to be an act of barbarism. Others affirm that the grammatical rules were definitely established in a certain year, and that a genius who might wish now to make some change in them is wrong not to have been born before that year when all discussions of literature past, present and future, were concluded.

Or again :

> Nations ought to serve as guides, one for the other, and all would be wrong to deprive themselves of the light which they might mutually lend each other. There is something very singular in the difference between one people and another : climate, the look of the country, language, government, finally and generally, the events of history. A power still more extraordinary than all the others contributes to these differences and no man, however superior he may be, is able to divine that which develops naturally in the mind of him who lives on another soil and breathes another air.

Together with these generalizations, Madame de Staël presented her readers with a mass of observations, illuminated by her enthusiasms, those of an intelligent woman who does not always make careful distinctions. " The Germans ", she said, " think more than they talk. The French talk more than they think." Current German literature was reviewed. The attention of France was called to Goethe, Herder, Klopstock. Each was admired and classified. Her preferences were expressed ; France was made aware of the fact that something of importance was going on just beyond its border.

Heine was to point out some fifty years later that Madame de Staël failed to grasp Germany. She caught one side of it, found it charming and misinterpreted it. What she failed to understand—and in this she was not alone—was that Germany, having passed through the Storm and Stress and having made the attempt to divest words entirely of their denotations, was now trying to find a use of words that would be still within the general functions of languages.

What she saw was for our purposes more important than what she missed. As Schlegel and her other friends

opened German poetry to her, she saw that it was a phenomenon which would serve as a needed correction to French logomancy. The importance of feeling in German poetry fed that part of her which had been nourished by Rousseau. The symbols which that feeling made use of in getting itself communicated, Catholicism, mediaevalism, Shakespeare, Ossian and Milton, because they were different symbols from the symbols which had been made use of by the French writers of her acquaintance were thought to mark the difference. Again the words were taken in the place of the things. The symbols were substituted for their functions. Without this confusion Hugo could never have committed the absurdities to be found in his " Preface ". Indeed the Romantic movement might never have appeared in France. A comparison between de Staël and Lessing obtrudes itself. Both operated with ideas, but whereas Lessing proceeds from the immediate effect to the general statement, de Staël derives the work of art from the propositions which have been put into her hand. Both were romantic in the sense that each presented the programme which was to influence greatly the writers who followed. Yet Lessing, with his emphasis on feeling and his analysis of it, remained German, while de Staël, though she introduced Germanic imagination into France, because of her reliance on incontrovertible fictions by her desire to see how the individual impression may be made to serve the purposes of a general statement, remained French.

The strength of Madame de Staël lay less in her ability to reform the technique of French poetry than in her demonstration that the experience of poetry could be induced by a new kind of subject. Her interest lay less with the operations of words than with the things the words referred to. If, in introducing new subjects to writers (Christianity, the north, melancholy), new sets of words were needed, the words would be found. The confusion is ubiquitous in the literature of peoples like the Europeans, who go to great lengths to improve the instruments of transportation but entirely ignore the instruments of communication, who believe that because facts are by definition external to man, man's words can be made to

fit the facts and, ultimately, who permit words to be confused with facts. The directions which poetry in Europe was ultimately to take, were to abut in a reformation of language, which, though the purpose of the reformation was not clearly understood, has come during the last thirty years to be wide. Of this reformation Madame de Staël understood nothing. She had experienced the effects of poetry in Germany. She had observed in the work and the discussions of her German friends either an indifference as to whether the subjects of literature were proper or improper, or a definite preference for a kind of subject hitherto unappreciated in France. The subject and the effect went together, both could be demonstrated in books or in conversation, and both could be presented as elaborations of the kind of verbal manipulations which the friends of Madame de Staël's mother were in the habit of performing.

3

CHATEAUBRIAND, the contemporary and opponent of Madame de Staël, did a work similar to hers. His reformation was less through proposition than by example. Madame de Staël's propositions are frequently wrong, but they are seldom ridiculous. Her long training in the drawing-room as apprentice and mistress had shown her how to present her enthusiasms so that if not true, they were, at least in one sense or another, reasonable. She had an intellectual decency which throughout the excesses of her private life she was able to preserve.

Chateaubriand, passionate, disappointed and vain, had none of this. His *Génie du Christianisme* made his fortune. It is at once the most suggestive and the most absurd of books. He took it upon himself to " prove that of all the religions which have ever existed, the Christian religion is the most poetic, the most human, the most favourable to liberty, to the arts and to letters, that the modern world owes everything to it, that there is nothing more divine than its morality, nothing more amiable or more grand than its dogmas, its teaching and its cult, that it supports genius, purifies taste, develops virtuous emotions, gives vigour to thought, offers noble forms to

the writer. . . ." The causes for the supposed success of Chateaubriand's reform force us to remember that literary movements, like romanticism, are not the simple fictions which Madame de Staël thought them to be. After the attacks upon religion by the Eighteenth-Century rationalists, the squabbles and the undignified intrigues and the senseless persecutions of the Jesuits and the Jansenites, and the atheism of the priests themselves, the French people, having freed themselves of a great deal of oppressive nonsense, were in need no less than French poets of symbols which would again rouse and assuage feelings. Catholicism, the traditional religion of France, offered those symbols and the French people were ready to return to it, providing, of course, that it could be refreshed and modernized. The rites and dogmas of Catholicism could be again accepted if these were invested with meanings which were richer than the meanings presented by the rationalists, and if some sense could be found in the qualities of feeling which they desired to experience. The defence of Catholicism which Chateaubriand offered was not in the main the defence of a constituted religious organization, and even less a defence of the religious emotion. Chateaubriand treated Catholicism as an enthusiastic and not too discriminating critic treats a play. He was not talking about religion, he was talking about a literary experience and he was explaining how this experience might be made use of for purposes of political and social reform.

If the *Génie* takes its place in the history of religion by appearing at a time when the French people were ready for a new defence of Christianity and if it takes its place in the history of literature by giving verbal justification to a series of symbols drawn from Catholicism which under the stimulus of Winckelmann in Germany and the Catholic reaction there, together with the mediaevalism which was coming to be of increasing importance to writers of poems and novels, yet its most direct and perhaps even its most permanent achievement in France was in the reforms it instituted in language. These reforms in this book, as well as in Chateaubriand's other prose, were towards the use of the precise word; but, at this

time, precise not in the reference to a fiction, but rather in their reference to sensation. It is the sensationalism of this author, the return to the things in landscape and his nervous response to them, propelled by a persistent melancholy that was to colour much of the poetry which followed—La Martine, De Vigny, and Hugo, when Hugo is doing more than permitting great words to roll through his mouth.

Here Byronism finds its beginning. This melancholy, a pervading emotion, Chateaubriand traces back to the time when he was in the womb of his mother. In his youth he was chronically unable to get along with human beings, during the Revolution he was in exile in England; later he made opportunities to observe the noble savages of America. His ideas turn again and again to the conflict between two types of culture, a higher and lower. *The Natchez* is the conflict between the new world and the old, between natural man and civilized man. *The Martyrs* is the conflict between Christianity and Rome. The intensity with which Chateaubriand experienced disappointment at his own defeat increased his sense of the sharpness of these conflicts. From that which was reasonable and evident Chateaubriand's imagination turned to that which was primitive and emotional. If the sources for these interests are similar in Chateaubriand and Byron, the methods of operation are not. For Chateaubriand, being French, again makes the attempt to justify his particular method of feeling by the process of proposition and deduction. Byron gives us oratory, seldom logic. Chateaubriand gives us sensations and ideas. One of the signs of the increasing popularity of romanticism in France is the increasing absurdity of the propositions advanced. Hugo's "Preface" will give further illustration.

From the propositions which Chateaubriand presented and the practice which he perfected, corollaries and scholia were drawn. Like Madame de Staël, he observed that the symbols of Christianity were of greater value to modern art than the symbols of paganism. The author of the *Chanson de Roland* had made this discovery some seven hundred years earlier. In the Seventeenth Century, the "Preface" to *Clovis*, which presented the proposition,

precipitated the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns which raged about it. Chateaubriand, like Madame de Staël, approached it by way of sociology. But since the Seventeenth Century, whatever the approach may be, the interest in the question results from a desire, badly understood, to find a set of referents which will be communicated by a set of verbal symbols in such a way that the words and their referents will stimulate and order feeling. The increased prosperity of Christianity and the Middle Ages served in a measure further to break down the authority of the classic rules. A new set of rules was needed, but as the classic rules had been arranged around a series of propositions, the new rules, which were to define an experience, more concisely an experience of emotion, required a new terminology. Such terms as " truth of expression " and " intensity of impression ", " all that you need to know is that truth is beauty " or " each work of art must be judged in and by itself ", were brought into fashion and have maintained themselves into the present. When it is objected that these terms are tautological and fail to make sense, poets and the critics who serve as their apologists, point out that as the function of literature is not to make sense in that sense, the terms which describe literature need not be any better.

Or again, the presentation of the Bible in France, not only as an early book which contains poetry, or as the word of God which is therefore poetry, for Frenchmen had been doing that for two centuries, but as an artistic masterpiece which presented a kind of art different from and as great as the arts of early Greece, was an achievement. With this and with the new interest in Christianity properly justified, mediaevalism was reconstituted in France, and with it Gothic art. It is of little importance that these ideas and reconstitutions had been presented brilliantly in England and Germany almost fifty years earlier and there had had their popularity. Nor is it of great importance that the programme followed by Chateaubriand and sketched by Madame de Staël was a programme not greatly different from that which had been followed by the English and the Germans. What seems

to be of importance is that the French were less easily tired by the logical literalism of their writing than the Germans and the English have been. This literalism satisfied them for a longer time and it took a vast amount of reasoning and a complete destruction of the Salon before the new literalism of the romantic poets could be introduced. When it was introduced, it still came by a definition of terms and a fitting together of ideas.

4

THESE considerations may help to make clear why romanticism was less prosperous in France than it was elsewhere and why it suffered so greatly from the attacks of good Frenchmen who wished to make it reasonable. In one sense, romanticism, as that term is understood in Germany, never penetrated into France. Whereas Wordsworth, in his literary reforms, was often shocking, the French romanticists because they were consistent are frequently ridiculous. Yet they made use of the stage properties of romanticism and they introduced momentous reforms in language.

The simile disappeared and the precise image took its place. The classic Alexandrine was broken up, in the place of a line whose twelve syllables are regularly separated by a pause which follows the sixth, we are given a line of twelve syllables which contains two pauses, at the fourth and at the eighth. When the manners of the romantic poets are compared with the manners of our own contemporaries, we have the feeling that the reforms instituted by the romantic group were largely superficial. Yet unless we understand something of the deadly seriousness with which these reforms were invested, we fail to grasp the tenacity with which the French people hold on to their system of proposition and deduction. Even Nodier and Amiel and Nerval should have had a better fortune than they had, for theirs was the temperament. Hugo, De Vigny, La Martine, De Musset, Gauthier, should have done more than they did, yet theirs was the glory. It should not have taken fifty years to produce a Baudelaire. The Parnassian reaction of the last half of the century with its insistence on careful workmanship and

precision of image and clarification of thought, a resurgence of an insuperable classicism should not have been taken so seriously. That these are obvious facts in the French Nineteenth Century should serve to explain why romanticism in France was, in its scope and its power, less important than it was elsewhere.

This failure of romanticism was not for want of trying or for want of opportunity. From 1810 to 1830 critics and translators poured into the French publishers streams of translations and analyses. In 1809, Constant brought out a *Wallenstein* with notes on Schiller and the German theatre. Schlegel's lectures on dramatic literature were translated in 1814. In 1816 Raynouard published in six volumes his anthology of the poetry of the troubadours, an anthology which is still useful. In 1821 Guizot translated Shakespeare ; and Barante, Schiller's plays. The next year Pichot put Byron into French. In 1825 Loeve Veirmars translated Wieland's *Oberon* and the next year ballads, legends and popular songs of England and Scotland. Quinet produced three volumes on Herder's ideas of history. The next year Villemain lectured on mediaeval literature at the Sorbonne and Sainte-Beuve produced his book on Sixteenth-Century French poetry, Nodier his Faust, Gerard de Nerval his translation of *Faust*, and Deschamps his discussion of Schiller's *The Bell*, to be followed the year after by Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The interest was great and yet despite Raynouard and because, perhaps, of the conversational abilities of Sainte-Beuve, the attention of France was turned to its Sixteenth Century rather than back to its Twelfth. There can be little doubt that both were French in the senses in which I have been using this term. There can be even less doubt that the Sixteenth Century with its manifestoes was more French than the Twelfth. For Sainte-Beuve, the classic age interrupted the spontaneous development of French genius.

With the new desires which had been introduced in an attempt to effect the necessary reforms, came a new vocabulary. But even here it was a revitalization of words taken from older French books, a reaction against Malherbe justified less by the immediate question as to

whether these words were the only words for the situation than by the thought that as something was wrong with classic diction something might be better with the older language. Two books of Fénelon's *Télémaque* are said to contain the names of only ten colours, six of red, two of yellow and two of green. The romantics introduced a much broader notation because they were seeing a greater diversity of things. As the classics had confused the word with the idea the romantic writers confused the word with the physical object which the word designated. The fact is important as an illustration of the extent to which France is bound by its words. Strangely unable to derive its sensations from experience, French poets of the romantic generation and later have attempted to make " words themselves into sensations ". In French romanticism, words still mark the limit, the boundary of action. Gauthier, the painter, attempted to use words in the place of colours and out of him were generated the two children of Nineteenth-Century poetry, Parnassianism and symbolism ; bastards both, because, being aware of their mother, they knew not their fathers. Both operated with words as though words were simple entities, for both words were an accident, for neither a medium. Although both wrote at great length neither was able to give an account of language except in terms of metaphor.

