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THE POETRY OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

Aspects of the Modern Tradition in English Poetry, with
special attention to Edward Thomas, Harold Monro, and
F.S. Flint.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D. at the
University of Kent at Canterbury

by

Hugh Underhill.

O there is nothing like fine weather, and health,
and Books, and a fine country, and a contented
Mind, and Diligent habit of reading and thinking,
and an amulet against the enmui...

John Keats, Letter to Fanny Keats, 17 April 1819.

August 1974.

PREFACE

This is a literary-critical study of three twentieth-century poets seen in relation to a continuous development of the English poetic tradition from Romanticism to what is approximately termed 'Modernism'. It traces the emergence of a particular group of poetic obsessions involving an intensely subjective striving for 'totality of self', as well as a sense of a chasm between the poet and the world around him and the need to bridge this chasm. The battle of poets with style and technique in the earlier part of the century was a necessary accompaniment to the authentic expression of these obsessions. The historical core of the study is the second decade of the present century, but there is no closely-defined historical period, and the discussion ranges from Keats and Baudelaire to the later work of Yeats, Eliot and Graves.

Introductory orientations are established in relation to certain well-known works of criticism and theory. The change in the poet's position in society broadly associated with the Industrial Revolution is still seen to affect poets, but it is clear that the Modern tradition, if continuous with the Romantic tradition, also splits off from it in important ways. The starting-points of this process are located in the events which followed the arrival of Ezra Pound in England in 1908 and culminated in the publication of The Waste Land in 1922; in particular it is thought necessary to define the role of Georgian poetry with some care.

The poetry of Edward Thomas is seen as representative in possessing qualities which at once unite it with and distinguish it from the Romanticism in which it has its roots. His own commentary on Keats throws much light on the kind of psychological disposition and 'poetical character' which makes poetry out of a state of being in which more or less normal experience appears an almost intolerable burden: this is described as 'the problem

of acute consciousness'. Harold Monro's haunted vision and stylistic uncertainties are related in various ways to T.S. Eliot's treatment of the psychological problems of modern man, and the escapes and solutions the two poets explore are compared. F.S. Flint, a chief polemicist of the Imagist movement, is examined as an important mediator between French Symbolism and modern English poetry. He is seen to take part in initiating dominant trends in twentieth-century English poetry, notably the 'confessional' and anti-heroic modes, while his 'Otherworld' is studied as a pattern of the conflict in modern poetry between escape and acceptance.

The turning to 'nature' by the Romantic poets in an attempt to discover there a new integration of the self is an aspect of the Romantic legacy which presents the modern poet, who has often revolted against rural subject-matter, with a severe problem of identification, and the country and the city are seen to take on a symbolic antithesis in the modern poetic consciousness. The work of Thomas Hardy is crucial to a discussion of this situation; it suggests for the Modern tradition ways of resisting the poison, or ennui, which corrodes the Romantic sensibility and the escapes and evasions which tempt poets afflicted by it.

The effects of this ennui, which involves a sense of 'life consumed in unfulfilment' and often of hollowness at the centre of the modern urban experience, are correlated in the work of Baudelaire, Keats and T.S. Eliot, as well as in that of Monro, Flint and Thomas. It is observed that the intense subjectivity of modern poets is often directly connected with a yearning, which has both Romantic and Symbolist antecedents, for escape into a dimension of reality outside time and normal consciousness. All the poets examined seem to exhibit, in one form or another, a sense of 'difference' from other men and a profound uncertainty about the choices and commitments the modern world demands of them, and about the nature of their identity within it. The striving to achieve 'the true voice of

feeling', the attempt to record with the greatest exactness the feel of an experience, the quest for identity, representatively noted in the work of Monro, Flint and Thomas, are revealed as endeavours to define again for their own generation the distinctive qualities of human consciousness. In struggling with these problems of consciousness, the argument runs, the poets studied have at times succeeded in introducing the public or outer world into their poetry without falsifying the subjective self, or falling into the rhetorical and didactic modes of the nineteenth century. Their poetry, it is concluded, is an infinitely subtle and responsive record of sensibility and consciousness, which becomes at the same time a criticism of life.

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INTRODUCTION

I. The Field of Discussion

The appropriateness of locating the Romantic tradition directly behind the Modern tradition is widely recognised. Adding in 1965 a 'Retrospective Introduction' to his Modern Poetry and the Tradition, Cleanth Brooks intimates the kind of continuity which exists when he finds in the Romantic poets a 'split between the subjective and the objective'.

For it was the split between the subjective and the objective — the chasm between the life of the emotions and attitudes within the poet and the universe outside him — that so much troubled the Romantic poets. The poetry of Wordsworth and the criticism of Coleridge, are dominated by the attempt to bridge this chasm.

To this day, an attempt to bridge some such chasm is largely what occupies poets. The obtrusiveness of 'nature' as a subject in Romantic poetry is no accident, for not only had the decline of aristocratic patronage and the rise of bourgeois power by the beginning of the nineteenth century rendered the poet déclassé and helped drive him to seek refuge in 'nature', but the most obvious way in which the chasm expressed itself was as an alienation of man from nature. If the twentieth century has understandably revolted against rural themes, the essential kind of consciousness to which such a situation gave rise, and an intensified interest in the operations of consciousness itself, is the inheritance from Romanticism with which modern poets, whether they like it or not, have to deal.

That this is so, and why it is so, is suggested by Brooks at the close of his 'Retrospective Introduction':

it seems certain that poetry will continue for a long time to revolve around the matter of man's consciousness — the consciousness which separates him from the other animals and alienates him from nature, but which at the same time is the very power that allows him to see nature, as it were,

from the outside,² and to see himself in the very act of seeing it.

That there are various complicating factors which serve to modify the Romantic consciousness in twentieth-century poets, and to modify the nature of the problem confronting them, is a circumstance attended to in the body of this study, but we may note immediately that the kind of self-consciousness indicated in Brooks's last words tends to be even more intense in modern poets than in the Romantics. If the split between the subjective and the objective troubled the Romantics (and we should note that there are also multiple conflicts within the poet's subjective self), the moderns have placed a high valuation upon intense subjectivity. Ellman and Feidelson's anthology The Modern Tradition provides admirable perspectives on this; the editors comment:

Modern exploration of the unconscious mind and of the heritage of myth has been part of a larger concern with the distinctive qualities and value of subjective life. But if the Unconscious is primarily a personal subjective world for Freud, it is primarily superpersonal for Jung; and if the forms of myth are closely related to the private visions of symbolist poets, they are also public, communal and historical. Subjective life at its most intense is personal and private, wholly individual, and the value of subjective reality in this sense is a modern article of faith. The individual person has turned round upon himself, seeking to know all that he is and to unify all that he knows himself to be. The totality of self has become the object of an inner quest. This cultivation of self-consciousness - uneasy, ardent introspection - often amounts to an almost religious enterprise.

It is certainly my intention to take into account the world of what is 'public, communal and historical', but the quest for 'the totality of self' will be seen in this study to be closely related to the problem of identity felt by the modern individual, and 'uneasy, ardent introspection' will emerge as a hallmark of the poets discussed. Another hallmark, a scrupulous effort to observe and reveal the truth about the self, which may take either direct (D.H. Lawrence) or oblique (Baudelaire, T.S. Eliot) forms in poetry, is also noted by Ellman and Feidelson:

A first principle of self-consciousness is that nothing, however inglorious or unpleasant, should be ignored. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Confessions is the prototype of many later examples of the elevation of candour into a prime virtue. Rousseau premised his book upon his capacity⁴ to be wholly honest with himself and the reader.

It is this question of consciousness, and the manner in which modern poets have sought to construct a style, and a more general aesthetic, of sufficient resilience and responsiveness to meet what has presented itself to them as a very perplexing situation, to which I address myself.

To mention three great modern artists of subjectivity is to indicate a trans-European axis along which what I have in mind runs: Proust, Kafka, Eliot. Since this is a study of poetry, and primarily of English poetry, only passing reference will be made to the first two of these, but, as the material used will repeatedly suggest, the cultural and literary-psychological phenomena I am investigating are not contained within fixed boundaries either of literary genre or of language and nationality. It may be felt, however, that the term 'modern' is used without sufficient definition. It is, as Mario Praz has very sensibly argued in relation to 'romantic', 'an approximate term'.⁵ 'Modern poetry' here means much what it does in Cleanth Brooks's book, while Ellman and Feidelson's The Modern Tradition is an essential point of reference. Perhaps it need not be said that moderns are not always 'modernist'. 'Modernism', it is accepted, implies conscious innovation in style and subject-matter, but such poets as Thomas Hardy, Robert Graves and Edward Thomas, who would not normally be considered modernist, are, I argue, modern in their pre-occupations. However, to maintain too persistent a distinction can become pedantic or merely multiply confusions, and it will be found that I sometimes use the terms interchangeably. Essentially, my use of the terms bears upon an attitude towards experience, and towards how experience may be got into poetry. Not only the intellectual orientation, but ways of

feeling and the workings of the creative imagination are quite distinctively other in particular respects than at previous times. It is to work where this distinct dissimilarity from the work of the past is felt that I apply the terms 'modern' and 'modernism'.