Lamartine, De Vigny, and Hugo, different though they be in personality, must stand as representatives of French romanticism. It is, I think, generally admitted that all three were very different from their predecessors and that each was with imperfect aspiration reaching towards an effect which was roughly similar to the effects desired and frequently achieved by the Germans. Perhaps the problem they faced is really a dilemma ; at the same time that they made the attempt to use words only in their emotive senses they were under the necessity, first because they were Frenchmen and, second, because words are words, of using words with their referential function. Or, put in more extreme terms, at the same time that they wished to use words to give the effect of music, they were under the necessity, because words are words, of using them to give an account of a situation. The German poets of the

Storm and Stress and of the First and Second Romantic Schools had faced this problem. The Storm and Stress and some of the later writers had made the attempt to use words merely to evoke an emotion and had deprived them of their referents. Although the problem never was seen quite clearly in Germany, the undeniable needs of German imagination led German writers sometimes now, but more often again, to make shrewd use of the verbal referents of the fiction. The French were bound by their fiction, witness De Vigny's inability to free himself from legend and myth.

Perhaps the situation may be simplified by getting back again to the terms roughly accounted for in the first chapters—the word "imagination" for example. If there are objections to using this word as a pointer at the situation which I am about to describe, another word, a mathematical symbol, a musical tone, or any other kind of pointer may be used. The matter of terminology is here of importance only if the terms used serve to make clear the situation I have in mind. Imagination then, as I have been making the attempt to use it, refers to a state of mind in writer or reader which gets itself clarified or organized by the use of verbal symbols. These verbal symbols have various kinds of meaning. At the same time that they point at things, they stimulate or relieve feeling. It is in their referential rather than in their stimulating function that they have presented difficulties to critics and poets. None of us has been able to get quite clear about what we are to make of the sense of a poem. By an extension of the emotive function, the sense of a poem, i.e., the fiction with which it operates, the pseudo-statement which it presents, the account it offers of a situation, may, and frequently does, serve an emotive function in a very direct manner.

The romantic poets in France, to a lesser extent in Germany and England, permitted the account, the pseudo-statement, to run through the entire poem. De Vigny was unable to operate without his story and Lamartine, the musician, got the word "meditations" into the title of each of his books. For them thoughts were still central to the poetic experience. The verbal symbols

which expressed the thoughts were, it is true, no longer arranged so that they might be tested by other arrangements of verbal symbols, for throughout French romanticism they still present a consistent whole. "The Lake" is definitely "set". We have the feeling that we can trace the sequence of mood. We can give an account of the situation in terms of historic narrative. De Vigny was even more closely controlled by his plain sense. Moses and the wolf are consistent fictions as, in the Cartesian sense, they are not self-contradictory. The emotion arises out of the whole story, the whole story does not arise out of the emotion. A later generation was to make a discovery that if the ordering and communication of feeling is a function of poetry, then the story or fragments of story can be made to serve the purposes of that function, witness, for example, *La jeune Parc*.

Victor Hugo is a phenomenon. This very bad poet, who has written great poetry, has endeared himself to the French middle classes because of his verbal facility. No Frenchman before had had so many words which he could organize by internal consistency so that none would greatly disarrange the others and so that, if one takes his production as a whole, there would be so little meaning of any kind in the totality of the effect. Hugo's thought is a small stream flowing into a vast desert. He felt about ideas, and his ideas about feeling are theatrical in the sense that they convince only for the moment. The historical accounts he presents in the preface to his *Cromwell* are absurd, both in that they show a weakness in scholarship and a pompousness in the presentation of ideas. That a reviewer could have heralded Hugo as "brutal nature" is further illustration of the extent to which the French, tied by their words, regard nonsense as a natural force. The *Orientales* show Hugo exploiting the exotic in romanticism and attempting at the same time to bring romanticism as a force into politics. The *Feuilles d'Autumn* show Hugo as the Olympian attempting to penetrate the lives of the bourgeoisie. Both demonstrate the tyranny of plain sense over the imagination of the poets. Words set limit to action. The account is important, feeling comes out of the account. In the

Légendes des Siècles Hugo touched upon the greatest theme of all times. He almost realized the ideal which Wordsworth and Coleridge had set themselves in their *Lyrical Ballads*. By giving an account in ballad form of the historical events from the eras of pre-history until the present time, he might have been able to release the imagination of France. At times and in the mediaeval sections he succeeded. Yet throughout he was strangely bound by the exigencies of the theatre. The shortest poems are the most successful and the legends of the centuries, the point at which the French imagination of the romantic vintage touches most closely the heart of lyric poetry lies some thirty years beyond the limits which considerations of time, space and the patience of readers, have set to this account.

5

THE course of French imagination runs from Charlemagne to Thibault and the French would like to take it back, if Remy de Gourmont's *Aesthetics of the French Language* is to be taken as evidence, as far as Homer. But if we admit that the Greeks and the Romans had something to say, France itself came into being vaguely under Charlemagne, the German emperor, and more self-consciously under the pious Louis and his son. For the purpose of comparing imaginations, the evidence begins to accumulate with Charlemagne. From his time to ours two modalities have made themselves noticeable. First, a tendency to limit action in terms of propriety, to keep action, that is, within harmonious limits and to investigate the conjugations of propriety under unusual circumstances. What should a queen do if a knight rode to her rescue on a cart? This, in the Thirteenth Century, soon gave way to the complications of allegory which, in their turn were in effect the putting of meanings to words, meanings which were not easily subjected to the demands of plain sense, in terms of other words. Allegory, which soon came to be seen as a technique, but an imperfect technique, for the elucidation of the meanings of words, accompanied a complication of forms. The forms which were easier, more germane to French imagination, took

the place of allegories, and from the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries, France, stubbornly, and in despite of the intrusions of the Humanists, propagated its popular literature on a formal basis.

The Sixteenth Century brought the Manifestoes—still words were the limit, actions must be subjected to them. The Sixteenth Century tied its hands with new words. By climbing to the peak of Greek and Latin literature, it enlarged the horizons to such an extent that Malherbe, the schoolmaster, with hordes of country ladies and gentlemen in his ante-room, made the attempt to restrict both the actions of his followers and the words they used. In the meantime Descartes had exploited the system of proposition and deduction as these apply to practical experience, and had forged a powerful weapon which the English experimentalists were to use to great advantage. The application of this to literature through Corneille, the Academy, the Salonists, Boileau and Racine, was immediate. By the end of the Seventeenth Century this system of taking words for ideas had been carried as far as it was humanly possible to carry it. Inasmuch as words, in their referential functions, were thought to be tied to their references and to have no value except as accounts of a situation which situation could only be accounted for in terms of still other words found in the chronicle, or used by the physical scientists to explain their experiences, Voltaire turned to the analysis of historical sequence, and Montesquieu offered an account of the spirit of the laws.

Sainte-Beuve pointed out that French literature took a peculiar course in the Seventeenth Century. This was not, as he suggested, a distortion of French temperament, it was rather a reformation in terms of language. France had become sufficiently civilized to realize that words were of importance. It made the attempt to get words fixed fast to ideas. This system, because it was self-evident and gave comparatively slight opportunity to further elaboration of exploration, was disrupted by the Revolution and the reforms of Rousseau. In the meantime the reforms in England and Germany had been made available. France having explored its own systems to the limits, had no place to go. Moreover, its own system

gave it very little opportunity for further enlargement of its emotional sphere. It yearned towards the romantic, but was limited by its own tradition.

A question of capital interest arises in connection with this situation, namely, why it has taken so long for us to understand the fact that words, no less than cannons, are instruments for the magnification of the human ego. France gives us no answer. In France we find human expansion limited by two boundaries. In the early days by propriety and in the later days by consistency. The two amount to the same. That which is proper for Chrestien de Troye is similar to that which is consistent to Descartes, Corneille and the rest. Words limit the two: words in a pattern, each consistent with the other, and all contributing to an effect which can be or may be tested by experience, if it is not your experience it may be the experience of history but it must be veritable and verbal.

The strength of the French tradition lies in this, that the only way a French assertion can be controverted is by either a blow on the face or a tremor in the heart. Neither will stand in a court of law. The French schools of literature have had such great popularity in recent days because the propositions they present are logical in the senses in which I have been using that term. That is, they are consistent, they can be explained, not indeed with reference to fact, but with reference to the verbal systems which have given them being. But that too is their weakness. After Hugo came Gautier and with him were Baudelaire, Flaubert, the Parnassians and the others. They, it is true, understood little, but in recent days we have Valéry. Whether he knows or not—may the waves give answer.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GERMAN RETREAT

GERMAN literature in the Nineteenth Century is, in many senses, in retreat from the positions that had been conquered by the Storm and Stress. The German Storm and Stress was able to state the objectives towards which German literature had been struggling those many centuries. It was, however, unable to devise an adequate technique for the attainment of these objectives. The confusion between word and thing entered, and in place of an adequate analysis of linguistic functions, particularly of those functions which are directly concerned with the ordering and control of feeling, the writers of the late Eighteenth Century occupied themselves with an analysis of what they thought the words referred to. From feeling which was immediate in the poets and critics, German authors stepped directly to referent and left out of consideration the problem of language which communicates the referents and satisfies the need of feeling.

As we have seen, there was little doubt in their minds about what they wanted poetry to do. They wanted it to be sheer emotion. The poem was not words on paper, the words were not used for purposes of communication; words were the instruments by which the poet modulated, directed and stimulated his feelings. Poetry tended toward music, yet words being what they are it is impossible to use them without regard to their reference. Whatever may be the importance of the thing words point to, words nevertheless do point. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage for the verbal artist and it distinguishes his art from the art of the musician. The thing the words point to may or may not increase our knowledge, and the poet may or may not be concerned with communicating his thought at the same time that he is creating the experience of poetry. In one sense the entire problem of the

history of literature might be taken as an examination into how the sense, the pseudo-statement, the fictional account is made subordinate to, parallel with, or superior to the experience of literature. Although the sense frequently gets in the way of the poem, the poet has a much broader range and makes use of a more varied set of instruments than the musician who is restricted to tone. That no systematic attack should have been made on this problem until recently and that it should have escaped analysts like Lessing and Schiller, and that Coleridge should have been content with an aphorism despite the fact that it was felt by them and historically indirect attempts had been made at its solution, serves further to illustrate both the dangers of using language without an adequate control and the extraordinary power that words exercise in confusing both thought and feeling.

The Storm and Stress assumed that the needs of emotion could be satisfied by the employment of a set of general referents and by a disruption of rhetoric which reduced the structure of their compositions to a series of exclamations. The general references were their inheritance from the Eighteenth Century, from the linguistic reforms of Malherbe, from the speculations of Voltaire: "Liberty", "God", "equality", "nature", "Holy Nature", "the noble savage", terms, general in their reference, which served well enough for a few years. There was, to be sure, a great amount of going out into the country, of drawing parallels between the growth and death of plants, and the growth and death of love, and an increasingly precise observation of the details of things seen, felt or heard. Linguistic speculation was also indulged in, but this was in terms of the ideology taken over from the natural sciences.

Europeans have never been able to get quite clear of the question of origins. It is in a very definite sense our religion, for some of us maintain that our souls cannot be saved unless we believe that the world originated in a certain way. Linguistic speculations, and many of the speculations which had to do with poetry, were determined by the desire to get at the beginnings. The earthly paradise of the Middle Ages and the Golden Age of the

Platonists were, without any signs of embarrassment, substituted by the pseudo-ethnographers for the early chapters of Genesis. The speculations of Montesquieu, Lowth, Herder, and later Grimm, were an attempt to get at a beginning and show development. The physiology of speech was not misunderstood before the late Abbé Rousselot demonstrated it, but it was not even known to exist. The complex co-ordination of breath, vocal cords, tongue and lips, chambers of resonance, which make speech the most elaborate of gestures, was passed over entirely by these extraordinary men who were establishing the foundations of modern science and who, one might imagine, would have turned to linguistic responses with ardour. Having missed this, it is perhaps not surprising that they should have failed to appreciate the importance of the many semantic functions. Emotions were supposed to be connected with the things the words referred to. The First and Second Romantic Schools and later movements in and out of Germany were a search for the things that would create poetry.

I

ONE of the differences between the First and the Second German Romantic Schools, is the change from general fictions to national fictions, from naturalism and primitivism in the large to German nationalism and German primitivism. Herder's *Stimmen der Völker* is an international collection of folk-songs taken from all parts of the world. *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, with which Brentano and Arnim and their Heidelberg associates introduced the Second German Romantic School, is a collection of German folk-songs, national in function and intention. The Second Romantic School turned from general mediaevalism to German mediaevalism. The references were, to this extent, concentrated. Why this nationalism should have appeared as so powerful a force in the Nineteenth Century is a question which lies beyond the scope of these pages. It may be sufficient to point out that that century which was ushered in by the large international and humanitarian dreams of the rationalist, and which witnessed the establishment of democratic governments, was

the most intensely nationalistic that Europe has known. The idea of nation aroused emotions which were more intense than had been aroused earlier, and at the same time the word " nation " covered a much broader series of references than loyalty to clan or county or a single leader. Goethe maintained an Olympian aloofness while Napoleon's armies were ravaging Germany. Not so his younger contemporaries, who by poem and story attempted to unite the German people in opposition to the heroic conqueror.

Prussia at that time was getting itself together and preparing for its drive as leader of the German States. That apparent vagueness which, because we have no adequate linguistic notation, is thought to be attached to all feeling, was felt as a danger by the Prussian organizers. In order to combat it, they instituted German efficiency. Each object must be given its name, the German style developed that complexity which makes each phrase into an adjective preceding a noun which may be at the end of the sentence several hundred words away from the opening term. It was felt that in this way it might be possible to control a flowing and pervading emotionalism. Discipline became first a Prussian and then a national ideal. Since it was clearly impossible to grasp the reason for an action, the nation must be required to act without asking for a reason. This was necessary if the nation was to survive, and if the Prussians were to maintain their position of leadership. The Germans, for whom things had less appeal than emotions, acquiesced. The protests of Young Germany resulted in the migrations of the 40's. The intelligence and energy which the German nation lost, America won.

The problem is given tragic expression in Kleist's *Der Prinz von Homburg*. The protagonist disobeys an order and wins a battle, for his disobedience he is condemned to death. His judge offers him his life if he sincerely believes that the punishment is unjust, the protagonist accepts the sentence. The play is of some symbolic importance in the history of national imagination. The sympathies of the audience are strongly on the side of the hero and the processes by which the hero arrives at the conclusion that the winning of the battle is of no impor-

tance as compared with the crime of disobedience worked powerfully. Military moralists have their own, and no doubt sound, views on the question. But what is here to the point is that this direction of imagination should have become a direction taken by an entire nation. It is a part of the emotional response to nationalism and throws some light on the German uses of the functions of feeling and sense. Even Heine, Jew and therefore internationalist, exile and therefore anti-German, responded vividly to the term Fatherland. " Ich hatte einst ein schönes Vaterland . . . es war ein Traum."

The nationalism of the Second Romantic movement expressed itself in the novels and dramas of the leaders of this School. Arndt's, *Die Kronenwächter*, is the story of a mysterious band, guardians of the crown of Barbarossa in an impregnable castle and under the protection of supernatural forces. The Hapsburg Maximilian once saw the castle rising into the clouds, but it disappeared as he approached. The descendants of the Hohenstauffens are brought up in ignorance of their origin. Berthold, one of them, is transformed by Dr. Faustus. He assists Luther. Adventure, historical reference and a glorification of Germany's great past are mixed with a large share of the supernatural. The world of these Germans is a strange place. Events have hidden and secret meanings which are not to be confined to the verbal systems which the logicians have developed. It is not that the supernatural is as real or true as the actual ; but rather that the actual itself has meanings beyond those which it derives from being put into relation with a system, from being in accord with other actualities. The true is not that which persuades intelligence as the beautiful assuages feeling. These are not two systems, they are a single system. Intelligence, the verbal system of deduction and induction, derives its sanctions from feeling to arrive in the end at the Kantian " Ding an sich " or the Fichtean, Hegellian, Schopenhauerian modulations of the inner and unknowable kernel which the poets seek, now by this system of symbols or now by another system, to elucidate. Magic, the Blue Flower, German nationalism, transcendentalism, the microscopic precisions of Annetta von

Droste who could hear the grass grow or the exoticism of Platen are attempts at demonstration.

Kleist's *Kätchen von Heilbronn*, a drama based upon an English ballad, here becomes a mediaeval German *märchen*. Kätchen, supposed to be the daughter of an armourer, is shown in a dream the picture of her future husband, a count. She follows him like his shadow. He has also seen the picture of his future wife but mistakes Kunigunde the sorceress for her. Kunigunde persecutes Kätchen. Her good angel brings the count to her while she sleeps. They recognize each other. Kätchen turns out to be not the daughter of a poor man but the daughter of the emperor. She becomes Princess of Suabia. *Michael Kohlhaas* is a novel of the Sixteenth Century.

Kleist's *Hermannschlacht*, the first part of *Faust*, and Fichte's *Addresses to the German People* appeared within a short time of each other. The *Hermannschlacht*, a tragedy, is the struggle between the German people and the Roman nation, the former, politically weak and divided, the latter, strong and well organized. As the term Roman was a euphemism for France, the play was, in that period of French domination, suppressed. Fichte in his addresses appealed to the German people to become " that which we should be, Germans ".

> Think [he cried] that in my voice are mingled the voices of your ancestors from the grey past, who with their bodies dammed up the mighty flow of Rome toward world dominance, who shed their blood for the independence of the mountains, the plains and the streams which, in your hands have been given as booty to strangers. . . . We must create character for ourselves, for to have character and to be German mean, undoubtedly, the same thing.

Fairy tales were re-worked into novels, but they were German fairy tales. One of the avowed purposes of the Second Romantic School was to revive the German folk-song among the German people. Brentano spent several years with a guitar on his back wandering from town to town singing the songs he had either collected or re-written ; for folk-song in those days did not refer only to

a song that was transmitted by oral tradition but rather to any song that was *volkstümlich* which might be rendered roughly in English by the phrase, " in the manner of folk-song ".[1] In this sense many a poet wrote new songs which have become German folk-songs (an American parallel is the work of Foster). Thus " Ich hatt' einen Kameraden " became a determining factor in German imagination as the song of the comrade and loyal companion who was killed by a bullet which might have taken either friend. " Die Lorelei ", the song of the Rhine siren who, combing her golden hair, sings the fisherman to destruction, received its early form in the hands of Brentano and was later to be given its final version by Heine. These themes and many others dealing with what was or might have been popular superstition were re-worked by the poets and became popular tradition. Whether the song is a folk-song in the technical sense in which ethnographers now use that term, was of no importance so long as it was like a folk-song in the symbols it made use of and the feelings it aroused.

2

THE work of the Grimm brothers was part of this development. After taking note that many popular stories were very similar to stories found in mediaeval German heroic poetry, they developed a hypothesis which, while it greatly stimulated the development of ethnographic research, deflected ethnographic thought into directions which were not only fruitless but nefarious. Popular tales, they said, are abrasions of primitive religious German legend. The fairy tale, as Andrew Lang suggested, is the star dust of a myth. The repercussions of this point of view in all European thinking about epic poetry and primitive epic (note, for example, the work of Lachmann, one of the Grimms' students, and his followers) was to stimulate the collection of popular tales and to encourage the formulation of entertaining hypotheses which, when tested by common sense, are now seen to be amusing evidences of scholarly ingenuity misplaced. The hypo-

[1] " Popular " is, of course, the verbal English equivalent, but English usage attaches additional meanings to the symbol.

thesis, however, helped in directing attention to national tradition, and ever since periods of nationalism in Germany and elsewhere—even in China—are characterized by great interest in the collection and examination of popular tales.

Again, Grimm's pronouncement, " Das Volk dichtet," with its implication that popular poetry is created by the people as a whole rather than by an individual, touched upon the fact that literature is in function national imagination, but did not encourage scholars to examine with sufficient care the corollaries which must follow and which are in part suggested in these pages. The statement is characteristic of the Second Romantic School in that it raises again the fiction of the lower classes and primitive man who is supposed to be emotional and imaginative rather than reasonable and individual. The grammatical discoveries of the Grimm brothers and their formulation of the law of consonantal change in accepted syllables gave further stimulus to the study of development in language and directed the attention to words as physical entities. Words were treated as though they existed in space and were units. The problems of semantics were examined only in their historical progression. The statement that the word which now refers to father, once referred to the chief, was of greater importance in the Nineteenth Century than an analysis of the ways in which the word " father " carries at the present time a large number of senses, many of which are emotive. Even more important perhaps are the collections of fairy tales, the *Kinder- und Haus-märchen*, which the Grimm brothers made for posterity. These were collected with a truly scientific technique and are expressions of the romantic interest in the thinking and feeling and imagining of the illiterate populace.

3

GOETHE'S *Faust*, a re-working of a popular theme, a mixture of supernaturalism and realism, with its mediaeval atmosphere, and his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, his own account of his adventures with German writers, belong to this search for national and mediaeval subjects by which

the German feeling about God and the mysterious universe got attached to the German people themselves. But the *Westostlicher Diwan* marks the beginning of search in another direction: the exotic. Attempts that have been made to account for romantic exoticism have examined the relations between the subjects chosen and the life of the time when exoticism appeared. This relation does exist and tells us part of the story. No one can doubt, for example, that the first generation of the Nineteenth Century found itself greatly disappointed and distressed by the failure of the revolutionary hopes put before it by the French rationalists. The world in which all men were to be free and equal refused to make itself actual. The categories of reason were unable either to establish a social order which would satisfy men's needs or to cure an emotion. The success of Napoleon and the reactionary policy introduced by the Council of Vienna, which had its echoes in England, made even the discussion of these ideas dangerous if not fatal. As discussion of contemporary conditions was prohibited, Western Europe turned to a discussion of situations sufficiently distant to be safe. The Russians, interestingly enough, turned to that sharp realism which they later succeeded in perfecting.

The connection between exoticism and the general ideas about nature, primitive man and the like which the rationalists found themselves developing is also very close. As we tend to interpret all foreign cultures in terms of ideas which we bring from home and particularly as we have no vocabulary for examining a culture which may be radically different from that of Western Europe, it is perhaps not surprising that a great amount of satisfaction was generated by the discovery that the Chinese or the Persians or the Indians had a culture and a literature which could be made to fit in with the general ideas with which this first generation had been educated. The Mongolian Khans, the Hindu slaves, the repetitions of the Persian ghasel, were so different from anything that Europe had that they appeared to be a demonstration of the thing which Europe had persuaded itself it needed. That the life of the Mongol and the Persian is very different from the picture these early romantics made of it is obvious. But the satisfac-

tion which they derived from it is to be explained by the tinting of these pictures with the general ideas of the preceding generation.

Perhaps more important than either of these considerations is the need which was felt, but very badly understood, to break through the rigid systems which the French were successfully imposing upon imagination. The exoticism in Germany of the decades 1810 to 1830 and following is functionally not unlike the tendencies we have seen expressing themselves in German nationalism and transcendentalism. But the analysis of these similarities leads to difficulties. That a word like " Fatherland " does arouse powerful feeling is quite clear and that the word " cosmopolite " arouses emotions of a different order is also clear, but an analysis either of the things which these words point to, or of the nature of the emotions, is for various reasons difficult. He who ventures to inquire why we should love our country or why we should be " good " is too often accused of making the inquiry out of a desire (*vide*, perhaps, a " feeling ") to be unpatriotic or to be " bad ". Yet, inasmuch as patriotism of the fanatical type which has of recent years been so much exploited was unknown in earlier times and inasmuch as patriotism is more ardently attached to national language than any of the other social emotions, the doubt may be permitted to enter that the term is more closely associated with feelings than with thoughts. Thus German nationalism, exoticism and transcendentalism may be connected as three sets of symbols which perform similar functions. When Fichte announced that the German people alone have in them the seeds of human perfectability and when Bettina Brentano, Clemens' charming sister, several decades later wrote, " that which I see and understand are only echoes of my happiness " or " nature " —by which she referred to rocks and fields, wind, sun, rain and flowers—" has spirit and life " she was satisfying the emotions in a way not dissimilar to the way Fichte and the nationalists had attempted earlier. So, too, the exoticism of Goethe's *Diwan*, or Rückert's *Weisheit der Brahmanen* or Platen's *Ghaselen*. The set of symbols embraced by the terms " Fatherland ", " nature ", and " the Orient "

were attempts to make use of ideas, pictures or sensations for the satisfying of emotion. The fact of importance is not that these referents were used, but that they were taken as being in themselves and independently of the words adequate as poetic media.

4

THE linguistic speculations of the Second Romantic School are, except for the technical contributions of the Grimm brothers, insignificant. Recognition was given to the fact that poetry cannot be adequately stimulated or expressed by merely abstract symbols. More powerful medicine was discovered in the symbols of nationalism, " nature " and the far away. Ideas disappeared, a simplicist technique was adopted :

> Du bist die Ruh,
> Der Friede mild
> Die Sehnsucht du,
> Und was sie stillt.

The referent of " Du " could be anything from God to the " Ding an such ". Eichendorff recognized that a song sleeps in all things if you can only find the right word. Or Rückert again remembers his lost youth :

> Aus der Jugendzeit, Aus der Jugendzeit
> klingt ein Lied mir immerdar.
> O wie liegt so weit, o wie liegt so weit,
> was mein einst war !

Nothing could be more charming. Childhood, the opening of blossoms, youth, wandering into the " green world " leaving behind the sorrows and joys of the night before. . . . Nothing could be more futile !