But a comprehensive account of 'the modern' is not my intention. In the first place, the evidence provided by my three primary subjects would be of too restricted a nature: these are three English poets active in the earlier years of the twentieth century, whose work stands centrally in relation to the continuous poetic movement from Romantic to Modern. None of these published poetry before 1906; the first, Edward Thomas, died in 1917 and produced his entire poetic output in the three years preceding his death; the second, F.S. Flint, published no poetry after 1920⁶; the third, Harold Monro, wrote until his death in 1932. Thus, if the historical core of the study is the second decade of the century, there is no clearly-defined historical period under examination. Tracing the line of continuity back we encounter aspects of the Nineties, various manifestations of Symbolism and post-Symbolism in France, Baudelaire, and Keats in particular among the earlier Romantics; following the line forward we are led to the later work of W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and Robert Graves, and in a few places more recent poetry is touched upon. That such continuity does exist; so far as concerns those aspects of the Modern tradition which are the subject here, becomes a premise of the study. Thomas, Flint and Monro are, I think, if undeniably minor figures of varying strength of achievement, both representative enough and of sufficient interest in themselves to sustain the weight placed upon them. (Thomas, surely, is as remarkable a minor poet as one is likely to encounter.) The chief datum is the poetry of these three men, but their criticism and reviews are also drawn upon where appropriate, particularly in the case of F.S. Flint. In addition, Thomas Hardy, who in many respects falls outside the continuous movement

to which I've referred, but who in recent criticism appears more and more as a commanding counter-figure within the Modern tradition in English poetry, is introduced at certain points as crucially representative of something the movement often lacked, and yet which poets within it often seem groping towards.

In the second place, I am concerned with an area of sensibility, with which certain phenomena of consciousness and psychological states are associated, which is certainly modern, but does not define modernism. This territory in some ways belongs to non-literary disciplines, but because it is a question of sensibility, and because its manifestations appear deeply embedded in the dialogue between the poet and 'the universe outside him' - because, without these, the textures and structures of modern poetry would not be what they are - a literary-critical approach is certainly proper. And if, in Ellman and Feidelson's anthology, 'the materials, with rare exceptions, consist of discursive statements' about the modern tradition, I have sought out particular 'dominant images, the obsessive concretions of character, action, and language' such as they have expressly avoided.⁷ Naturally, I have recourse to 'discursive statements', as well as to bibliographical, biographical and historical data, where the line of argument or the account being given requires this, but as I have indicated the chief datum is a body of poetry; the language, images, and structures of that poetry are scrutinised as signs or signals of the states in which I am interested. Moreover, this is essentially a synthesising and interpretative study, directly behind which stand certain well-known works of criticism and theory. F.R. Leavis's New Bearings in English Poetry, Edmund Wilson's Axel's Castle, and Frank Kermode's Romantic Image, have fundamentally shaped my work, while C.K. Stead's The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot has extensively guided my thinking about the respective roles of Georgianism and Imagism in the modern tradition in English poetry, and

about the poets involved in those movements. To a considerable extent, my study is of Thomas, Flint and Monro seen against the critical and conceptual framework of these books. Further works upon which my discussion is dependent will quickly become apparent, but perhaps I should also mention here in a preliminary way the importance of Joy Grant's Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop for the passages on Monro, and of William Cooke's Edward Thomas: A Critical Biography, an admirable synthesis of criticism, biography and scholarship, for those on Thomas.⁸ In addition, my thesis would not quite have attained its present shape had Donald Davie's Thomas Hardy and British Poetry and Raymond Williams's The Country and the City not appeared when the writing of it was well advanced. I think I may say that certain critical emphases these two books contain were already present in my work, but they provided invaluable clarifications.

I am not certain how far my collocation of Keats and Baudelaire as originating forces of the Modern tradition will seem surprising, though everybody will be familiar with Baudelaire's importance for modern poetry. If, however, I do not attempt a comprehensive account of modernism, it is the words of Keats quoted on my title page - the expressed need to combat the threatened vitiation by ennui of all the things which make life, for the sensitive human being, tolerable - which point to the connecting axis of this study. It is manifest from Keats's life, letters and poetry that ennui is a modern peculiarity of consciousness to which he, before Baudelaire, was susceptible. A pattern will emerge, and will be found in Keats, of intense subjectivity, intense sensitivity, and heightened consciousness, giving rise to a multiplicity of dilemmas, and amounting even to a sickness of the personality which has the whole malaise of modern man behind it. The understandable desire in Keats for escape from the agonising plight thus exhibited, the quest for an antidote, an 'amulet against the ennui', is a prototype of Romantic flight from a hostile reality, and of the

Romantic cult of the imagination and the ideal, with its extreme manifestations in Victorian escapism, Symbolist transcendentalism, and 'art for art's sake'. It is a symptom of the general Romantic predicament particularly acute in the Keatsian type of artist. But such artists, if they are of any fibre and have any grasp of the realities of existence, as in Keats's own case, do not take long to become aware that no amulet is more than temporarily efficacious. Hence there arises another strand in this response to experience: the determination to develop strategies for resisting ennui. At one level, this can be seen simply as the struggle to remain sane as the normal world understands it. At a further level, it involves the immemorial struggle of the artist with the act of creation, creation being the vital force which stands in contradistinction to the life-sapping seductions of ennui; a struggle complicated by the fact that since Wordsworth and Coleridge this act itself has become significantly more conscious. Thus, a continuous cross-current runs through my thesis, the theme of resistance to ennui; the tendency emerging from the dialectic of the poet's experience and consciousness, from his dialogue with the world around him, for him to move into engagement with that world, and the varying success of, and the consequences for, poets who have thus called the bluff of Baudelaire's 'monstre délicat'. It is this web which entangles all the poets chosen, whether centrally or peripherally, for study, even where they may not otherwise appear connected; this is what their 'dominant images ... obsessive concretions' are seen to reveal.

Cleanth Brooks designates Wordsworth and Coleridge 'the first poets to bring into distinct focus the predicament of modern man', and goes on to connect this with the continuous poetic obsession since Wordsworth and Coleridge with the creative act itself, and extending from there, with the poem itself.

A poet like Wordsworth found himself cut off from the world of human values and imprisoned in a "Newtonian" universe in which the great machine of the world moved in terms of inexorable mathematical laws and therefore had no concern for, or relation to, the hopes, fears, and ardors of the individual human being. The problem was essentially a moral and philosophical problem, but the personal and cultural situation of poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge compelled them to describe it as a problem of poetic composition. For the problem addressed itself to them in this way: was it any longer possible to write poetry ... To be able to produce a poem became in itself a kind of moral achievement and a way of bringing man back into meaningful relation with his universe ... Hence the basic reason for the fact that Wordsworth's masterpiece should be The Prelude - a poem about the growth and development of a poet's mind - rather than the poem it was originally designed to introduce.

Before the Industrial Revolution it would have appeared a bizarre notion that there could be anything self-sufficient about the poem and the act of creating it. But writing a poem under the conditions of industrial capitalism becomes a kind of heroic act, a factor which will be constantly before us in this discussion. Brooks distinguishes between a modern concern with the poem itself and a Romantic concern with the processes of the poet's mind, and certainly in criticism there is a clear distinction between modern concentration upon 'close reading', and Romantic interest primarily in the poet's 'personality'. But M.H. Abrams shows how, as 'the innovative English critic of his time', Coleridge, through his insistence on the organic imagination allied to 'principles of writing', was 'enabled to maintain his double view, capable alternately of dwelling on a poem as a poem, and on a poem as a process of mind.'¹⁰ In fact, it is obvious enough that the two cannot be separated: the processes of the poet's mind seek structure, the poetic structure is the graph of the poet's mind. In any case, writing poems about writing poetry has become a major activity of poets, and for most of the poets here under consideration the creative act itself, and the relationship of art to life, made more enigmatic by the sense of 'chasm' already referred to, are obsessive themes. And that such poets are constantly

falling back on the operations of consciousness itself as the subject-matter of their poetry, is clearly a function of this same situation. But though writing a poem may be an heroic act, an achievement to offset ennui, it is a limitingly self-perpetuating activity if the poem is only about itself. Such an activity, perhaps, itself betrays a lack of adequate contact with life: how does the poet make this achievement relevant to what is outside him? 'Kubla Khan', of course, is largely about this very dilemma, and Brooks rightly insists upon it as a dilemma which continues into the present century.

We also find innovative statements in Coleridge about the notion of the poem as a pattern of oppositions, or as a process of conflict and resolution. The poet, he says in Chapter XIV of Biographia Literaria, by means of a 'synthetic or magical power' (the secondary Imagination), brings about a 'balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities'. This idea of poems generated out of a tension of 'opposite or discordant' forces is based on an analogy with biological generation out of the union of sexual opposites; the Coleridgean attempt at organic synthesis is a response to the Romantic conflict¹¹, to the sense of chasm between the poet and 'the universe outside him'. This is an umbrella beneath which a host of associated concepts - including 'dissociation of sensibility' - may be gathered, and finds almost limitless formulations in modern criticism and critical theory, to the extent that it is virtually possible to say that modern criticism sees it as the essential mode of operation of a poem. However, we must distinguish between the notion of a poem as organic growth and synthesis, and the notion of it as a collision of forces, and this connects directly with the Romantics' apathy towards Metaphysical poetry and the moderns' interest in it. Modern criticism does not, in any case, confine the notion of the poem as a tension of opposites to poetry written only since the Industrial Revolution, and it might even be said that the

whole idea is merely an extension of the Medieval, Renaissance and Augustan preoccupation with Order and Harmony, a further expression of the basic human will to organise and unify. But again we encounter the fact of heightened consciousness: since Coleridge we have been more conscious of these kind of dialectical patterns within the poem. At the same time the modern sensibility splits off from that of the Romantics, while still exhibiting the basic sense of 'chasm', by virtue of new, or renewed, interests (e.g. the Metaphysicals) and an even more complicated consciousness of the issues.