Those who had communications to make on matters of importance were making them even then with reference to social organization, and science. For these were the subjects about which the emotions of the leaders were in a state of agitation. At this time in Germany, as Heine acrimoniously pointed out, there seemed to be no need for poetry. That large part of the people which was particularly concerned with the task of earning a living, drinking

beer and drowsing in the chimney corner was given opportunity by the well-organized government, ever watchful of publications which might arouse its public to other and, as Young Germany thought, nobler aims, to exercise its lethargic instincts. This should not be taken to mean that a large number of very fine short lyrics and highly entertaining novels and dramas were not being written at this time. They were being written; but as a kind of accident. Poetry which for so long had been tied to the tails of idea, still maintained its sycophancy. Poems were still about something, and the very large number of banal compositions produced by the Second Romantic School shows that the poets, when they succeeded, succeeded in despite of their aims, rather than because of them. To assert that the quietness and banality of the majority of German writers at this time is due to the fact that they had nothing to say, that is, that there were no emotions available amongst the German people which needed verbal symbols for their alleviation, is to deny the obvious facts of human experience. What did occur was that although Eichendorff frequently and Rückert sometimes found the symbols which could alleviate the emotions, discovered the magic word, they found it as they thought in things rather than in hearts. Quietude is not necessarily the highest happiness; and the poets who sang of quietness thus declared their own bankruptcy. They failed to catch the dynamic balance, the creative impact of emotion upon emotion. Despite the fact that they produced some of the most lovely German lyrics, they failed to create a great German poetry. Yet this was the time of all others when greatness might have been expected. The Germany which conquered France in 1870 and all but conquered the world in 1917 was getting itself in order. Readjustments of gigantic kinds were being undertaken. Kleist had prefigured Bismarck, yet of this the poets knew nothing. Had they known, it is possible that modern Germany would not have arisen, for had they been able to tap and redirect the emotions which were thus concentrated, modern Germany could not have emerged.

5

THE direction which German phantasy took from the days of Charlemagne to about 1830, with the rise of Young Germany, are seen to have been towards a definite objective which was never achieved. Words and things have constantly been confused and neither the great achievements of the Middle Ages, nor the great storm of the Reformation were able to clarify this confusion. Words and their power have been ignored, the attention has been directed towards things and the mysterious ways in which things refuse to keep themselves within the limits which are placed upon them by verbal systems. Wolfram was not telling the story of the best knight in the world, he was telling the story of the ways in which an emotion gets itself distracted and deflected by carnal adventure. The German troubadours were less concerned than their French colleagues with the distinctions between courtly and vulgar love. For them the emotion was in itself sufficient. As the common people used words with less reference to propriety, that is, with less reference to a verbal system than their courtly contemporaries, the language of the common people was more useful to the German troubadours than the language of the court. The volkslieder of the Fourteenth Century were again more particularly modulation of feeling than they were accounts of heroic action.

At least twice the German people have made a dramatic decision that the rights of feeling were superior to the rights of common sense. The reforms of Luther in the Sixteenth Century and those of the Storm and Stress in the Eighteenth were attempts to make this decision explicit. Luther, by his insistence that each man is a church in himself, that each man must approach God and the religious literature independently, and independently derive whatever emotions can be derived from them, broke with the reasonable and explicit systems which the Church had established. But in breaking with these he demolished a great deal more. The Church had established an ethical system. If the individual did not know the difference between right and wrong, the priest would explain. The

exegetes had fixed the emotions which the worshipper must derive from religion. The individual approach advocated by Luther demolished both, and freed ethics and feeling in a way which Luther, the least objective of men and thus the least capable of anticipating the behaviour of his fellows, could not control. The great importance of religion, that is of emotions attached to the Bible and its contents, and the sudden freedom which the Lutheran manifestoes granted to individuals, resulted in the Sixteenth Century in the production of a small number of exquisite religious lyrics. The ethical morass which the Reformation created and the politicians exploited resulted in the disastrous Thirty Years War. That all German literature was not destroyed at this time is surprising. It is less surprising that many individuals who succeeded in maintaining themselves should have turned to foreign models for support.

The bankruptcy which followed upon the War lasted well into the Eighteenth Century. The needs of feeling were still powerful. The world still remained mysterious, and the two schools of writers which appeared at this moment attempted severally to identify words and things, thus creating a rigid system in which names would predominate ; and by means of action in the English fashion, particularly action in the infinite according to the Miltonic model, to liberate feeling. As has been seen, both the activists and the logomants were operating with general terms. The Anglophiles, deriving strength from the inspiration of Rousseau, were more inclined than their opponents to operate with individual experiences and were more aware than their opponents of the fact that " The truth of poetry is in inner truth " which, whether or not it justifies itself, is not to be tested by a verbal system. From their experiments and speculations were derived the theories of the Storm and Stress. The emotions which the Storm and Stress wished to introduce into poetry were more violent than the general public could stand and because the relation between words and meaning were not clear, the Storm and Stress failed in technique rather than in apprehension.

The First and Second Romantic Schools were schools

of exploration. The first sought the magic Blue Flower in poetry and the thing in itself in philosophy. The second sought the magic word which sleeps in all things in poetry ; and in philosophy it sought nature, or the will to power, or some similar fiction. In the meantime a mighty race of men, merchants and politicians, succeeded in modulating the emotions which the poets sought but failed to find. A new Germany arose which exiled the greatest poet of the Nineteenth Century, Heine, and succeeded, by developing the kinds of emotion which Kleist had adumbrated, in creating a well-disciplined militaristic and socialistic state.

The decay of poetry in the Nineteenth Century is none the less striking because of the fact that some half-dozen poets there were of extraordinary power. The existence of a Heine, a Browning, a Leopardi, or a Baudelaire, and their obvious utter futility in their attempts to deal effectively with the general public surrounding them, are phenomena which should give pause to the historian of literature. The effectiveness with which various organs have, in late years, been able to control and direct popular emotions is evidence that these emotions exist. The literati have missed their opportunity. Their search for subjects, their attempts in the romantic period to set themselves up as priests and thus teachers, and their inability to analyse their own craft and thus to use words effectively as instruments of the imagination, have relegated them to members of a small and precious cult. Germany came nearer to success than either France or England, but Germany turned aside. The world remained strange to the poets, though it was very real to the politicians. God worked in mysterious ways, the scientists by a piling up of word upon word and fact upon fact, attempted to restrain Him within their voluminous libraries. The thing in itself remained undiscovered and the magic word when it was uttered was incidental.

G. THE UNITED STATES

CHAPTER XIX

GOD, THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

CYNICS, taking note that European culture is in imminent danger of destruction, have ventured the prediction that during the Dark Ages which must ensue America will occupy the position of a new Byzantium, conservative, wealthy, and corrupt. Whether or not this prediction is warranted, it is probable that the deep blue sea which separates the land of the free and the home of the brave from Europe and Asia will continue for some time to come to preserve the kind of freedom America enjoys and the kind of bravery of which it boasts. Any observer who has spent enough time on the American continent to overcome his wonder at the size of the land, its buildings and its fortunes, must be impressed by several factors in the American cultural complex which, as they appear to respond to no immediate physical need, must be attributed to qualities of the American imagination ; and as they are difficult to explain in terms of the actual present situation must be derived from conditions in the past.

Americans appear to be in two states of mind at the same time. University professors do their best to dress and talk like prosperous business men and the business men, having purchased honorary degrees from needy universities, explain that their illiteracy is no deterrent to success, that literacy would have kept them from reaching their present position ; and innocuous Englishmen who have written a book or two which has caught the attention of the public are paid fees which stagger their imaginations for explaining contemporary culture to American audiences. At the same time that the practical man of affairs condescends towards the literate minority, the United States has the largest universities in the world. Registrations of 20 to 30 thousand students a year are not

unusual in the Middle West. An exaggerated respect for literacy goes together with a profound suspicion of the literate individual.

But this peculiar attitude towards literacy goes beyond belles-lettres and historical speculation. No people takes more delight in fact-finding commissions than the American. But when the report is published and discussed in the press, it is forgotten. Not only did a private learned foundation recently expend a large sum to investigate the sexual preferences of American womanhood, but one national government, itself having demonstrated that its predecessor was openly corrupt, shelved the report and there was no agitation amongst the American citizens that the abuses be rectified or the criminals punished. Knowing the facts consists in this country of putting words to an evil, and once the words are attached, the evil is overlooked. It is not that the Americans are incapable of action, they are incapable of programmatic and united action.

The American people are gripped by an emotional unease. They delight in seeing their shortcomings exposed by impertinent continental lecturers or by fact-finders or by cinemas. They project this emotionalism in terms of the fictions of the Eighteenth Century—" nature, liberty, democracy " as well as the fictions imported by the Calvinists who established the forms through which American imagination still functions : " God and the devil."

The imminence of God and the devil is manifested by moral earnestness. Many a middle western village has spent the night under arms ready to repulse the attack of the Pope of Rome and his cohorts who, it was supposed, had the intention of establishing the reign of the anti-Christ in the prairies of Iowa. At other times the devil works through the Jews or the negroes or the Yellow Peril. In recent years his organization has been the Communist Party. Americans show an almost pathological excitement about matters of this kind. In many states membership in an organization which has the purpose " of changing the laws or government of this country " is an offence punishable by fine and imprisonment. A professor of economics suffered acute professional embarrass-

ment when it was lightly remarked that his sister was a Radical. An expression of surprise that municipalities should permit their government to fall into the hands of gangsters who bring them into such bankruptcy that they are unable to pay for their police protection, or advocacy of any general reform of public utilities or of child labour may bring the charge of communism, and with it, always, the charges of atheism and sexual promiscuity.

God is no less imminent. The American joy in nature is a complex which is worthy of more attention than even Professor Foerster has given it. Visitors in any community are rushed to innumerable landscapes, seascapes or mountain views at a speed never less than 50 miles an hour. The indigenes not only take pride in these views but also and undoubtedly " rejoice in nature ". When they go back to it they do so in a big way, past gigantic cigarette hoardings and pertinent exhortations at dangerous points to " Prepare to meet your God ".

This state of mind, which has been insisted upon at such length because it differs in several respects from the state of mind which Americans think they enjoy, as well as from the state of mind common in Europe, may, because of its confusions, be attributed to a state of imagination, closely itself associated with an emotional condition. The factors which have determined it may be listed briefly as follows : The tone of American imagination was set by a conflict between several cultural factors. First, the fanatic Puritan, emigrant from the English middle classes, suffering from a powerful religious emotion which expressed itself in terms of God and the Devil. The referents of these terms were individuals of great power : the one representing the actions of which the Puritans approved and the other actions which they deplored. This minority was convinced that a stake in the government was secured by property rights. The Puritans were very early brought into conflict with an overwhelming number of immigrants from the lower classes who came as indentured servants or exiles. The riff-raff was numerous, boisterous and illiterate. On the other side of the Puritans was the Government in England, at first content to get rid of this troublesome crew and

later envious of American prosperity. Thus the great problems before the colonists were the problems of government and in these problems the terms " freedom, liberty, right, sovereignty " were of the first importance. The referents to these terms varied according to the user. They are still effective releases to the imagination and their referents continue to be vague. The imminence of God began to get itself expressed in the Eighteenth Century in terms of nature worship under the influence of the Deists and Rousseau, and at a time when these speculations close blossomed into belles-lettres under the hand of Bryant. But a more detailed examination is in order.

I

THE spectacle of imagination in America before 1830 has depressed all who have made the attempt to deal with it. Even the patriotic critics sigh with evident relief when they come to a discussion of the American poets of early Romanticism, for it was Romanticism which called the attention of American men of letters, always a small and apologetic band, to the possibilities for imagination on the new continent. Yet, from the point of view of the postulates which I have attempted to outline, the spectacle of American imagination before 1830, presents questions of some importance. What, under the circumstances, were the English, Dutch, Germans, French, and Scotch-Irish who came to this country in the early and late Seventeenth Century imagining? And how did whatever they were imagining get changed by the new conditions under which they were living?

The first fact which emerges from a preliminary glance at the situation is that, for reasons which are both honourable and dishonourable, it was the English group which got itself fixed in America. It was the English group which was vocal, and it was from the conditions existing in the English settlement that modern America has emerged. The events which occurred between the landing of the colonists in Virginia and Massachussets and the Jacksonian democratic revolution of the 1840's have fixed the qualities of American imagination to an extent that the events which occurred in Europe at the same time did not.

Europe is still capable of change. It can still call up vistas and possibilities inconceivable in America. This must not be taken to mean that the actual social organization is impervious to new technical experiments. But the technical changes which have been made for some two hundred years have been towards the achievement of a definite purpose, a purpose which was established in the earliest days and which can be altered only by a cataclysm.

Both Americans and their interpreters like to think of the United States as of a new country. This notion, both an apology and a boast, is misleading. The country is new, but its inhabitants are not. The immigrants were, it is true, a set of men and women who were unable to get on satisfactorily in their own countries. They liked to think of themselves as a band " chosen by God ". " God sifted a whole nation that He might send choice grain over to this wilderness ", said one of the seeds itself. Marston, in 1605, probably recorded the general feeling in England in Seagull's speech, " I tell thee, gold is more plentiful than copper is with us. . . . There we shall have no more law than conscience and not too much of either." To conclude from these statements that the settlers of America were establishing a new civilization is to go beyond the limits of evidence. In so far as the men and women who came there were not pleased with conditions in their own countries and sought to better themselves, they were new. In so far, too, as a very large number, probably the majority of the inhabitants, were in America less limited by the oppressions of the upper classes, their influence served to create a new kind of society. Nevertheless, the men and women who were articulate in the early days of America represent much more nearly the Old English temperament than a new English temperament. They transplanted English institutions and because they belonged to the Puritan middle classes they succeeded in anticipating by a score of years developments in England.

The situation would appear to be somewhat as follows. A very large continent was taken over by a small number of middle-class Englishmen. As the country was large, it was possible for the English to indulge their propensi-

ties for action in all possible directions at the same time. Salem and Boston, later Connecticut, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, each developed its own type of government which responded to the needs of the imagination of the inhabitants. At the same time Virginia, which had not been settled by cavalier gentlemen with curly locks, as is sometimes asserted, but by solid London tradesmen, was working out its particular and historically peculiar destiny. Each of these communities differs from the other in very important respects. They are all similar, however, in that they are English, and illustrate aspects of English middle-class imagination.

2

THIS imagination exercised itself, wherever it got recorded, on problems of statecraft. The literature of America before 1830 is dull because the question of what kind of a state is to be established is no longer, and I venture to use the term literally, a burning question. America has chosen; but if we are to understand a very important phase of English thought it is necessary to survey briefly the political terms which the imaginations of these immigrants used. If the great debate which took place just before and just after the Revolution be read not in terms of "What is government? Sovereignty? Natural rights? Primitive contract?"—not, that is, regarding these fictions and metaphors as referring to something that exists in the same way as Mt. Washington; but, if the issues of this debate be regarded as attempts of the imagination to establish a City of God, or a Platonic state, the functions and direction of American imagination will become clear.

The group which was most vocal in this debate was the group in which the imagination was the least satisfied. This may be due either to the fact that the kind of state this group had in mind was more clearly imagined before it left England, or to the fact that the emotional demands of the group were intransigent, or finally to the fact that the group was less homogeneous.

It should not be surprising that the Puritans of New England were the most vocal of all America. It was they

who first established the American printing press at the time when a governor of Virginia was thanking God that Virginia had none because printing and education brought atheism into the world. "I thank God", wrote the royalist Governor, Sir William Berkeley, in 1671 concerning the condition of Virginia, "there are no free schools, nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience and heresy and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both." It was the Puritans who first established schools in the natural attempt to produce other Puritan ministers who would think exactly the same things that their fathers had thought. Harvard is the child of this phantasy.

But the Puritan programme was not carried out with the ease which its formulators had hoped for it. A serious error was made in the very beginning. As these gentlemen were honourable members of the middle class, property for them became a qualification for participation in government. In America there was infinitely more property than men. Consequently, although the upper classes, that is men of small education and small position in England, attempted to keep power in their own hands, they were not only outnumbered by the riff-raff, which had in one way or another acquired property, but they were forced by their own principles to give some recognition to it. The leaders objurgated it, but those just beneath the leaders, who hoped sometime to become leaders, toyed with it, and at the time when these speculations close, the riff-raff succeeded in asserting itself. Nor must it be forgotten in going through the expressions of the American Puritans that only the leaders in America were literate, and that the number of these, compared either to the population or the size of the country was very small.

The origins of this riff-raff are diverse. Thousands of them came over as indentured servants. Having served their term, they were enabled to take up land. But many of them did not serve their terms. Beyond the fringe of settlements lay the wilderness where land was to be had

for the taking. These people and their descendants, whose blood flows in most Americans, were even at the best accounts an unwholesome crew. England was glad to get rid of them. Some few of them, it is true, were persons of standing who had fallen into misfortune. But the rest, freed from even those minor inhibitions which keep people upright in a settled community, fell into deplorable habits of living. A New England lady, Madame Knight, whose orthography might be improved, gives an account of the rude amenities of our American forefathers in the northern part of the Colonies, and Colonel Byrd describes those of North Carolina, which he refers to as lubber land. The men, he says, impose all the work upon the poor women, " make their wives rise out of their beds early in the morning, at the same time that they lie and snore, till the sun has run one-third of his course and dispersed all the unwholesome damps ". Plenty and a warm sun, he concludes, confirm a natural disposition to laziness.

The inhabitants of lubber land were in the majority. Their property gave them a right to be heard in councils of state. They kept the magistrates in a state of jitters and were no doubt influential in engendering among the magistrates the opinion that if the upper classes were to maintain their power, the laws must be given that excessive rigidity which arouses the wonder and horror of later day Americans. The question of minority rights has been in the foreground in America since the landing of the first colonists. The minority which demanded protection then, as it does to-day, is the minority which has accumulated larger holdings, on the average, than the majority, each with its small property. At various times during the last 300 years this minority has been swept out of power. Before the American Revolution, when it relied upon its traditional rights, it remained loyal to England and thousands were driven out of the country to have their place taken in part by those who remained or by new men of wealth who had profited from the disruption. Again in the 1840's the Jacksonian revolution marked the rise to power of the majority from lubber land and in the Civil War the southern planters, who represent the last and

decadent community of these upper classes, found themselves overwhelmed by the mercantile north.

The dominance of this majority and its successive victories has left its marks on imaginative writing in America, as well as upon many American institutions which were created to satisfy the needs of imagination. These men were fighting for their very existence against a mob of illiterate small farmers who had little respect for the law and whose new affluence—for to them the possession of land was a symbol which they interpreted not in terms of actual value, but in terms of the comparative importance it would have given them had they possessed the same wealth in England—engendered arrogance against their more literate and vocal masters. Arbitrary proclamations by the governing classes who held the theoretical power were replied to by arbitrary gestures on the part of the illiterates. At a very early date America developed this dichotomy which Americans themselves are at a loss to understand: namely an excessive pleasure in the making of laws and an excessive disrespect for the laws once made. At the same time that national and state congresses, country councils and city aldermen, assisted by national and state boards (the Inter-State Commerce Commission) and privately appointed dictators (Hayes for Hollywood and Landis for baseball) undertake to regulate the most minute details of personal conduct, the governor of one of the great states not only condones but encourages lynching and mob violence and the farmers of the middle west violently attack a sheriff in the performance of his duty.

Lynching and violence in America are not to be explained by a twitching of the nerves, exasperation against the inefficiency of the local police. They are a much more complex phenomenon. In their crudest and simplest form they are reminiscent of the old struggle between lubber land and Boston, between the illiterate and dumb land-owning majority and the literate wealth-owning minority which made the laws. When Thomas Jefferson substituted the terms " life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness " for Locke's " life, liberty, and property ", the substitution was a symbolic and profoundly significant compromise. There was property and to spare in

America. But happiness was being pursued, particularly the happiness that would give both groups a sense of equilibrium : that would keep the literate governors who had contractual control of the government by charter grant and the like in power ; and would at the same time keep lubber land quiet. " How can you have government if there is no one to govern," cries one of them in despair at the increasing popularity of democratic institutions.

But the struggle in the American temperament between logomancy and lawlessness goes deeper. Words are only words but action is a deed. Words keep rascals in power. Albion is perfidious. We have never lost a war and never won a treaty.

The effects of this split appear in unexpected places. Professor Erskine once wrote a brilliant essay to demonstrate that his countrymen make immorality an equivalent of intelligence. Intelligence is not deplored, it is verbalism that is under suspicion. From the earliest times, magistrates whose moral earnestness is undoubted but whose rectitude was not always certain led the American people by sophistries. The minority, filled with a divine enthusiasm and conscious of the imminence of God, expressed itself in terms which were highly metaphorical and mistook the metaphors for accounts of a situation. The lubbers knew that something was wrong, resented this verbal exploitation but, having accepted the premises which justified it, were unable to refute the statements . . . unable or too timid, for refutation in those days meant, as it still does, ostracism. Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams are classic examples. If, in America, " money talks " it does so as a protest against the verbosity of the governing classes.

Both the lubbers and the squires in America were Protestants, children of the reform. Whether small squires of northern and central England, or unfortunates picked up in the streets of the cities sent out as indentured servants, they had accepted the increased possibilities of action presented to them by the destruction of the Church with its mellowed ethical system. They were guided by a light within. Each man approached God as an individual and approached Him directly. God took an

intimate and personal interest in each of His children. Winthrop of Boston asserted: "Whatsoever sentence a magistrate gives, the judgement is the Lord's, though He do it not by any rule prescribed by civil authority." Cotton Mather records:

> A strange and memorable thing. After outpourings of prayer, with the utmost fervour and fasting, there appeared an Angel, whose face shone like the noonday sun. His features were as those of a man, and beardless; his head was encircled by a splendid tiara; on his shoulders were wings; his garments were white and shining; his robe reached to his ankles; and about his loins was a belt not unlike the girdles of the peoples of the East. And this Angel said that he was sent by the Lord Jesus to bear a clear answer to the prayers of a certain youth (i.e. Mather himself), and to bear back his words in reply. Many things this Angel said which it is not fit should be set down here. But among other things not to be forgotten he declared that the fate of this youth should be to find full expression for what in him was best; . . . And in particular this Angel spoke of the influence his branches should have, and of the books this youth should write and publish, not only in America but in Europe. And he added certain special prophecies of the great works this youth should do for the Church of Christ in the revolutions that are now at hand. Lord Jesus! What is the meaning of this marvel? From the wiles of the Devil, I beseech thee, deliver and defend Thy most unworthy servant.

Thus each deed is divinely conditioned. God propels us to action. He has His finger on each one of us. The violence of the mob is a divine afflatus. The differences of opinion between the lubbers and the progenitors of the Boston Brahmins is due in the first instance not to economic differences but to linguistic differences: the comparative literacy of the squires who by words attempted to redress the balance as opposed to the illiteracy of the lubbers. Whereas the words by which the squires lived were the words of God, the acts of the lubbers were the propulsions of God. Under these conditions it is not surprising that the imagination of early America, in so far as it got itself expressed in words, i.e., writing, should have been preoccupied with questions of government.

3

Belles-lettres, when they appear, are the infants of men who lived in the tradition of the minority upper classes. These men naturally turned to England for their model and as their training is not particularly broad, they were frequently inept in the choices they made. But whilst the early poets and novelists, Irving, Bryant, and Cooper, are delighted by their English reception, they are apologetic in America for their delight. Their interest in English models and institutions is the tradition of their class. Their apology for this interest is their deference to the majority. Cooper discovered American material by accident, Whitman, by an act of will due to his love for the common man. The marks of this dichotomy run through all American writing down to the present. If evidence is needed, one has only to consult the works of Mr. Mencken, who thinks that it is possible to be an American and still be intelligent.

This division produced still other effects. The language which was spoken soon took a notably different course from that which was maintained by the written language. The situation would be the same to-day if we took thousands of Cockneys, relieved them of the need of attending school and put over them a hundred or so dissenting ministers, who themselves are not always men of the highest education. At all times there seems to be a close connection between the spoken language and a vital literature except in those countries, China for example, where the written word retains its magical functions. This was not as immediately the case in Colonial America as it is in China. The dissenting ministers, who exhorted their flocks to do good deeds although they were convinced that no matter how many good deeds were done, only the elect would be saved, found themselves speaking a language which must have been very different from the current dialect. Books were expensive and hard to come by, and the interests of the ministers were themselves excessively limited. Those who were remarked upon as great readers appear to have spent much more time in the reading of tracts, objections, replies to objections and

replies to replies refuted, the ephemera of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' religious controversies, than they did in reading the classics. The point is of some importance in grasping the direction and quality of the imagination. Knowledge of the law was not necessary to magistrates whose authority was the Bible.

Nor was the situation improved with the passing of years. The increase amongst the lower classes was disproportionate to the emigration into the upper classes. If orthography is a test, literacy declined rapidly. The vast and encyclopedic knowledge of a Milton who came from the same classes which produced the American upper classes in the Colonial days was unknown here. It is indeed probable that had Milton been in America he would have encountered conditions intolerable to him. His ideas about freedom of the press, for example, would have been unpopular in any American community, and although progress has been made in the matter of divorce, his views would have brought about exile or worse. Between Milton and these fathers of a nation there were points of similarity, particularly their stubborn conviction that they were at all times the mouthpieces of God.

4

A BRIEF examination of the imaginative processes in these American communities will discover to us a peculiar kind of emotionalism which is different from emotionalism elsewhere because it was less checked, either by the physical conditions of life or by the co-existence of other kinds of emotional activity. It may be worth while here to enumerate some of the elements in this emotionalism and to account briefly for the fictions by means of which imagination in Colonial America got itself expressed. The difficulties in doing this, however, are clear.

Due to the dichotomy mentioned above, dispassionate analysis of American minds or manners is taken by Americans as an unfriendly and unwarranted rejection of " the American point of view ". Moreover many of the fictions which were operative in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries have been supplied in the Nineteenth with new references. Liberty, observed one gen-

tleman, is of two kinds, natural liberty, or liberty to do evil, and civil liberty, which is liberty to do good. It is the freedom to be restrained.

Records from which the imaginative world constructed by the Fathers of America lived are, for the most part, confined to the compositions of the Puritan divines of the north-eastern states. These were a peculiar group of men, freed from the control of their peers, and thus in a position to give their verbal phantasy full play. Amongst them there were, as we shall see, diversities of opinion and even when taken as a group they may not have been representative of the American populace of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. Where their world astonishes us, the world of the illiterate Americans would probably confound us.

The vocal Americans in those centuries were Protestants. They derived either directly or indirectly from Calvin, but out of Calvinism they succeeded in building many sects. It is true that Calvinism, as it came to be practised in those years, was a committee of presbyters, intimately associated with God, which directed the civil and spiritual affairs of the community. Behind this, however, lay the classic dogma of the reform, Luther's theory, that every man is his own church, or more generally that every man must approach the record of God's will in his own way. This individualism resulted in the proliferation of sects in England and America and expressed itself in two extreme forms. One the rationalism of Arminianism, later Unitarianism, and the other an animism which saw in every event and mood the activities of God, His angels, the devil and his ministers. Taking into consideration the state of mind of the ministers who attempted to explain their ideas and the general low level of the populace as a whole, it is clear that the animistic point of view (whatever its allegorical implications may have been) was likely to be in the ascendant.