This continuity, yet splitting-off, of the Modern tradition from the Romantic tradition helps us to see why, rather than Coleridge - in so many ways the founding inspiration of the modern aesthetic in poetry - it is Keats who is the essential Romantic for our purposes here. This is despite the fact that Coleridge's poetry is packed with the obsessions I am concerned to trace. I shall, for example, discuss the Keatsian affinities in such a poem as Edward Thomas's 'Melancholy', but we may easily notice the presence of Coleridge too behind that poem. Coleridge gives us abundant records of dream-experience and of the confusion of dream and reality in a hallucinatory state of consciousness, of a kind which often attend the modern problem of identity and the modern poet's enigma concerning the relation of art and reality. As in Coleridge, such states may be symptomatic of illness, physical or mental; they may be induced by opium or other drugs. In any case, Coleridge's pain, we often feel, is self-inflicted or at least willingly indulged; he plucks, he says in 'To William Wordsworth', 'the poisons of self-harm' (1.80). Just as 'indolence' is one of Keats's favourite words and passivity of mind one of his notable characteristics, Coleridge in 'The Eolian Harp' records a state of mind in which 'many idle flitting phantasies, Traverse my indolent and passive brain,' (11.40-I). In a letter of October 9, 1797, he tells Thomas Poole of his childhood:

'So I became a dreamer - and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity'.¹² To John Thelwall on October 14 of the same year he expresses a sense of consciousness as a barely tolerable burden, in the face of which a state is sought which is almost oblivion except that the subject knows he is in such a state: 'I should much wish, like the Indian Vishnu, to float about along an infinite ocean cradled in the flower of the Lotos, & wake once in a million years for a few minutes-just to know that I was going to sleep a million years more'.¹³ He felt that he was not only guilty of indolence and procrastination, as he wrote to Thomas Wedgewood on October 20, 1802, but perhaps worse, that he had nothing 'honourable' to tell of himself: 'It has not been altogether Indolence or my habits of Procrastination which have kept me from writing, but an eager wish ... to have something honourable to tell you of myself'.¹⁴ That sense of life, in a phrase I shall later use, 'consumed in unfulfilment' which so widely afflicts the poets under discussion is nowhere stronger than in Coleridge. And he maps 'countries of the mind' - the ancient mariner's voyage is a salient example of a psychological journey given concrete form - in the manner we will examine in Keats, Edward Thomas and others. All this is endemic, indeed, in the poets of the Romantic and Modern traditions we are to have under consideration, and in such poems as 'The Pains of Sleep' and 'Dejection: an Ode' we may locate key expressions of the near-pathological aspects of the kind of consciousness involved. D.W. Harding has traced the pattern of this pathology as it appears in 'The Ancient Mariner':

The human experience around which Coleridge centres the poem is surely the depression and the sense of isolation and unworthiness which the Mariner describes in Part IV. The suffering he describes is of a kind which is perhaps not found except in slightly pathological conditions, but which, pathological or not, has been felt by a great many people. He feels isolated to a degree that baffles expression and reduces him to the impotent, repetitive emphasis which becomes doggerel in schoolroom reading [lines 226-7]. At the same time he is not just physically isolated but is socially abandoned, even by those with the greatest obligations [228-9]. With this

desertion the beauty of the ordinary world has been taken away [230-1]. All that is left, and especially, centrally, oneself, is disgustingly worthless [232-3]. With the sense of worthlessness where is also guilt. When he tried to pray

A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

And enveloping the whole experience is the sense of sapped energy, oppressive weariness [244-6].¹⁵

The Romantic love of the indefinite and the all-embracing, often a would-be mysticism, goes together in Coleridge with a 'sense of sapped energy', a condition of aboulia, an incapacity to resolve his problems by taking action towards determinate ends.

This condition in Coleridge is connected, as is well known, with his taking of opium, and I must digress slightly to put into perspective the question of drug-taking, upon which I shall frequently touch. Some poets took laudanum or other forms of opium for medical purposes as was perfectly common in the nineteenth and even early twentieth centuries, a few took narcotics deliberately seeking visions which might enrich their poetry. How far, if at all, the states of consciousness under consideration are in fact influenced by drugs - producing a vision or dream in which space and time appear to be suspended or superseded, followed by the inertia and self-pity of the dream's aftermath - it is perhaps impossible to be certain. There are three points to bear in mind: drugs only heighten pre-existing states; it may be that certain types of temperament are predisposed to drug-taking and that these poets coincidentally possess such types of temperament; the states may simply be ones which present certain similarities to drug-induced states without there being any causal connection. At the same time, there could possibly be, as I indicate at the end of Chapter 6, some connection between narcotic hallucination, and the myth, or the probings of unconscious mind or collective memory, which play a part in the work of some of these poets; but the evidence is far too uncertain for conclusions

to be drawn.

Coleridge is again a founder of the modern impulse in the question of 'organic form' and in his statement of the idea that art has a logic of its own. Yet when we turn to the expressive texture of his verse, we find lacking a certain manner of dramatic concreteness, an absence of substantiality of local effect and of that Keatsian intricacy of articulation which, though it is nothing like Metaphysical 'wit', and though Keats's verse has the alogical structure and emotional surge of characteristic Romantic poetry, is significantly closer to modern dispositions. The 'stranger' in 'Frost at Midnight', marvellously recreated observation as it is -

the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
(11.13-16)

- is immediately subsumed in the oceanic Ego, which in its turn produces a sublime swell in the verse, in ways which Imagism and an interest in such poetic modes as that of the Metaphysicals were to put out of court for modern poetry.¹⁶ It was Keats himself who put his finger on the precise set of factors which ally him with the modern sensibility and tend to cut Coleridge off from it. I shall have more to say about the Keatsian 'poetical character' which he himself contrasted with the 'egotistical sublime' that we may take Coleridge to exhibit, in some measure, in common with Wordsworth; this egotistical sublime is not by and large something with which the modern mind feels an affinity. (This need not prevent the modern reader responding to Wordsworth as a great poet). I shall refer, too, to Walter Pater's defining statement that 'Modern thought is distinguished from ancient by its cultivation of the "relative" spirit in place of the "absolute".' Coleridge, said Keats, 'would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable

of remaining content with half-knowledge.'¹⁷ Whatever Keats meant in precise terms by these much puzzled-over phrases, it is quite clear that he is contrasting his own tentative and agnostic cast of mind, his capability of 'being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason', with Coleridge's yearning for the absolute, for the final truth, for an ultimate mystical unification of all knowledge. Major modern poets have also sought the fixity of absolutes, paradoxically as part of an anti-Romantic reaction promulgated in the first instance by T.E. Hulme. But the impression of a radical discontinuity with Romanticism which the influence of Hulme's doctrines, including his anti-relativism, for a time gave, is now seen to be deceptive. Those moderns who have yearned for the absolute have done so precisely because they are so irrevocably of the Keatsian cast of mind; C.K. Stead argues attractively that Eliot's 'impersonality' is really a refined version of 'negative capability'.¹⁸ Again, the Platonic idealism of Coleridge, or for that matter of Shelley, may seem to have affinities with the Symbolism which is so potent a force for modernism.¹⁹ But the early influence of Shelley on Yeats and other poets was outgrown by them in their mature work, and here the significance for the moderns of such poetry as that of the Metaphysicals is again apparent. This significance has on occasions been too easily coupled (T.S. Eliot is partly to blame) with that of the Symbolists; in certain respects the two modes are opposed. C.K. Stead comments:

When F.O. Matthiessen ... writes that 'the condensation of form that was demanded both by Donne and the Symbolists logically builds its effects upon sharp contrasts', the word 'logically', if it means anything, is being used in two quite different senses at once. The conscious, directing intellect, the sinewy logic, the driving towards a particular point, all present in Donne, are absent in Symbolist poetry; on the other hand, there is no room, within the exacting intellectual structure of a Metaphysical poem, for the Symbolists' repetitive, dream-like music - the style which is brought to perfection in 'The Waste Land'.²⁰

The distinction is a good one, but in his special concern to emphasise Eliot's Romantic ancestry Stead omits to point out that Eliot's poetry does have a cerebral vivacity and a corrugation of texture which could not have come from the Symbolists. He claims that 'the experience of his [Eliot's] poetry is foremost an aural, emotional experience',²¹, but couldn't we say this of Shelley, or Swinburne? Critical attention to the way in which Eliot brought back the intellect into poetry as a reaction against Romantic 'feeling' and moral didacticism may sometimes have been too exclusive, but the fact is that the allusiveness and the ironies do force us to attend intellectually as well as emotionally and aurally. Similarly, in Edward Thomas's poetry both Symbolist and Metaphysical elements exist potently side by side, and one must be careful not to confuse the two. The endless verbal luxuriance of Shelley's idealistic fantasies is apt to weary the modern reader and has certainly not been looked-to as an example by modern poets; in any account we give of this situation the influence of the Metaphysicals cannot be overlooked. The prophetic strain which runs from Blake through Wordsworth and Shelley is unmodern; Keats's tempered idealism is much nearer than the nebulous ecstasies of Shelley or Pantheistic pieties of Coleridge to the complex and ambiguous patterns we find in the moderns.

Coleridge is too centrally of the spirit of his own time. What limits his significance for the twentieth century is precisely that sort of representativeness in relation to nineteenth-century thought which John Stuart Mill attributed to him. He is the representative figure of Romanticism in English poetry; as much the exemplifying voice of a particular cultural situation as Pope on one side and Tennyson on the other. Despite the extent to which his forays into the unconscious and his aesthetic psychology broach modern preoccupations, he speaks to the modern consciousness largely as a forerunner rather than a kindred spirit.

Leavis's account of the limited usefulness of his criticism for the modern student of literature, though it may offend Coleridgeans, seems to me about right.²² Keats, though not a modern, is not so immutably of his time; rather, he is a Romantic in the process of becoming a modern. For instance, his 'Eve of St. Agnes' has its aura of Gothic Revivalism and its Romantic exaggerations, yet the indecisiveness of its ending, the refusal of comfort let alone ecstasy, the 'remaining content with half-knowledge', strikes a much more modern note than the obtrusive moral which ends 'The Ancient Mariner'; and there is nothing in Coleridge so taut and strenuous, prefiguring the modern manner, as the induction to the revised 'Fall of Hyperion', of which I shall have more to say.

II. Starting-Points

The Modern tradition, I have said, splits off in important ways from the Romantic tradition, and the starting-points of this process in English poetry can be located with relative certainty.

The events which followed the arrival in England of Ezra Pound in 1908, and which culminated in the publication of The Waste Land in 1922, have been profusely documented. Wallace Martin points out that Pound himself referred to this period as the 'Risorgimento' and drew parallels with the Renaissance.²³ In July of 1908 F.S. Flint's first article as the poetry critic of The New Age appeared (though after 1910 he wrote elsewhere); 1909 saw the publication, from the same publishing house, of Flint's first volume of poems, In the Net of the Stars, and Pound's Personae. Two of T.E. Hulme's poems appeared in an anthology of the 'Poet's Club' in January 1909, and shortly afterwards he, Flint, and others interested in new directions for poetry seceded from the Club to form what Pound later called 'the forgotten school of 1909'. For a little more than a year between 1909 and 1911, when the magazine was taken out of his hands, Ford

Madox Hueffer provided a platform for fresh voices in poetry in The English Review. In his collected poems of 1909, as C.K. Stead has observed, Yeats 'put an outworn style and restricted sensibility behind him',²⁴ and was on the verge of his great mature work. Yeats's development, of course, may in itself be read as a record of the transition from Romantic to Modern; it has often been pointed out that he was far enough advanced in the process not to need the advice Pound offered him, though perhaps Pound acted as a catalyst. In 1911 and 1912 two more poets arrived in England from abroad. Languishing in Florence in 1911, Harold Monroe complained to his friend Maurice Hewlett (later mercilessly ridiculed by Pound in a much-quoted passage for his praise of Newbolt²⁵) of the state of English poetry. Hewlett told him to go back to England and do something²⁶; what Monroe did, at the beginning of 1912, was to found The Poetry Review, and at the end of the year, to open the Poetry Bookshop in Devonshire Street, the first Georgian Poetry anthology appearing with the Poetry Bookshop imprint in December. This is the year in which Robert Frost, unable to find a publisher in America, brought his family across the Atlantic; A Boy's Will appeared in 1913 and Frost's profound friendship with Edward Thomas was developed. By the end of 1920 Pound had published Hugh Selwyn Mauberley; T.S. Eliot, arriving in England in 1914, had made a decisive impression and had eventually taken over editorship of The Egoist. The War Poets had left their bitterly indelible mark. The Imagist movement had been conjured into being by Pound around the work of H.D., another expatriate American in London, and was nearing the end of its course. The Georgian poets, under the conservative leadership of J.C. Squire, were degenerating into a self-regarding clique - the 'Squirearchy' as Osbert Sitwell called it.²⁷ Periodical publications such as Middleton Murry's Rhythm (1911-1913) and The Blue Review (1913), and the Sitwells' Wheels (1916-1921), had crossed the scene; Yeats had published The Green Helmet, Responsibilities, and The Wild Swans

at Coole; and in retrospect the second decade of the century would come to acquire a peculiar significance.

I wish to pursue details only in certain specific directions, in particular as they concern the three poets at the centre of my study. It is no diminution of Pound's importance to insist on the proposition that his efforts from 1908 onwards, together with his Hugh Selwyn Mauberley and Eliot's The Waste Land, are not isolated phenomena, in the sense that they exist in relation to, and emerge from, a whole network of literary and intellectual explorations. Indeed, if Pound's dominating role has been much emphasised, other less obvious figures have also been variously canvassed as having made early contributions to the new poetic. Among these are Arthur Hugh Clough (it has been suggested that the lover Claude in his Amours de Voyage (1858) is a precursor of Prufrock and Mr. Silvero), Wilfred Scawen Blunt, to honour whom Pound led a contingent of poets in 1914²⁸, Rudyard Kipling and John Davidson, both respected by T.S. Eliot. John Davidson (1857-1909), who committed suicide, in a Nietzschean act of will, just as the new current was beginning to run, is certainly an interesting case. With uncommon intellectual energy, he thoroughly rejected past modes of thought, and looked for new kinds of subject-matter in poetry - advances in science and technology, the urban scene, realistically observed social conditions, Nietzschean and quasi-existentialist philosophy. His The Triumph of Mammon (1907) is just about contemporary with Hulme's first formulations of his ideas, and it implies a similar rejection of Romantic Humanism. The limiting factor with Davidson is that he never rejected Romantic modes of expression as Hulme did, and except in 'Thirty Bob a Week' and a few pieces with nothing modernist about them such as 'A Runnable Stag', he does not seem equipped to be a poet; there is little sign of a notable artistic intelligence. The case of Gerard Manley Hopkins is of a somewhat peculiar nature; it certainly has a place in the history of the Modern

tradition in English poetry, but the religious, personal and poetic problems with which Hopkins grappled are not, by and large, those with which I am concerned. Again, it is difficult not to see the War Poets as a case apart, and while I shall certainly refer to the war and its effects upon poets and upon the problems of consciousness in which I am interested, the war poetry of this period demands, and has indeed received, separate treatment.

The germinal situation of Imagism is, like Pound's importance, fully enough appreciated not to need insisting upon, but attitudes towards Georgianism tend to be ambivalent. There has been a critical tendency to circumvent the problem the Georgian movement presents by either of two ploys, the exclusive or the inclusive. Either it is asserted that a poet for whom approval is sought does not really 'belong' with the Georgians; or, as in James Reeves's Penguin anthology, Georgian Poetry is represented by a wide choice of work, a good deal of which was never directly associated with the historical movement. A recent comment by Raymond Williams, 'There is so much there that is vulnerable, but the critical definition needs to be made with great care',²⁹ seems to have the sort of judiciousness about it which is required for approaching the Georgians. C.K. Stead observes:

a chorus of critics begins its remarks on D.H. Lawrence's poetry by saying that he was 'not a Georgian'. In so far as all poets are individuals, no poet is a Georgian - or a Metaphysical either. But the characteristics which mark off the Georgians from their immediate predecessors are shared by Lawrence, Graves, Owen and Sassoon: a rejection of large themes and of the language of rhetoric that accompanied them in the nineteenth century; and an attempt to come to terms with immediate experience, sensuous or³⁰ imaginative, in a language close to common speech.

The earlier Georgians saw themselves as in revolt against both prominent aspects of late nineteenth-century poetry, against, as Robert Graves put it, 'all formally religious, philosophical or improving themes; and all sad, wicked, café table themes.'³¹ They saw themselves as engaged in something of a Wordsworthian revalidation of their art, bringing poetry

back into contact with ordinary life, using often unpoetical subjects, and infusing their work with a 'modern' scepticism. Moreover, what one contemporary reviewer called their 'acceptance of individual whims and wayward fancies in the place of firm philosophical ideas',³² shows them (putting aside the preconceptions) moving in the direction of the poetry of subjectivity which is our concern here. But the 'realism' which R.H. Ross claims to be 'the major, pre-eminent Georgian hallmark',³³ is often, it has been objected, a matter of 'crude schoolboyish fantasies' in which one hears 'the snigger in the dorm'.³⁴ There is an unmistakably public-school ethos about the anthologies, perhaps inevitable under the editorship of a pillar of the establishment like Edward Marsh. And without doubt what the anthologies in fact purveyed was a poetry of escape; brief, undemanding lyrics, or, in longer pieces, comfortably ambling blank verse or couplets, presenting a bucolic idyll or tales of distant lands and distant times. Anything taxing would not have had the appeal for the busy city-dweller getting away for a weekend in the country that these anthologies did. But they present a darkening world too. That modern man is afflicted with some kind of general malaise is tacitly acknowledged and even half-heartedly faced. The alienation of urban life is given this sort of treatment by John Masefield:

Towns can be prisons where the spirit dulls
 Away from mates and ocean-wandering hulls,
 Away from all bright water and great hills
 And sheep-walks where the curlews cry their fills;
 Away in towns, where eyes have nought to see
 But dead museums and miles of misery
 And floating life un-rooted from man's need
 And miles of fish-hooks baited to catch greed
 And life made wretched out of human ken
 And miles of shopping women served by men.³⁵

In tenor, if not in expression, this is getting into the area of an Eliotish vision of the modern city, and I shall devote a chapter to the antithesis of country and city suggested here, as it appears in the consciousness of poets of the time. But Masefield's response to the situation only confirms established attitudes, while D.H. Lawrence's freshness of response stands alone

in the Georgian anthologies. It is in the delicate work of a poet whom F.R. Leavis, as responsible as anybody for the pejorative currency of the term 'Georgian', singled out for attention in New Bearings, Walter de la Mare, that we feel the Georgian ethos is married to a real and strongly felt sense of unease, of impending threat. But his work continues to be regarded as suitable for children; Leavis described the effect of 'legerdemain' his poetry has, the way the unease merely adds a frisson to our enjoyment of the magical spell he weaves. His is clearly no ordinary talent, but avoids any kind of adult formulation of the unease, anything that might have to be faced seriously by the weekend readers of Georgian Poetry.

Yet we still have to take account of a poem such as Gordon Bottomley's 'The End of the World'³⁶, where the effect achieved is not that of an incidental frisson. At first sight this might appear a typical Georgian poem; its stylistic features are old-fashioned without the renewed validity a Hardy or Robert Frost or Edward Thomas imparted to such features; yet it has compactness of texture, and the simplicity and realism at which the Georgians aimed are invested with an unusual degree of actuality. Throughout, in movement and onomatopoeic effects, the lines recreate the endless sigh and sweep of falling snow; there is a relentless, even rhythm which seems to impress upon the reader the threat of a cold entombment like that which eventually befalls the two people in the poem, cut off by days-long snowfall in an isolated farm-house:

The snow had fallen many nights and days;
 The sky was come upon the earth at last,
 Sifting thinly down as endlessly
 As though within the system of blind planets
 Something had been forgot or overdriven.
 The dawn now seemed neglected in the grey
 Where mountains were unbuilt and shadowless trees
 Rootlessly paused or hung upon the air.
 There was no wind, but now and then a sigh
 Crossed that dry falling dust and rifted it
 Through crevices of slate and door and casement.