God, for this gentry, was the master colonist who took an intimate interest, not only in the social acts of His subordinates, but in their very thoughts. He was present in all things and He had sent this band, which He had chosen from all Europe, to reconquer for Him North America

which had been usurped by Satan and his cohorts. The fact that they were there proved that they had been chosen and indeed, if one accepts this referent of the word God, namely: an entity with human passions and the very human desire to increase his territories, combined with omnipotence except against Satan, the logic of the Puritan divines is unassailable. The point was argued by Samuel Sewall in his *Phaenomena Quaedam Apocalyptica* in which he " essayed to prove that America was to be the final ' rendezvous of God and Magog ' ". Cotton Mather, in his *Wonders of the Invisible World*, cried when under attack, that " an Army of Devils is horribly broke in upon the place which is the *Centre*, and after a sort, the First-born of our *English Settlements* ". In the *Magnalia* we read a passage strangely reminiscent of Herodotus translated into Christian terms. Whereas Herodotus was concerned lest the great deeds done by the Greeks should be forgotten, Mather hopes that " the memory of the great things done for us by our God may not be lost, and that the story of the circumstances attending the foundation and formation of this country and of its preservation hitherto may be impartially handed unto posterity ". The Devil, Mather believed, had reigned in America without any control, and he was enraged by the Christian kingdom. " I believe that never were more satanical devices used for the unsettling of any people under the sun than what have been here employ'd for the extirpation of the vine which God has here planted." The opposition which the lubbers from time to time organized against the power of the divines was regarded as the Devil's conspiracy to get back the land. He said, " Behold ! Sinners ! the very devils are walking about our streets with lengthened chains, making a dreadful noise in our ears and Brimestone even without a metaphour is making a hellish and horrid stench in our nostrils." Some time it may be possible to analyse hysterias of this kind and their effects upon social organization. For Mather the referents of the words were as precise as the referents of other words he used in common conversation. Yet to-day there are few who will not recognize these terms as fictions, the product of an imagination describing a world in which not

only Mather but the largest part of his contemporaries lived. Nor has the imminence of the devil and his reality faded from the consciousness of later Americans, as is made clear when we remember that communist Russia was recently, and Germany was some twenty years ago, described as the Kingdom of Satan in the largest American newspaper.

The magistrates and Puritan divines whose association was always close, though not always without moments of severe strain, inhabited a world of demons and angels. The state of mind which found release in symbols of this kind may be seen to have expressed itself in other symbols, if for a moment we accept the fact that these devils were hallucinations and that the account is a pseudo-statement satisfying the mental and emotional needs of the men who offered it. Yet because we can now recognize it as hallucinatory, and because its proliferation produced an infection which reached one crisis in the persecution of the witches at Salem, it offers startling evidence of the ways in which verbal symbols produce crises of considerable seriousness. For if witchcraft exists only in the imagination, the question which presents itself to the student of the imagination is not only by what evidence could sober and serious men have come to these absurd conclusions, but rather what was the state of mind which found satisfaction in these imaginative structures? In our survey of the various crises which produced the French rationalism of the Seventeenth Century, the attempt, that is, to make a pattern of words in which the literal references will be consistent with each other, we have seen that French rationalism itself is a product of an imaginative need. The system instituted by Calvin, although it betrays the rationalist programmatic activity of a Frenchman was still Hebraic and dualistic. For in making a reasonable pattern much depends on the postulates, on those truths which are accepted as self-evident and not subject to demonstration. These postulates themselves, whatever ultimate explanation may be found for them, reside in the imagination, that is in the mental and emotional state of the individual who accepts them. The vivid actuality with which the demons were invested, the hellish

and horrid stench which the brimstone made in Mather's nostrils and made *without metaphor* may well be evidence which helps to explain the dualism in Colonial and later America and the functions of language in clarifying and perpetuating these conflicts.

Milton's sense of the profound ethical importance of each individual action is one aspect of this. The neat ethical theory which had been administered with general effectiveness but little success by the Roman Church had been destroyed and its destruction put men in an emotional quandary which though it can be rationalized must always be thought of as an emotional problem rather than as a problem of reason and system. Right and wrong had become matters of individual judgement. Individual happiness, salvation or damnation regarded as eternal states, depended under one branch of Protestantism on making the proper decision at the proper moment. The responsibility which devolved on those individuals who took matters of this kind seriously was thus felt as a great weight. Not only man's deeds but his thoughts, not only his thoughts, but his feelings, those vague propulsions, those states of mind which appear suddenly to transform our entire picture of the world we are living in, needed to be scrutinized. The Bible is the charter. Its sanctions are divine and primary. The King's charter is of secondary importance and the laws and regulations which the Colonials set up are a compromise between the two.

The Bible is open to all. There were, however, frequent and distressing differences in the interpretation of this charter. The magistrates had been set up in early America and in setting them up the King had clearly been impelled by God. Thus the magistrates may be expected to be closer to God and to understand His plans better than the commonalty, not because the commonalty was debarred from access to the Scripture or because it was farther from God in a hierarchical sense than the magistrates but because God had expressed His views by establishing the magistrates.

Heterodox opinions are thus from some other source. Mistress Anne Hutchinson was driven from the com-

munity for her and the magistrate's moral earnestness, but they were earnest in different ways. Winthrop calls her

> A woman not only difficult in her opinions, but also of an intemperate spirit. . . . The groundwork of her revelations is the immediate revelation of the spirit, and not by the ministry of the Lord . . . and this hath been the ground of all these tumults and troubles; and I would that those were all cut off that trouble us. . . . We see not that any should have authority to set up any other exercise beside what authority hath already set up.

Those who, sharing our postulates are unable to share our conclusions, are clearly in error. If our conclusions have the sanction of God and manifest destiny, opposite conclusions must have the sanction of God's enemy who is attempting to demolish God's plan. The war between God and the Devil was intense in the Colonies. The spirit speaks through the heart engendering emotional states. But is it the good spirit or the evil spirit which is speaking? The life of the individual and the life of the community is thus subject to the closest scrutiny.

To-day the pattern of reason by which these harassed magistrates arbitrarily guarded their lives and the lives of their fellows appears to be weak. We explain it all somewhat crudely in terms of self-interest, self-complacence and arrogance. Yet we must guard ourselves against falling into their error. If to-day we doubt that God has an immediate concern in our smallest deed, it is because we doubt the existence of God, or more accurately because the word " God " no longer arouses the same emotions, or refers to the arch colonist in eternal conflict with the powers of evil. The shift in postulates produces a new picture as the turning over of a child's set of blocks will show Red Riding Hood on one side and Beauty and the Beast on the other. From the point of view of the Puritan Fathers the references of the words they used were a consistent system. If a God-fearing and God-loving man loses his crops and his cattle, the loss is to be attributed not to God's wrath but to the malice of the devil operating through the devil's ministers, witches and warlocks. The sense of conflict, the strain imposed by

the ethical responsibility resulting from the Protestant point of view projected itself in a series of symbols which to us seems fantastic and horrid.

The magistrates and divines faced even more serious opposition from without than they did from within their own group. As they were a self-perpetuating body they recruited their members after careful examination. The opposition from without came from two sources. The English government on the one side and the lubbers on the other. The lubbers were the closer and for the most part it served the magistrates well to support the one against the other. This served further to flatter the snobbery which is innate in Whiggism. The word " liberty " took on for those few colonists who were vocal, somewhat literate and held power in the community new referents. First, it implied the liberty of the magistrates to administer the Colonies as they were convinced God pleased, without interference from abroad ; and second the liberty of the magistrates to administer the Colonies as God working through them pleased without interference from the Colonials.

The problem entered a new phase when differences arose between magistrates and Church. Winthrop stated clearly " That a Church hath not Power to call any Civill Magistrate to give Account of his Juditiall proceedings in any Court of Civill Justice : and what the Church may doe in such Causes." The struggle between the Supreme Court and the Legislature in modern America which gives the court the ultimate power of veto appeared early. Winthrop in annulling an act of the popular assembly argued that he was thereby preserving the liberties of the people " if by any occasion they should be in danger : I cannot liken it better to anythinge than the brake of a windmill : w'ch hathe no power, to move the runninge worke : but it is of speciall use, to stoppe any violent motion, w'ch in some extraordinary tempest might endanger the wholl fabricke."

> For the other point concerning liberty [Winthrop observed] a great mistake in the country about that. There is a twofold liberty, natural (I mean as our nature is now corrupt) and civil or federal. The first is common to man with beasts and other

creatures. By this, man, as he stands in relation to man simply, hath liberty to do what he lists ; it is a liberty to evil as well as to good. This liberty is incompatible and inconsistent with authority, and cannot endure the least restraint of the most just authority. The exercise and maintaining of this liberty makes man grow more evil, and in time to be worse than brute beasts : *omnes sumus licentia deteriores.* This is that great enemy of truth and peace, that wild beast, which all the ordinances of God are bent against, to restrain and subdue it. The other kind of liberty I call civil or federal ; and it may also be termed moral, in reference to the covenant between God and man, in the moral law, and the politic covenants and constitutions amongst men themselves. This liberty is the proper end and object of authority, and cannot subsist without it ; and it is a liberty to that only which is good, just, and honest. This liberty you are to stand for, with the hazard (not only of your goods, but) of your lives, if need be. Whatsoever crosseth this, is not authority, but a distemper thereof. This liberty is maintained and exercised in a subjection to authority ; it is of the same kind of liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. . . . On the other side, ye know who they are that complain of this yoke and say, let us break their bands, etc., we will not have this man to rule over us. Even so, brethren, it will be between you and your magistrates. If you stand for your natural corrupt liberties, and will do what is good in your own eyes, you will not endure the least weight of authority, but will murmur, and oppose, and be always striving to shake off that yoke ; and if you will be satisfied to enjoy such civil and lawful liberties, such as Christ allows you, then will you quietly and cheerfully submit unto that authority which is set over you, in all the administrations of it, for your good. Wherein, if we fail at any time, we hope we shall be willing (by God's assistance) to hearken to good advice from any of you, or in any other way of God ; so shall your liberties be preserved, in upholding the honor and power of authority amongst you.

As wealth increased in America, and with it literacy, two changes occurred : England began to pay more attention to the Colonies ; and the lubbers were more able to fend for themselves. In the Seventeenth Century North America had been a good place to send troublesome and tiresome people, either sober Puritans whose sense of moral conflict might infect others and make difficulties for

a government which was in any case precarious, or rascals, incompetents, adventurers and criminals who were a burden in the state. In England Parliament engaged in a struggle to get power into its own hands and away from the King. To an American it is amusing to read the account by Franklin, who knew the ins and outs of political corruption as well as any later American, of the extent of bribery he found when he was sent to London as a colonial agent. The parliamentarians behaved in as arbitrary a fashion as their distant cousins and rivals the American magistrates. The Colonies had granted requests for funds, but they objected to demands. When their allegiance was to the King, they acquiesced, but Parliament was a different matter. And the increased wealth of the Colonies made the Colonies a particularly juicy fruit for the Parliament to consume.

Within America even more serious events were taking place. In the course of several generations the shrewder lubbers by taking what they could get and holding what they were able were even a greater menace than the simple Seagulls of the Seventeenth Century. As the financial and verbal resources of the governing and the governed equalized themselves the emotional and imaginative breach widened. There were defections on both sides. Fear and suspicion expressing themselves in terms of the ethico-religious controversy sketched above were constants in the equilibrium of the Eighteenth as they are in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. The right of an individual to take what he could get was unquestioned at a time when a few hundred thousand individuals inhabited a continent. The right of a group of men to take what it can get is a corollary. The struggle between the individual and the trust had a beginning in the Eighteenth Century, to which, in the Twentieth Century, the attempt of the government to regulate the details of business and the resentment of the business men is a logical consequence. The most surprising and, in a sense, discouraging aspect of the whole matter is the tendency of this controversy to project itself in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century terminology. The issues of Milton's *Areopagitica* were made concrete in America at a very early date.

The magistrates in their difficulties with England and the lubbers in their controversies with the magistrates compromised in the Eighteenth Century by the words " free speech and free press ". Voluminous evidence exists for the study of the variant meanings of these terms. Very recently the suggestion by the newspaper owners of America that the demands of their employees, as supported by the government, for adequate sanitary facilities is an infringement of the freedom of the press (because it interferes with profits) is illustrative not only of the power of words in America but of the simplicity with which words are manipulated.

Democracy in America is an ideal of the outs. The student of American emotion and phantasy will do well to read carefully the terms of the great debate which occurred before and continued after the War of Revolution. Not only did it culminate in Jefferson's substitution of " life, liberty and pursuit of happiness " in the platform for Locke's " life, liberty and property " but it served to set the tone of later discussion. John Quincy Adams was no " slavish adorer of our sovereign lords the people ". Madison admitted :

> The landed interest, at present, is prevalent, but in process of time . . . when the number of landholders shall be comparatively small . . . will not the landed interests be overbalanced in future elections ? and, unless wisely provided against, what will become of our government ? In England, at this day, if elections were open to all classes of people, the property of landed proprietors would be insecure. An agrarian law would take place. If these observations be just, our government ought to secure the permanent interests of the country against innovation. Landholders ought to have a share in the government, to support these invaluable interests, and to balance and check the other. They ought to be so constituted as to protect the minority of the opulent against the majority.