Drastic reduction of visibility, unnatural effects of light, sound and

movement - 'shapes loom larger through a moving snow' - might well actually occur in a heavy snowfall, and authentic detail enhances the sense of reality:

For more than three days now the snow had thatched
That cow-house roof where it had ever melted
With yellow stains from the beast's breath inside;

But, as this detail suggests, something abnormal is happening; an unnatural world is gradually constructed out of the realities - mountains are 'unbuilt', trees are 'shadowless'. Bottomley describes the world we know, full of 'familiar things', but something scarcely thinkable is happening to it: the earth is cooling down and dying in the way we know it some day must - 'The earth was cooling and drew down the sky.' And because we start from realities we are involved in a way we would not be if this were a blatant piece of fantasy, of magic-spell weaving. At first the man and woman are pleased with the respite from normal occupations which the snowfall gives them:

All was safe indoors where life went on
Glad of the close enfolding snow - O glad
To be so safe and secret at its heart,
Watching the strangeness of familiar things.

But gradually the 'strangeness of familiar things' becomes menace, and in imperceptible stage life ceases to go on - the clock stops,

A butterfly, that hid until the Spring
Under a ceiling's shadow, dropt, was dead.

A broken bed, burned in the grate for warmth, proves ineffective as 'the coldness deepened'. The man falls asleep with the woman watching him, and she realises that it is futile to try to reawaken him. Perhaps this is only a subjective drama, the couple cut off from the outside world so long by the snow that it feels as if the world is ending. In any case, the attempt to give concrete realisation to a state of mind, a state of being besieged by a creeping psychic menace against which there is no defence, is to a large degree successful. The poem's effects are as stealthily insidious as the snow itself; there is no obtrusive announcement of calamity, no hysterical

rhetoric. The nerveless tone, like somebody walking unflinchingly on the edge of a precipice, is maintained steadily; the poem works like a migraine gnawing away at our resistance. Certainly, the woman's final speech suffers from the emotional insipidity we find in the verse dramas of Bottomley and other Georgians, a sub-Shakespearean vacancy inherited from Victorian verse-drama. Certainly too, the sort of longing for oblivion which the Nineties affected may stand behind the poem, but it is given substance; while touches of Miltonic-Tennysonian cliché in cadence and phrasing - 'locks spreaded like a son of morning', 'Yet never bird fell out, save once a dead one', 'Because they heard not any sound of bells' - do not seem mere vapid impressiveness but integral to the relentless movement of the poem, and are in any case surrounded by lines of colloquial naturalness. Perhaps the creeping paralysis described in the poem forbodes the ultimate triumph of ennui. Perhaps this is the bourgeois spirit in literature prophesying its own demise, announcing a world in which phrases like 'locks spreaded like a son of morning' will cease to be acceptable except for ironic effect, a world in which, as the Victorian-Edwardian order fell apart, the weekenders could never again feel 'safe and secret' in their country retreats. However this may be, although 'The End of the World' scarcely qualifies as a 'modern' poem, it does seem to emerge from a characteristic limbo of consciousness, in which the real and the unreal interchange and co-exist; sensations of the profound unreality of things, and hallucinatory or dream-like worlds given a disconcerting concreteness, occur repeatedly in the poetry we are to examine, and seem to present themselves as effects of a haunted and bewildered modern consciousness. I think the poem may reasonably be taken as a symptom that the anxieties, the general predicament, of modern man under industrial-scientific capitalism, given poetic acknowledgement by Wordsworth and Coleridge, but held at bay throughout the Victorian dispensation by the spirit of Tennyson's In Memoriam, Browning's 'God's in his

heaven - All's right with the world!', or at best Arnold's 'sweetness and light', were at last, under new pressures, asserting themselves in the consciousness of poets in a way which would demand a new rigour in the act of composition, and new imaginative resources.

Since the turn of the century the poetry reviews and criticism of Edward Thomas had been quietly but persistently helping to prepare the ground: it would be difficult to put one's finger on more acute or more modern criticism during the first decade. Rupert Brooke's interest in the Jacobians, before Eliot had pointed the way, is also worth noting. Despite a few good poems, Brooke need not concern us here, but in his own way, under the patronage of Edward Marsh, and with a public image as part young Greek god, part angry young man, he for a time looked a figure who might possess the power to remake English poetry. But the course of things was probably most strongly influenced by those who controlled literary periodicals, men like A.R. Orage, editor of The New Age, Hueffer while he ran The English Review, Pound when he had insinuated himself into The New Freewoman which then became The Egoist, and Harold Monroe, who also built up his own bookshop and publishing house.

Monroe's various activities provided him with the means of keeping his finger continuously on the pulse of London literary life. Dedicated, like Pound, to Poetry, he saw himself, also like Pound, as conducting a campaign against the legacy of late-Victorian verse, but he wanted poetry to take on a revolutionary-prophetic role, whereas Pound wanted poetry to form a living reinstatement of the great achievements of past culture, and was concerned with renewing and streamlining the intrinsic poetic machinery to this end. Pound's concern was primarily a technical one, his Imagist Manifesto was simply, in effect, an attempt to correct certain gross stylistic faults to which English poetry had fallen prone. At the same time, this concern reflects the essential emphasis of virtually all the modernist and revolu-

tionary movements in the arts (revolutionary in the artistic sense) an emphasis on purifying art, on isolating more rigorously qualities of the work of art which distinguish it from all other objects or activities, and hence on theories of 'significant' or 'expressive' form. Such theories posit the autonomy of the art-structure and take us back to the Coleridgean claim that art has a 'logic' of its own, without committing the fallacy of 'art for art's sake'. But Monroe, said to have displayed a typical Scottish dourness, and who apparently repressed homosexual inclinations and had what Flint called a 'bleak side' to his personality, did not employ Pound's shock tactics. As a young man he shared the romantic idealism of many of his generation; he was committed to Fabian socialism, and interested in vegetarianism, schemes of communal living, and craftsmanship on the Burne-Jones and William Morris model. He thought, in the words of his friend Arundel del Re, that

it was the duty of the modern poet to give poetical expression to the ideas and feelings of the new age that, he believed, was dawning; an age in which man must finally cast off worn-out beliefs and meaningless traditions and begin to live joyously and rationally because better acquainted with the laws of nature and of his own being.³⁷

He seems to have partaken in large draughts of that 'exciting brew' which Holbrook Jackson describes in his obituary of A.R. Orage:

Then came Nietzsche. That was my fault. Orage went over the top and so did the group. We all developed supermania. He wanted a Nietzsche circle in which Plato and Blavatsky, Fabianism and Hinduism, Shaw and Wells and Edward Carpenter should be blended, with Nietzsche as the catalytic.³⁸
An exciting brew....

Broadly speaking, Monroe was affiliated, like most of the Georgian poets, to the liberal intellectual movement of which ^{we} may take the Schlegel sisters in E.M. Forster's Howards End to be the conspicuous example in literature. He wanted poetry to herald the foreseen new age, and he wanted to bring this poetry to the people. Pound adopted a contrary position, important insofar

as it insisted on the poet's right to be true to himself rather than satisfying the demands of an audience, but one which had implications of cultural élitism and was in the tradition of the poet as exile, matters about which I shall have more to say. Perhaps what G. Bullough in 1934 saw as modern poetry's 'vicious circle of increasing isolation and remoteness',³⁹ was, as Eliot claimed, a necessary and inevitable condition. But Monro, in effect, strove to maintain what C.K. Stead describes as the equilateral triangle between the poet, his audience, and 'Reality',⁴⁰. However, the catholicity of taste which this involved had two sides to it. On the one hand, it was a useful corrective to the over-narrow concentration of enthusiasms to which Pound's influence tended, and kept the field open to more traditionally-inclined young poets such as Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, and Wilfred Owen. On the other hand, it reflects an uncertainty of judgement. Monro had a certain *recherche* knack of singling out unusual minor talents, including feminine ones, and he was aware that it was not enough merely to change the public image of poetry and persuade the public to buy more poetry, but that poetry must change too, both in style and subject-matter. 'A new diction is demanded, and a return to life', he wrote in the first issue of his Poetry Review. But his book Some Contemporary Poets (1920) contains instances of critical short-sightedness in the face of more major promise, and he rejected both Eliot and Edward Thomas for publication, though he later said that The Waste Land was 'as near to poetry as our generation is capable of reaching'.⁴¹ In time, he came to have a sense, coloured by deteriorating health and disappointment in personal relationships, of twentieth-century civilisation as a fine new growth unaccountably turned rotten. It is the haunted vision which this produced, together with the stylistic uncertainties which were his endeavour to find an authentic poetic voice for such a vision, which are of interest for our present purposes, and I shall compare his and Eliot's treatments of the psychological

problems of modern man and the escapes or solutions they each explore.

In the decade following 1908 F.S. Flint wrote in most of the influential magazines, and later contributed to The Times Literary Supplement, the Mercure de France, and Eliot's Criterion. From the start an unusual grasp of French poetry and a polemical and theoretical bent were evident; the direction and emphasis of his writing, as well as his capacity to put English writing into a European perspective, may be illustrated by some comments he made in 1913 in the special 'Futurist' issue of Poetry and Drama, which was brought out to coincide with a visit paid to England by the Italian Futurist poet, Marinetti.

People may laugh at M. Marinetti; but if they will take the trouble to consider his theories without prejudice - it is very stupid to have literary prejudices - they might profit; and the beginning of the poetic art that is to fit with the future mind, modified by machinery, might be made. Without going so far as M. Marinetti, we may ask ourselves what is the use, for instance, of logical syntax in poetry? Why we should have so absolute a respect for the integrity of words? Whether poetry will not finally develop into a series of emotional ejaculations, cunningly modulated, and coloured by a swift play of subtle and far-reaching analogies? Are we not really spellbound by the past, and is the Georgian Anthology really an expression of this age? I doubt it. I doubt whether English poets are really alive to what is around them. And, to betray myself completely, whether, perhaps, it is worth while being so alive. It is a question to consider and thresh out. There are so many old emotions to which we cling that it is legitimate to pause before we set out to transform ourselves into the fiends M. Marinetti would have us be, although it may be admirable to be a fiend. ⁴²

In asking his readers to consider theories about 'the poetic art that is to fit with the future mind', Flint was neither prepared to be taken in by half-measures such as Georgian Poetry, nor to go overboard for the grosser inanities of movements such as Futurism. The tone is radical, but there is a sensible placing of Marinetti, an awareness of what in Futurism related to the essential issues. His questions reach towards

much that we now recognise as intrinsic to the twentieth-century poetic - experimentation with methods of poetic organisation, with the 'logic' of syntax, the 'integrity' of words. A 'series of emotional ejaculations', moreover, obviously fits verse such as D.H. Lawrence's; Flint shares, as we shall see, a number of problems of composition with Lawrence, and they were on similar ground in their response to Futurism. In Italy in 1914, Vivian de Sola Pinto points out, Lawrence read the anthology I Poeti Futuristi, and in Marinetti's manifesto 'we can see the germ of Lawrence's conception of "poetry of this immediate present, instant poetry".⁴³ It suggests the free verse and expressive form, a kind of seismograph of the subjective life, recording the subtlest vibrations of sensation and consciousness, which both poets were seeking.

Futurist free verse, a perpetual dynamism of thought, an uninterrupted stream of images and sounds, is the only medium to express the ephemeral, unstable and symphonic universe which is being created in us and with us. Futurist free verse is the dynamism of our malleable consciousness fully realised: the integral ego, sung, painted, sculptured indefinitely in its perpetual aggressive evolution.⁴⁴

But if Futurism is among the international affiliations of the poetry of consciousness, Lawrence, like Flint, distinguished the sense from the silliness:

I like (Futurism) because it is the applying to emotions the purging of old forms and sentimentalities. I like it for saying - enough of this sickly cant, let us be honest and stick by what is in us ... They want to deny every scrap of tradition and experience, which is silly.⁴⁵ I like them. Only I don't believe in them.

Both draw upon Futurism for a clearer definition of the situation facing the poet, but do not see it as a directly usable model. It is to this situation - that of the poet standing as heir to the Romantic and Symbolist traditions yet aware of some difference in himself and in the world around him - that the numerous articles Flint contributed to periodicals throughout the

decade are all, in effect, addressed. There seems to me no room for doubt that when Pound and Eliot turned to non-English models, and Eliot invoked a 'mind of Europe', a large part of the ground had first been broken by Flint. Richard Aldington, who himself wrote on French poetry in The Egoist, made the admission that

I believe I am right in saying that practically the only men in England who have sufficiently omnivorous reading habits to read all the modern French poetry published are Mr. F.S. Flint and Mr. John Gould Fletcher.⁴⁶

Christopher Middleton has observed that Flint 'corresponded with numerous young French poets and had a quite extraordinary grasp of their ideas and practice', and that 'Pound at that time must have seemed to him a brash and narrow amateur.'⁴⁷ In a letter to me he comments:

I think it is important to realise what a gigantic amount of work he did in those days, writing his articles on French poetry ... Flint knew French better than Pound did, and he was also capable of reading and writing Italian and German ...

Aldington, indeed, implies that Flint was largely responsible for Hulme's translations of Bergson - 'Flint did the translation and Hulme revised it and put his name to it'.⁴⁸ Even Tristan Tzara, in his Memoirs of Dadaism⁴⁹, saw fit to mention Flint as having made Dadaist ideas known in England.

In phrases to which I shall recur from time to time as touchstones, Leavis spoke of Edward Thomas's 'distinctively modern sensibility' and of 'the fidelity with which Thomas records the modern disintegration, the sense of directionlessness.'⁵⁰ We may ask, is this a situation which is so distinctively modern, and is there any objective foundation for such a sense of disintegration, of directionlessness? Is it pervasive enough to make it a defining characteristic of sensibility in our own time? Are there not more dominant forces affecting sensibility? We are unlikely to arrive at indisputably final answers to these questions; Leavis's assertive tone does take a lot for granted, and his formulations are somewhat pat.

Nevertheless, we will be hard put to it to find any major statement in poetry of confidence in twentieth-century civilisation or of assurance about man's place in the universe. Along with what George Dangerfield depicted as 'the strange death of Liberal England' went the demise of that intellectual liberal movement, to which the young Harold Monro was attuned, which in the earlier part of the century saw twentieth-century man striding confidently and purposefully ahead - a movement unable to survive the rigours the century actually brought. A retrospect on this from a highly central 'liberal intellectual' standpoint may be found in Leonard Woolf's autobiography:

In the decade before the 1914 war there was a political and social movement in the world, and particularly in Europe and in Britain, which seemed at the time wonderfully hopeful and exciting. It seemed as though human beings might really be on the brink of becoming civilised. It was partly the feeling of relief and release as we broke out of the fog of Victorianism. The forces of reaction and barbarism were still there, but they were in retreat ... For the first time in the history of the world the rights of Jews, cobblers, and coloured men not to be beaten, hanged, or judicially murdered by officers, Junkers, or white men were publicly admitted; it looked for a moment as if militarism, imperialism, and antisemitism were on the run.

We were, of course, mistaken in thinking that the world really might become civilised, but the fact that it didn't does not prove that our optimism was foolish or credulous. It is so easy and foolish to be historically wise after the event. It was, I still believe, touch and go whether the movement towards liberty and equality - political and social - and towards civilisation, which was strong in the first decade of the 20th century, would become so strong as to carry everything before it. Its enemies saw the risk and the result was the war of 1914; they postponed the danger of our becoming civilised for at least a hundred years. But the future could not alter the fact that it was exciting to be alive in London in 1911 and that there was reason for exhilaration. Profound changes were taking place in every direction, not merely politically and socially. The revolution of the motor car and the aeroplane had begun; Freud and Rutherford and Einstein were at work beginning to revolutionise our knowledge of our own minds and of the universe. 51
Equally exciting things were happening in the arts...

The fact is that those whom Leavis called 'the sensitive and aware' have in the present century failed to achieve a sense of grasping their world, they have come to experience it in terms of a falling apart. It is with these landscapes of the mind, and the attempts to find poetic equivalents for them, that I am concerned, though I shall try to bring the discussion to the point of recognising that the intensely subjective worlds which poets, as a result of this situation, have spent their time exploring, have led the Modern tradition itself to an impasse. But if Leavis's remarks are, after all, no more than a commonplace about modern man, they have that quality of unexceptionable generalisation which is a necessary element of effective criticism, and do seem to stand up when we examine them against the materials out of which modern poetry has been made.

Edward Thomas's poetry is made out of a restless temper compounded by a life that gave him no rest. R. George Thomas, editing the letters to Gordon Bottomley, commented:

The sheer amount of Thomas's reviews is forbidding... At a conservative estimate I think that these preserved [i.e. by Thomas himself] reviews represent about two-thirds of Thomas's total output ... a minimum of 1,122 reviews - just over a million words about 1,200 books. During the first four years [i.e. 1900-1904] he averaged 80 reviews a year ... between the Christmasses of 1905 and 1912 he was contributing 100 signed (or full-length) reviews annually to the Daily Chronicle or the Daily Post ... to The Nation, The Athenaeum, or The English Review, besides at least 50 shorter notices to weeklies and, after 1907, a monthly article or two-column unsigned review to The Bookman.⁵²

Through these labours Thomas certainly acquired considerable status as a critic, but such work did not support a wife and three children, and financial harrassment and sheer fatigue joined forces to intensify and entrench his natural darkness of temper. Relations with his family were often strained, and, far too haunted and restless to settle to a stable and lucrative job, he travelled ceaselessly about the countryside of England and Wales, in what was really an inner quest for what he could

never find. He becomes an archetype of the socially estranged romantic artist. Weariness is a recurring theme in his writings; in his prose book The Ickniel Way we find:

There will never be any summer any more, and I
am weary of everything. I stay because I am too
weak to go, I crawl on because it is easier than
to stop.⁵³

It is this state of being which is recorded with such marvellous 'fidelity' in his verse, and which is so 'representatively' in tune with modern intuitions of ennui. T.S. Eliot wanted modern poets to do what he praised the Metaphysical poets for doing: to be 'engaged in the task of trying to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling', rather than merely 'ruminating' as the Victorians had done.⁵⁴ It is precisely in terms such as these that Thomas breaks with the Victorian past. Not only does the structure and movement of his verse have affinities with the Metaphysicals, but so does the sceptical, tentative, self-doubting cast of mind it embodies, a mind ceaselessly in movement, endlessly pondering over whether 'to stay' or 'to go'. This helps us to place Thomas as a modern who belongs alongside poets such as Eliot and Pound, whose Personae he was one of the first critics to praise; the connection with the self-analytic, self-conscious poetry of the Metaphysicals also relates to the peculiar intensity with which Thomas is engaged in writing a poetry of consciousness. Jon Silkin has recently observed:

The poetry often, and perhaps at its best, conveys the impression of a mind thinking about itself, and its response to its past experience. The prose is less conscious of itself and more concerned with the mood it evokes. This is hardly surprising, because the prose came first, and because the poetry then drew on the material of the prose, subtly altering the responses to objects that often provoked the day-dreaming nostalgia of the prose. A painful honesty subsequently corrects in the poetry the indulgence and nostalgic dislocation of some of the prose.⁵⁵

The relationship between the prose and the poetry is fully discussed by

William Cooke; this 'mind thinking about itself' may be observed in poems such as 'Aspens', of which the final stanza runs:

Whatever wind blows, while they and I have leaves
We cannot other than an aspen be
That ceaselessly, unreasonably grieves,
Or so men think who like a different tree.⁵⁶

'I was the aspen. 'We' meant the trees and I with my dejected shyness', explained Thomas to Eleanor Farjeon.⁵⁷ The poem has a good deal of ostensibly Romantic and nostalgic apparatus, yet it is in the extent to which Thomas can step outside himself, can be conscious of his own condition in the way implied in that 'ceaselessly, unreasonably grieves', can analytically point out to us the relationship between the outer landscape and the inner one in a way a Romantic poet would not care to do because it interferes with the organic spontaneity and virgin quality of the feeling, that we see him splitting off from the Romantic tradition to become part of a Modern tradition. It is to this representative situation in Thomas that I immediately turn in my first chapter.