John Quincy Adams reasoned that a whole nation has no right to do what it pleases. Justice and morality, terms which Adams and his associates were pleased to define as the rights of the opulent minority, were superior to mob rule, by which they referred to the demands of the lubbers.

> If, therefore, a majority . . . are bound by no law human or divine, and have no other rule but their sovereign will and pleasure to direct them, what possible security can any citizen of the nation have for the protection of his unalienable rights ? The principles of liberty must still be the sport of arbitrary power, and the hideous form of despotism must lay aside the diadem and sceptre, only to assume the party-coloured garments of democracy.

The verbalism of Adams makes the emotional split quite clear. The majority is a single power opposed to the divinely instituted minority to whom God has shown His particular favour. The organizations of the opposition which were frequently due to the oppressive laws of the government, secret organizations dedicated to the noble and holy task of getting the minority out and the majority in, were " demoniacal clubs ", " nurseries of sedition ", " hotbeds of atheism ", " spawn of faction ", and, according to Parrington, " common decency required that they be put down with a strong hand ".[1]

5

To go through the accumulated evidence is an onerous task. As it was in the beginning, so, in despite of the several revolutions that have occurred, it remains to-day, though less clearly defined, a split between a divinely constituted minority and an uncommunicative sceptical majority. The possession of property is the manifestation of the will of God. Attempts at reform from the mild and philanthropic desire to abolish child labour to the more radical determination to clean out obvious abuses in the economic structure are lumped together and damned as communistic and the reformers are tainted with atheism and sexual promiscuousness. In despite of this fanaticism, or perhaps because of it, the actual and practical achievements of the Americans have been great. For purposes of these speculations, however, the dichotomy and the terms by which it is defined is of importance as a symptom of the imaginative quality of Americans.

[1] Vernon Louis Parrington, *The Colonial Mind*, 1620–1800 (New York, 1927), p. 323.

The English love of action in all directions, hampered by the difficulties of pioneer living and by the opposition of the lubbers (or on the part of the lubbers, opposition by the magistrates), found its justification in words taken from the French Calvin, a founder of Protestantism, the English John Locke, the philosopher of the Protestant Whigs, and produced a linguistic and political system consistent with its own postulates. At the same time, God's obstinate refusal to be reasonable, in the terms thus defined, strengthened on the part of the English an innate German sense of the imminence of God and His mysterious works, a sense which was innate in the thousands of German immigrants who entered America in the Eighteenth Century and who have flocked there since.

In many respects Benjamin Franklin is the first of the typical Americans, the first who had an imagination that could make indiscriminate use on the proper occasion of the terminology of both the governors and the governed. He was also the first who, by the exploitation of words and hard work, found the leisure to indulge his curiosity. His exploitation of the ambiguities of language would have made him to-day a member of the Supreme Court. Philadelphia, he thought, needed organized protection, but the Quaker Fathers of the city were Pacifist merchants more concerned with protection against fire than protection against an enemy. He wrote to a friend, " If we fail, let us move the purchase of a fire-engine with the money ; the Quakers can have no objection to that ; and then if you nominate me, and I you as a committee for that purpose, we will buy a great gun and certainly that will be a fire-engine." When the French Academy refused to grant Franklin a prize for his researches into electricity because these researches had no practical use, he is said to have proposed an investigation into flatulence which would make it a social asset.

The American quality of Franklin's imagination is a complex phenomenon which modern America is at a loss to understand. In its use of language modern America has become extraordinarily effete and has forgotten the violence which in invective was allowed to both Puritan and lubber. Franklin's Americanism is seen both in his

Autobiography, which is an account of the ways in which he, assisted by God, worked out God's manifest destiny, and his *Almanack*, practical hints which, if followed, will enable us all to assist in God's plan :

> Frugality and Industry will go a great way towards indemnifying us. Idleness and Pride tax with a heavier hand than kings and parliaments. If we can get rid of the former, we may bear the latter.
>
> It is [he asserts] more difficult for a man in want to act honestly than for an empty sack to stand upright.

Or again :

> Now that I have a sheep and cow
> Everybody bids me good morrow.

So much for the governing classes and the right of property owners to share in government. On the other hand : " A ploughman on his legs is higher than a gentleman on his knees." But, in his *Autobiography*, a pencilled note, " Nothing is so likely to make a man's fortune as virtue." For Franklin, as for Milton, virtue had a magical property. He kept a ledger in which he recorded his lapses into sin, and when he discovered that incontinence was the sin which he was least able to control, he gave up keeping the ledger.

The imaginations of Franklin's contemporaries responded in different ways. Jonathan Edwards was a theologian and philosopher. The conflicts and stresses of Eighteenth-Century America increased his mysticism. In a passage which is strangely similar to a passage by the theistic Shaftesbury, he reports while walking in the fields :

> And as I was walking there and looking upon the sky and the clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God as I know not how to express. . . . After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more and more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of everything was altered : there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, an appearance of divine glory in almost everything ; God's excellency, His wisdom, His purity and love seemed to appear in everything—in the sun, moon and stars ; in the

clouds and the blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water and all nature—which used greatly to fix my mind.

Before he married her, he said of Sarah Pierrepont,

She will sometimes go about from place to place, singing sweetly; and seems to be always full of joy and pleasure; and no one knows for what. She loves to be alone, walking in the fields and groves, and seems to have some one invisible always conversing with her.

Or again in a passage which just escapes the fatuousness of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre:

So that, when we delighted with flowers, meadows, and gentle breezes of wind, we may consider that we see only the emanation of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see His love and purity. So the green trees and fields, and singing of birds, are the emanation of His infinite joy and benignity. The easiness and naturalness of trees and vines are shadows of His beauty and loveliness. The crystal rivers and murmuring streams are the footsteps of His favor, grace and beauty. When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beauteous bow, we behold the adumbrations of His glory and goodness; and in the blue sky, of His mildness and gentleness. There are also many things wherein we may behold His awful majesty: in the sun in his strength, in comets, in thunder, in the hovering thunder-cloud, in rugged rocks, and the brows of mountains.

Crèvecœur, the Frenchman, introduced into America the terminology of the French Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns. The differences between men are due to environment. The fashionable modern term is "economic interpretation of history". Fontenelle, de Staël and Taine would, each with his particular reservations, concur in Crèvecœur's statement:

Men are like plants; the goodness and flavour of the fruit proceeds from the peculiar soil and exposition in which they grow. We are nothing but what we derive from the air we breathe, the climate we inhabit, the government we obey, the system of religion we profess and the mode of our employment.

Or again:

Can a wretch who wanders about . . . who works and starves . . . can that man call England or any other kingdom his country? A country that had no bread for him, whose fields procured him no harvest, who met nothing but the frowns of the rich, the severity of the laws with jails and punishments; who owned not a single foot of the extensive surface of this planet? No! Urged by a variety of motives, here they came. Everything tended to regenerate them; new laws, a new mode of living, a new social system; here they are become men: in Europe, they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetable mould and refreshing showers; they withered and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war: but now by the power of transplantation like all other plants, they have taken root and flourished. . . . By what invisible power has this surprising metamorphosis been performed? By that of the laws of their industry . . . this country is now that which gives him land, bread, protection, and consequence: *Ubi panis, ibi patria,* is a motto of all emigrants. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, *self-interest*; can it want a stronger allurement?

Crèvecœur also understood the frontier:

The few magistrates they have are in general little better than the rest: they are often in a perfect state of war; that of man against man, sometimes decided by blows, sometimes by means of law . . . men are wholly left dependent . . . on the spur of uncertain industry which often fails when not sanctified by the efficacy of a few moral rules. There, remote from the power of example, and the check of shame, many families exhibit the most hideous parts of our society.

The more respectable army of veterans will come after them.

. . . prosperity will polish some, vice and law will drive off the rest, who uniting with others like themselves will recede still farther; making room for more industrious people . . . will change in a few years that hitherto barbarous country into a fine, fertile, well-regulated district . . .

6

THE opinions of Franklin, Edwards, and Crèvecœur represent three strata of American imagination. That Franklin's and Edwards' opinions are pseudo-statements will be more obvious, perhaps, to the modern readers than that Crèvecœur's statement is phantasy. The catch lies exactly in the Latinism, and one can hardly resist the feeling that the author himself was aware of the difficulty and, in order to cloak it, resorted to a foreign language. It is the same fallacy as resides in the Cartesian, " I think, therefore I am." The country is not where the bread is, but where the bread is there is the bread and the presence of bread will release defence mechanisms, and patriotic ardour, whether in individual or in the social complexes. The barbarous frontiersmen, illiterate, unused to words and realistic in their approach to social problems, refused to expand *ubi panis* into *ibi patria*. They were driven out. In those who came after, there has remained a doubt strengthened by the doubts of the lubbers faced by the arrogance of the divines and the magistrates, not only as to the will of God but as to which of them may be deceived. It was a gigantic game of poker. The stakes have been accumulating for three hundred years. The show-down is not yet.

A very small quantum of imaginative energy was left for belles-lettres. In Dwight's *Conquest of Canaan* which saw the light in 1785, Joshua discussed the rights of man and the future prosperity of the west which was to become a blissful Eden. Here men will

> Trace juster paths and choose their chiefs divine,
> On Freedom's base erect the heavenly plan,
> Teach laws to reign and save the Rights of Man.

Later America has assumed that this was the rights of the common man, although at all times the phrase has been applied with equal logic to the rights of the opulent minority.

The conflict was eased by the Revolution. The dissident magistrates and their supporters returned to England to the extent that there was hardly an English village

which had not one or more of them. In less than half a century after the Revolution, those who remained settled their political differences with England and asserted their imaginative and linguistic solidarity in the war of 1812. Bryant, Cooper, and Irving are the fathers of American belles-lettres. Two imported qualities must be subtracted from their writings if we are to see them as Americans: first the general Calvinistic Whiggish point of view which was imported by the earliest immigrants, that is the imminence of God and its implications, and second the more banal of the Rousseauistic and theistic doctrines which were likely to impress profoundly a community that was slightly literate. That which remains belongs to a minor tradition of English literature. These men were not writing in their colloquial; they were writing in a literary language which was far removed from the language which they habitually spoke.

William Cullen Bryant, according to his apologist, John Bigelow, his learned associate in journalism, "was essentially an ethical poet".

> In the flower, in the stream, in the tempest, in the rainbow, in the snow, in everything about him, nature was always telling him something new of the goodness of God and framing excuses for the frail and the erring. His verses are the record of these lessons as far as he apprehended and could express them.

When he sees the new moon he has

> Thoughts of all fair and youthful things—
> The hopes of early years;
> And childhood's purity and grace,
> And joys that like a rainbow chase
> The passing shower of tears.

From these mnemonic irrelevancies he turns to the old moon and reflects:

> In thy decaying beam there lies
> Full many a grave on hill and plain
> Of those who closed their dying eyes
> In grief that they had lived in vain.

Remembering his progenitors, the New England magis-

trates, he reflects on the moral lesson presented to us by the winds:

> Yet oh, when that wronged spirit of our race
> Shall break, as soon he must, his long-worn chains
> And leap in freedom from his prison place,
> Lord of his ancient hills and fruitful plains.
> Let him not rise, like these mad winds of air,
> To waste the loveliness that time could spare,
> To fill the earth with woe, and blot her fair
> Unconscious breast with blood from human veins.

In March, he reflects:

> But in thy sternest frown abides
> A look of kindly promise yet.

And when he sees the river he exclaims:

> Oh, glide away from those abodes that bring
> Pollution to thy channel and make foul
> Thy once clear current. . . .

Happily Mr. Bigelow rejoices when he observes that one of Bryant's great distinctions is "that he never wrote a line, either in verse or prose" (editorially? or privately?), that countenanced a degrading impulse, an unclean thought, a mischievous propensity, or an unmanly act; and this, too, in a period of our literature when for none of the poets most read could their most ardent admirers claim any one of these distinctions. It is, of course, difficult to know which of the poets Mr. Bigelow read with the greatest ardour. The psychologists have made unclean thoughts and mischievous propensities common enough, but a lengthy meditation has failed to bring to light the degrading impulses and the unmanly acts which Mr. Bigelow appears to have had in mind when he penned this sentence.

Bryant could not say that in writing his poems he was directly conscious of an outside intelligence. He sometimes wondered whence the thoughts came, and they seemed to him hardly his own. Edward Everett observed with reference to Bryant, that the "truly beautiful, pathetic and sublime is always simple and natural and marked by a serene unconsciousness of effort". From the point of view of the speculations advanced in these

pages, the two statements are illuminating. Words have been obliterated by things. In American belles-lettres, as well as in American political life, three factors are constant, the word, taken in place of the thing, in the tradition of the magistrates, the thing taken in place of the word in the tradition of the illiterate lubbers overly impressed by words, and the incorrect formula of where the bread is there is the country, permeating all.

In later American writing, Poe, Whitman, and James, other factors may be distinguished. James was an exile. Whitman and Poe were martyrs. The ingenious Poe, by the exercise of intelligence, was an outcast; Whitman, by a biological blemish, was a pariah. The fact that in each instance they sought for English moral consolation much as the English now seek for American sales, is evidence as to the importance which Americans now attach to belletristic activities. The objective was less in terms of money than it was in terms of moral consolation, and this was not due to the fact that American authors were indifferent to wealth, but rather to their need for consolation.