FOOTNOTES

1. Cleanth Brooks, Modern Poetry and the Tradition, Chapel Hill, 1965, p. xxviii.
2. Ibid., p. xxviii.
3. Ed. Richard Ellman and Charles Feidelson, The Modern Tradition, New York, 1965, p. 685.
4. Ibid., p. 685.
5. See The Romantic Agony, Oxford Paperbacks, 1970, pp. 1-16.
6. A fragment of verse drama, 'The Making of Lilith', appeared in the Imagist Anthology 1930, pp. 97-114, but there is little about this to invalidate Peter Jones's comment about Flint in the Penguin Imagist Poetry, p. 166, that 'Sadly there was no revival of his poetic impulse after Otherworlds (1920)'.
7. Op.Cit., p. vii.
8. Manuscript sources are drawn on by both Grant and Cooke, and the scope and limits of my study have not, in my judgement, required going beyond published sources for my material. The one manuscript I have examined, consisting of letters from W.H. Davies to Edward Thomas in the collection of King's School, Canterbury, is of peripheral significance. In the case of F.S. Flint, I have had some assistance from Mr. Christopher Middleton, who has studied Flint's unpublished papers in the Humanities Research Centre at the University of Texas (Austin).
9. Op.Cit., p. ix.
10. The Mirror and the Lamp, New York, 1953, p. 124.
11. See Allan Rodway, The Romantic Conflict, 1963, for a specific discussion of the notion of 'conflict' in Romantic poetry.
12. Collected Letters, ed. Griggs, Vol. 1, 347.
13. Ibid., Vol. 1, 350.
14. Ibid., Vol.ii, 874-5.

15. 'The Theme of The Ancient Mariner', Scrutiny, Vol. ix (1941), 335.
(The lines numbered in brackets are quoted in the original passage).
16. Or as Allan Rodway puts it, his verse is 'robbed ... of Wordsworth's sense of locality'. Op.Cit., p. 165.
17. Letters, ed. Rollins, Vol. i, 193-4.
18. C.K. Stead, The New Poetic, 1964, pp. 128 ff.
19. I shall tend to talk about Symbolism in a generic sense. Discriminations such as are made in A.G. Lehmann's The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895, Oxford, 1950, will be acknowledged only where they have a modifying effect on some aspect of my discussion. Wherever I am referring to what may be considered the Symbolist tradition, emanating from Baudelaire, in this broad generic sense, or to poets or poetry associated with it (i.e. a Symbolist poet, a Symbolist poem), I have tried to use a capital 'S'. References to the ordinary use of symbols or symbolism in poetry employ the lower-case 's'. There is a good deal of overlapping, and I do not claim to have entirely avoided confusion.
20. Op. Cit., p. 161.
21. Ibid., p.167.
22. 'Coleridge in Criticism', Vol. xi, no. 1 (June 1940), 57-69.
23. See '"The Forgotten School of 1909" and the Origins of Imagism', New York, 1966, p. 7. This essay was included, with some alterations, in Wallace Martin, The New Age Under Orage, Manchester, 1967. Martin refers to Pound's article 'Analysis of This Decade', The New Age, xvi (Feb. 11 1915), 409-410.
24. Op. Cit., p. 54.
25. The Criterion, Vol. XI, no. xlv (July 1932), 587-8.
26. According to F.S. Flint's 'Biographical Note' in the 1933 Collected Poems of Harold Monro.
27. 'The Jolly Old Squire or Way-Down in Georgia', The Monthly Chapbook, no. xxix (September 1922), 15.
28. An occasion recorded, in a note signed by F.S. Flint, in Poetry and Drama, Vol. II, no. V (March 1914), 5.

29. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, 1973, p. 254.
30. Op. Cit., p. 88.
31. Robert Graves, The Common Asphodel, 1949, pp. 112-13.
32. Arthur Waugh, 'The New Poetry', Quarterly Review, Oct. 1916. Quoted by C.K. Stead, Op. Cit., p. 82.
33. R.H. Ross, The Georgian Revolt, 1967, p. 146 FN.
34. Michael Thorpe, Review of The Georgian Revolt, in English Studies, Vol. LI, no. iii, (June 1970), 269-71.
35. Georgian Poetry 1911-1912, p. 121.
36. Ibid., p. 25.
37. 'Georgian Reminiscences', Studies in English Literature, (Tokyo), XII (1932), 325-6. Quoted by R.H. Ross, p. 60.
38. New English Weekly, 15 November 1934. Quoted by Paul Selver in Orage and the New Age Circle, 1959, p. 87.
39. G. Bullough, The Trend of Modern Poetry, 1934, p. 90.
40. Op. Cit., p. 11.
41. 'Notes for a Study of The Waste Land', The Chapbook, no. xxxiv (February 1923), 21.
42. 'French Chronicle', Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. iii (Sept. 1913), 359-60. Flint is reviewing Marinetti's poetry written in French, and hence refers to him as M. Marinetti.
43. 'D.H. Lawrence: Poet without a mask', Introduction to Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence, 1964, p. 9.
44. Quoted by Pinto, Ibid., p. 9 FN.
45. Ed. Harry T. Moore, The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence, 1962, p. 280.

46. Richard Aldington, 'Some Recent French Poems', The Egoist, Vol. I, no. xii, 221.
47. Christopher Middleton, 'Documents on Imagism from the Papers of F.S. Flint', The Review, no. iv (April 1965), p. 35.
48. Richard Aldington, Life for Life's Sake, New York, 1940, p. 154.
49. Reprinted as an appendix by Edmund Wilson in his Axel's Castle. See Fontana Library edition, 1961, p. 246.
50. F.R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry, Penguin, 1963, p. 61, p. 64.
51. Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, 1972, pp. 36-7.
52. Ed. R.G. Thomas, Letters from Edward Thomas to Gordon Bottomley, 1968, pp. 8-10.
53. Edward Thomas, The Icknield Way, 1913, p. 281. The passage in which this occurs was versified by Thomas in 'Rain'.
54. Ed. Hayward, Selected Prose, Penguin, 1953, p. 118.
55. Jon Silkin, Out of Battle, The Poetry of the Great War, 1972, p. 90.
56. Edward Thomas, Collected Poems, 1949, p. 157.
57. See Eleanor Farjeon, Edward Thomas: The Last Four Years, 1958, p. 153.

CHAPTER I

EDWARD THOMAS AND THE PROBLEM OF ACUTE CONSCIOUSNESS

I. The 'Poetical Character' of Edward Thomas¹

One of the distinctive features of Edward Thomas's poetry is its concern with the 'feel' of an experience, with what the mind does to an experience. Moreover, the recording of experiential phenomena of this order comes together with an ontological concern with the perception of essences. It might be said that a great deal of poetry attempts to convey the exact nature or essence of a thing or an experience, but Thomas delves into the mental processes attendant upon this in a peculiarly obsessive way. This is apparent in the poem called 'Parting':

The Past is a strange land, most strange.
 Wind blows not there, nor does rain fall:
 If they do, they cannot hurt at all.
 Men of all kinds as equals range
 The soundless fields and streets of it.
 Pleasure and pain there have no sting,
 The perished self not suffering
 That lacks all blood and nerve and wit,
 And is in shadow-land a shade.
 Remembered joy and misery
 Bring joy to the joyous equally;
 Both sadden the sad. So memory made
 Parting to-day a double pain:
 First because it was parting; next
 Because the ill it ended vexed
 And mocked me from the Past again,
 Not as what had been remedied
 Had I gone on, - not that, oh no!
 But as itself no longer woe;
 Sighs, angry word and look and deed
 Being faded: rather a kind of bliss,
 For there spiritualized it lay
 In the perpetual yesterday
 That naught can stir and strain like this.²

This is not a simple piece of nostalgia or lament at parting, nor is it just saying that the past always appears less painful than the present. The poem's fluctuations of thought and feeling and the corrugations of the verse realise for us the acute discomfort of a state of consciousness,

a psychological disposition, in which more or less normal experience becomes an almost intolerable burden, to be mentally heaved and strained at in an effort to get it into some sort of manageable form. 'Parting today' is 'a double pain', while the present - many Thomas poems debate the relative value or reality of past and present - is a state of being in which, almost by definition for Thomas, the pressure is never taken off; the movement of the verse itself 'stirs' and 'strains' to convey this state. What sort of a mental condition is this and what sort of a 'poetical character' - the appropriateness of Keats's phrase will, I hope, become evident - makes poetry out of it? 'Parting' has perhaps a certain affinity of character with the Metaphysicals: the lively speech-movement, the tendency towards involved and paradoxical thought, and something of an explorative habit accompanying a record of 'the thought at the moment it arose in the mind'.³ Thomas's verse in general displays an oblique, angular play of mind involving the repetition of words and syntactical arrangements with progressive shifts of meaning, and a terse conjoining of perceptions or ideas which is almost wit were it not for the reticence. All of this embodies a particular selfconscious and analytic attitude towards experience, and to note that Thomas shares this with the Metaphysicals goes some way towards answering my question. But we can also talk about affinities in Thomas with very different writers, Hardy and Robert Frost, for example, or Keats.

The association of Thomas with Keats was made by John Burrow in Essays in Criticism in 1957.⁴ Mr. Burrow's starting-point is the 'rotten little book on Keats' which Thomas told Eleanor Farjeon he had undertaken in the autumn of 1913:⁵ 'Between the writing of this book and its publication in 1916, Thomas produced nearly all the poems by which he is now known.' Mr. Burrow proceeded to argue that 'the particular strength of these poems testifies as much to an intelligent reading of Keats

as to the acknowledged friendship and advice of Robert Frost'. Replying to this article H. Coombes complained that 'Many writers helped to form the man who is the Edward Thomas of the poems', but that nothing in Keats '"became" anything in Thomas's poetry in the simple way Mr. Burrow suggests'.⁶ This is true; the presence of those 'many writers' has been well demonstrated, notably by Mr. Coombes himself and by William Cooke in their books on Thomas. Even so, Mr. Burrow was justified in his perception that 'the intimate relation of [Thomas's] critical judgements to his habits as a poet' reveals particular affiliations between his own poetry and Keats's.