CONCLUSION

IN the second third of the Nineteenth Century the imaginations of England, France, Germany, and America entered a new phase. Not only did the industrial revolution begin to make itself felt at this time, introducing changes in the directions which imagination took in its search for systems (realism, naturalism, and the like), by which it could make itself more potent; but the literatures of the northern countries and of the Russians exerted a powerful influence. At this time some objectives were attained; others were missed. The greatly increased complexity of the situation makes it advisable to terminate this survey at a point when romanticism having gone as far it was willing to go begins either to decline or to transform itself.

I

THE postulates outlined in the first section of this account give a picture of the history of European literature which to some will appear distorted and to others incomplete. The purpose has been to examine the three literatures of Europe independently of the metaphors which traditionally have been used in describing them and their achievements. In a sense all writing is metaphorical, but I have made the attempt to keep this in mind and thus avoid some of the errors at least which lie in wait for all who deal with material of this kind. That the attempt to give a verbal account of the effects of experiences with words induces new experiences with words is inevitable.

In order to save time such general terms as "literature", "the novel", "poetry", have been made use of. Here again a warning must be uttered. There is reason to doubt whether the thing the word "poetry" refers to exists and whether the kinds of experiences the word "literature" refers to have very much in common. It

seems that they have this much in common, however, that they are all experiences which are induced by words, that they satisfy needs (" appetences ") ; that the need for them is becoming greater as more people learn how to read and that this need is not to be identified directly with other physical needs such as sex and food. This need appears to have something to do with the emotions, and one of the problems put before the reader has been the ways in which words operate on the emotions and the kind of need they appear to satisfy. These kinds seem to differ in England, Germany, and France. The French imagination appears to operate best within the limits of a verbal system. This system, by being consistent with itself and in later years by setting up a series of verbal fictions which, if they are not themselves physical, are treated as though they were physical, confines itself and its activity. In Germany the need seems to be more directly emotional. Things are treated with disdain and are made use of only in so far as they liberate feeling. In England action, whether in the country-side, or through the fields of history, or through psychological analysis, serves to stimulate the feelings. The differences which appear in literature need not imply differences in race. If these pages have succeeded in demonstrating the existence of differences, they have done all that is necessary. Differences in imagination which present themselves to the comparatist of literature are differences in the sorts of meaning in which nations take delight. If so, they should be capable of historical demonstration.

Languages themselves intensify the differences which appear in literature, but the important fact which we must keep in view throughout discussion of these matters is that languages and literatures are not two different phenomena, but are very much the same phenomenon. The attempt, for example, to analyse the experience of literature before we are clear about the experience of language itself, or more specifically, to attempt to discuss the " aesthetics " of a poem before we have knowledge as to the way words perform their functions and to do this by means of words which are themselves crude instruments and unanalysed, is to invite the disaster which has befallen traditional

criticism. The fact that literature and poetry have been put aside as something special and not connected with our experiences of every day, casual conversation at the club or over the bridge table, or confidences made to a physician, are facts which give pause because it may be urged this segregation of literature must point to facts of experience which, if the theses here presented are sound, would appear to be under attack. Yet the thesis may be maintained that in the experience of literature, the special quality which appears and which is the cause of this segregation is less different from the quality of our profane experience of words in its kind than it is in its degree. In this sense the classic definition of poetry as the best words in the best order will hold, the referents for the term "best" be made more precise, by some such paraphrase as, the words which arouse the most intense emotional response in that order which is best suited to this function. This, too, is a kind of metaphor, and if acceptable must be controlled by some conception of language and emotional response which will keep before us the fact that words are symbols whose power of arousing feeling differs not only with different individuals, but in the same individual with the succession of days and years, moods, and the state of digestion.

But when these changes have been made in the exclamation, the question is raised rather than answered. This question is, in a sense, the central question of these papers, but before we elaborate it further and attempt to bring together the suggestions here set forth as to some of the ways in which verbal symbols serve this purpose, another fact connected with the segregation of the literary experience may be mentioned, namely, that this segregation is itself evidence of the naïve, indeed neolithic, attitude which in spite of the passage of centuries has maintained itself. It is a remanet of logomancy. From the earliest times wordsmiths have set themselves apart because they have been able to exercise a particularly powerful influence over their auditors. M. Jourdain, who discovered that he had been talking prose all of his life, is not unique. The magic power of words in arousing and allaying feeling has been guarded by that portion of the general public which

submits to it with jealous care. The " man who has written a book " instead of being put in his proper place as a craftsman is still regarded by large portions of the public with much more feeling than he deserves. The experience of literature itself is so precious to many of the people who have it and need it that they fear an understanding of it will destroy it. Clearly this is not the case. If it is understood, it should be of greater value, and a proper understanding of it may serve, inasmuch as the experience is a social phenomenon of great force, to direct it. To assert that the professor of literature may administer an emotional therapeutic is perhaps only another way of restating the old romantic observation that poetry is of importance. Goethe was neither the first nor the last who cured a diseased mind by the writing of novels and poems.

If the experience of literature is particularly associated with the emotional effects of words, another conclusion appears to be inevitable. Those persons who have the greatest need for the experience of literature would appear to be those persons who labour under emotional tensions of various kinds. Literature may thus be said to relieve these tensions and to correct the emotional balance. The term " furor poeticus " was revived and not coined by the Renaissance. The German barbarians appear to have had a term for it. From this, several startling suggestions may be drawn. If the poet is not himself a madman—and there is no doubt that some poets are mad—he and the persons to whom he appeals suffer from an emotional unbalance which the experience of literature serves to correct. The fact that the periods of the most intense verbal activity have been periods of great activity in other fields strengthens this suggestion. It is exactly in these periods of emotional ferment that action too limited by the exigencies of environment flows over into phantasy, and finds words for its relief.

2

NOT only do the emotional needs satisfied by the experience of literature differ among individuals, but they appear also to differ among nations. The English need for symbols of action, the French need for verbal categories, and

the German need for a mysterious universe, have been insisted upon sufficiently. The history of literature appears to demonstrate the existence of these needs, and their demonstration here is of less importance than the more immediate question as to how these nations have made use of words to get these needs satisfied. The nations themselves by accepting or rejecting a literary proposition, as well as by the kinds of books taken over from other nations, appear to have accepted these needs without question. Some surprise may be expressed that the critics, when they announced *in cathedra* that a book is good or a book is bad, did not inquire more closely into the reasons for its goodness or badness. Many inquiries indeed have been made, but they were not close inquiries and suffered from the crudity of the verbal system with which they were made. Such equations as " it is good because it is beautiful, or elevating, or noble, or pure, or intense, or true to life ", are no longer acceptable because these terms themselves, being exclamations rather than accounts of situations, point only to the fact that literary excellence has something to do with feeling.

If it appears odd that critics have not taken the trouble to step back from exclamations which relieved their emotion and examine them, it is perhaps even more odd that others who occupy themselves with the anatomy of human experience should not have done so. Two reasons may be adduced. The first of these is the naïve attitude towards words already referred to. Since the Renaissance each word has been thought to have a meaning. Some scholars have even maintained that when two meanings are discovered for the same word, we are faced " in truth " with two different words. The dictionary definition of homonym is still " two words which have the same sound, but different meanings. Ex. *read* and *reed*." The artificiality of the lack of distinction is clear. If, however, words spoken are regarded as vocal gestures and words written as signs which give us direction as to which gesture should be made, and if the senses of words are taken to be the things the words symbolize as well as the functions they perform, the situation is simplified. Any symbol may have one or many referents and symbol and

referent together may perform one or many functions. This observation makes necessary the revision of most of the ideas inherited from the past, not only about the experience of literature, whether that experience be regarded as different in kind from other experiences, or whether it be regarded as the same, as well as the revision of our ideas about everything which we have attempted to account for in terms of verbal symbols. A re-reading of the history of economics or politics or criticism will, I think, convince anyone that words in these disciplines have been used and are still being used at the same time to point to things, events, fictions, which are usually other words treated as though they were things, as well as to stimulate and relieve feeling, indicate tone and define intention. The development of a technique for the analysis of these complexes is badly needed. Perhaps the material presented here will illustrate the need of such technique in the history of literature. When Dr. I. A. Richards' dictionary of parallel definitions of the key words used in discussion is published we will, if the persons who need to read it can be persuaded to do so, have made progress. Mr. C. K. Ogden's construction of a philosophical language which he refers to by the term Basic English, is a practical step of the greatest importance. But a question which faces us all is how can we develop a technique which will keep our words in order, and by keeping our words in order keep our ideas and our feelings in their proper places, proper being taken here in the sense of " most useful to us ".

The second deterrent which kept scholars from a close examination of critical exclamation, was the very achievement of the Classical Renaissance itself, namely, the discovery that for purposes of discussion, one word could be given one meaning, that is, that one word could be made to point to one single referent, and the consequent repose upon this discovery. From the point of view of these pages the word and its referent or referents are taken as the elementary facts of experience. Either the referent arouses that state of emotion which we call the experience of literature, or the word arouses it. The situation which makes itself clear in the Seventeenth Century and later is

that there is an almost constant confusion between the effect of the word and the effect of the thing the word refers to. When one word is a symbol for several referents, analysis is precarious. Is the emotion aroused by the word due to one referent or another, or is it due to the complex state created by the confusion of reference. Equally important with this and in no sense an elementary fact of criticism are the other functions of words in terms of tone and intention. In their theories the German Stormers and Stressers came very close to an understanding of this situation. In their practice Eliot and Valéry and the Surréalistes have come very close to it. In all cases, however, success has been frustrated by an incomplete understanding of and an unwillingness to examine language regarded as a physical gesture.

3

If these pages can be thought to serve any practical purpose, they may direct attention to two particular problems of which it is hoped they show the importance. The first is the function of language in the history of literature and the second the need for a more adequate notation for qualities of feeling.

To assert that language is important in the history of literature should be so tautological that the assertion is unnecessary. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The function of language in the experience of literature is not only completely misunderstood; it is ignored with a blithe gaiety. One of the reasons for this is that language has been surrendered by critics into the hands of the professional linguists. These gentlemen, who developed a brilliant analytical technique three hundred years ago, have done little more since then than adapt that technique to the current scientific fashions: primitivism in the late Eighteenth Century, evolution in the late Nineteenth. No technique has been provided for the analysis of linguistic functions, the problems of ambiguity, or polysemantism. Work now in progress in the hands of Dr. I. A. Richards and Mr. C. K. Ogden offers a basis upon which a very elaborate structure will be raised. That, in despite of the romantic revolution with its frenetic

search for feeling and its attempts to restore to language semantic functions of which it had been robbed by the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, we have not decades ago formulated a more adequate theory than is now available of linguistic functions is evidence both of the naïve way in which language is still taken and of the power which the rationalist reforms continue to exercise.

The statement that language is important in the history of literature is particularly directed to the teachers of the schools, who assume that students understand what they read and devote their attention, less to critical and careful exegesis of the text than to an attempt to elaborate the feeling which it is assumed the text has produced. It is possible that in clumsy hands, Dr. Richards' analysis of the functions of meaning will lead again to a clumsy hermaneutics and over-formal explication of the implicit which further reforms will destroy. A development of this kind is not inevitable nor to be desired but a serious and reverent return to the texts is badly needed, if teachers of literature are not to become its vandals.

The general opposition on the part of people who are not incapable of experiencing literature, to the kinds of careful analysis here advocated is due in great part to the projection of the romantic point of view. As the Eighteenth Century had carried the analysis of the direct referents of words, and the implications that can be drawn from them by means of logic, to a limit beyond which further analysis could not go, the romantic writers, in naïve and violent rejection of this method, turned away completely from linguistic analysis. As the earlier analyses had been directed towards an elucidation of the sense and as the sense was by the romantics accepted only as a means for the ordering of feeling, it was thought—or perhaps rather felt—that analysis itself was destructive. Analysis brought into light elements of a poem which were unimportant for the experience of poetry. Consequently, analysis destroys the experience. That this is not a necessary conclusion is clear. It is not the analysis which is destructive, it is false analysis, incomplete in the sense that it fails to account for the totality of the experience.

CONCLUSION

The need to get standards of judgement which will be more universally accepted and more generally understood is part of the problem. If in these pages it has appeared that I have too loosely taken the position that that literature is good which is either " good for me " or good for a large number of people, the position has been accepted only because a more precise statement was impossible until the material had been presented. Good literature in one country is probably not good in the same way in another. With the differences between standards as great as they appear to be, any attempt to determine universal goodness in literature must take these differences into account. Yet they cannot be taken into account with any precision or delicacy until the work of linguistic analysis has been carried much further. A technique is needed which will bring out the kinds of action desired in England, the kinds of feeling cherished in Germany and the kinds of sense which soothe the French. When this has been done, there will still remain, as an unattainable absolute, a possibility of judgement in terms of linguistic skill. Writers differ in competence. A competent writer must be adjudged as one who can most effectively make use of all of those factors of meaning which are of importance in his language. Keats's regret that Shelley did not load every rift with ore is a regret, which no doubt many share but few state, that Shelley was linguistically incompetent. That he was a poet in despite of this defect is obvious. But appreciation of his poetry will be increased by a more just appreciation of his linguistic limitations.

In dealing with questions as complex as those which have raised their heads in these pages, and in dealing with them without an adequate notation not only is error inevitable, but a certain amount of dogmatism—and I hope it is a small amount—must enter the discussion if for no other reason than to save time and to avoid stylistic monotony. The revolution which the Cambridge semasiologists have introduced is real. None can yet tell whither it will lead us. The purpose of these pages has been rather to ask a question than to answer one.

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