I should like, first, to add to Mr. Burrow's evidence a few examples. Observations of natural phenomena such as this in 'To Autumn':

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue

are remarkably similar in the two poets - compare Thomas's

The pack of scarlet clouds running across
The harvest evening that seemed endless then.⁷

Though Keats refers here to the dawn, Thomas may be remembering in his pack of clouds the 'dismal rack of clouds Upon the boundaries of day and night', where the sorrowing Hyperion 'stretch'd himself' (Book I, ll.302-5). In any case the comparison serves to illustrate the strongly metaphorical and concrete habit of expression which the two poets have in common. We will find, too, the same play in both poets with oppositions of cold and warmth, darkness and brightness. Thomas amply qualifies as a possessor of that 'poetical Character' which in Keats's definition 'enjoys light and shade'. When in his book he quotes⁸ from the closing stanza of 'Ode to Psyche' one senses him savouring the complex of contrasts in 'bright torch', the darkness and coolness of night, 'warm Love', and (an especially positive sympathy here) 'dark-cluster'd trees'. Of the quality and character of Keats's Englishness, Thomas says:

English literature, English poetry, the Muse of his native land . . . was a main part of what England meant for Keats. Nature and poetry joined influences. . . . 'I like, I love England - I like its living men' 9

This is something very like his own deep-rooted Englishness, and for Thomas, too, English poetry and nature join influences. In his book, Thomas brings out excellently the interdependence for Keats of books - his reading - and nature; to Keats, he says, 'The beauty of Nature immediately suggested the beauty of poetry and the translation of one into the other'.¹⁰ This is the case for both poets, and not only does Thomas record with obvious satisfaction various aspects of Keats's observation and appreciation of nature, but their particular ways of perceiving and experiencing are similar. One of these is suggested by Thomas, for example, when he admires in Keats's letters the 'direct presentation of the moment's phases of mind and moods of temperament' or when he notes 'Keats's fidelity to the observation or feeling of the hour'.¹¹

Thomas's critical study (the finished book was not so 'rotten' after all) is, then, the expression of a self-implicating sympathy, a kinship of sensibility and of 'poetical character'. Thomas recognises in Keats the kind of passive extinction of self in the experience of the moment, the same kind of giving of himself to the weather and other natural manifestations, that is present in his own poems:

So he could lie awake listening to the night rain 'with a sense of being drowned and rotted like a grain of wheat'; if a sparrow came before his window he could 'take part in its existence and pick about the gravel' 12

Thomas's 'Rain' begins with a similar surrender to the night rain, and draws to a close:

Like me who have no love which this wild rain
Has not dissolved except the love of death ... 13

Here Thomas allows the surrender to find its ultimate form in a Keatsian embracing of death. Something like Keats's 'taking part in' the life of

the sparrow extends in Thomas to virtually all natural objects, to the weather and the seasons. 'Digging' ('Today I think Only with scents...')¹⁴ is a compact expression of the Keatsian abdication to sense-impressions, to the moment's experience. In another poem ('The Brook') Thomas loses himself in the life of a butterfly:

And down upon the dome
Of the stone the cart-horse kicks against so oft
A butterfly alighted. From aloft
He took the heat of the sun, and from below.
On the hot stone he perched contented so,
As if never a cart would pass again
That way; as if I were the last of men
And he the first of insects to have earth
And sun together and to know their worth.¹⁵

In 'Sleep and Poetry', we may recall, a butterfly was one of those 'peaceful images' which helped to bring Keats release from 'Despondence! miserable bane!' (l. 281, ll. 339-45), and we may note in passing, bearing in mind such Thomas poems as 'Lights Out' where he speaks of 'sleep that is sweeter Than tasks most noble',¹⁶ its alliance with release in sleep. But in Thomas's lines as in Keats's, even the butterfly appears to be losing itself, dissolving its being, in a moment of intense sensuous experience ('As if never a cart would pass again. . . .'), echoing the poet's abdication to such a moment; the identification of man and creature is in 'to have earth And sun together . . .'. These points of rest and self-extinction are always bounded by a sense of the continuing reality from which they are an escape: 'as if' registers in the reader's mind that a cart will pass again that way, so that much of the poem's effect and meaning emerges from this playing-off of the moment against the continuing reality. Dr. Cooke speaks (though in relation to Frost rather than Keats) of Thomas's 'psychological theme of attempted escape and necessary return.'¹⁷ And X the poem does end with a partial breaking of the spell, a breaking of a kind even more notable in, for example 'The Lane'.

Many of Thomas's poems enact in their perplexity both a reconciliation

with, and an alienation from, the actual. Keats sometimes effects a reconciliation with life through his escape, by means of a gathering-up of sense-impressions into a concentrated flight of the imagination. There is invariably a rueful return to reality (the ending of 'Ode to a Nightingale' is the obvious example), but it is the escape which makes life meaningful and tolerable. 'All that I could lose/I lost' says Thomas in 'The Brook', indicating by this very statement that the losing is never total. And Thomas is quick to find in Keats his own anti-mystical bent and mode of experiencing through fully physical phenomena:

. . . though a lover of the moon, a most sublunary poet,
earthly, substantial, and precise, a man, but for his
intensity, singularly like his fellow-men . . . 18

The emphasis could not be more exactly correct for Thomas himself; even his metaphysics are rooted in physical reality; as Mr. Coombes has written, 'The grasp of the actual makes us firmly discard "mystical"'.¹⁹

This problem of escape from life yet reconciliation with it is again engaged by Thomas when he draws attention to the closing stanza of 'Ode to Psyche', with its placing of 'a sanctuary' among the dark-clustered trees.²⁰ Keats's wish to build a fane to Psyche 'In some untrodden region of my mind' is echoed in, among other poems, Thomas's 'Over the Hills':

Often and often it came back again
To mind, the day I passed the horizon ridge
To a new country, the path I had to find
By half-gaps that were stiles once in the hedge. 21

Despite the physicality and particularity of detail, it becomes evident as the poem progresses - one notices, for example, the poised effect of 'horizon ridge' with the enjambment suggesting some climactic passing from the known into the unknown - that this 'new country' does indeed only have its existence in the poet's mind. The phenomenon is symbolised elsewhere as in the song of 'The Unknown Bird'. The poet told 'the naturalists' about the bird but they were at a loss to identify it. The moment of escape which the symbolism represents, furthermore, cannot be

reclaimed. The bird 'never came again'.²² 'I did not know my loss Till one day twelve months later' says the poet in 'Over the Hills', and continues:

Recall
 Was vain: no more could the restless brook
 Ever turn back and climb the waterfall
 To the lake that rests and stirs not in its nook
 As in the hollow of the collar-bone
 Under the mountain's head of rush and stone.

'Loss' suggests the losing, or extinction, of self in the moment of release, as well the failure to rediscover the moment. And the final lines, with their remarkable representation of a psychological phenomenon in terms of physical phenomena, form a secondary image of the poet's restless and impossible quest, ramifying the poem in a characteristic Thomas manner. The symbolic features in the poem - the horizon, the path, an inn, some 'strangers' - are consistent with their use in other poems; they intimate the fulfilment which constantly eludes Thomas. Now, different as this is from the escape into the imagination which is Keats's 'untrodden region of my mind', it is like in its representation of an inward quest for fulfilment or self-extinction, for 'sanctuary' or rest, and it is like in the imaging of this quest in terms of physical scenery (the dark-clustered trees and mountain ridges of Keats's poem). Neither poet makes mystical claims for his moment of release; it remains a slightly bewildering psychological oddity:

Surely I dreamt today, or did I see
 The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?

or as Thomas puts it: 'As if the bird or I were in a dream.' But Keats's cri de cœur to Reynolds, 'lord! a man should have the fine point of his soul taken off to become fit for this world',²³ is what both poets felt acutely, and for both this paradoxical means of reconciliation with life through escape is a mode of rendering experience manageable for the ultra-sensitive man.

The centre of his sympathy for Keats is found by Thomas early in his book:

In spite of his energy, courage, and independence, he enjoyed and suffered from what he himself called his morbidity of temperament . . . his morbidity of temperament was inseparably kin to the sensitive passive qualities without which his poetry would have been nothing. I do not mean that his poetry sprang from his morbidity simply, but that both had to do with this brooding intensity of his receptiveness, that they inhabited the same enchanted treasure-caves. Eagerness and joy went with it also. 24

It must, I think, be admitted that an element of morbidity is there in both poets, and it is this 'brooding intensity of receptiveness' which is so alike. Two aspects of this are closely linked: one, a certain imaginative medium, represented by the phrase 'enchanted treasure-caves', and the other by the terms in which Thomas writes of the Odes and 'The Eve of St. Agnes':

Love for vanished, inaccessible, inhuman things, almost for death itself - regret - and the consolation offered by the intensity which makes pleasure and pain so much alike - are the principal moods of these poems. 25

Though Thomas is far from the Gothic Revivalism of 'The Eve of St. Agnes', he is sometimes able to integrate expressively a touch of fancy into a poem, as with the 'castle in Spain' in 'Wind and Mist'. In 'The Path' he refers to:

the path that looks
As if it led on to some legendary
Or fancied place where men have wished to go
And stay

This 'place' might be compared with Keats's 'sanctuary' built in the mind, with its 'gardener Fancy'. R.P. Eckert writes of Thomas's childhood: 'He had always a lively fancy'; he used to wander alone about the country near his home with an imaginary companion, 'a spiritual self', and the country became 'an almost mythical land'.²⁷ So the 'legendary or fancied place' and the curious alter ego that figures in several of his poems have their origin in childhood imaginings. The interdependence

of books and nature is again apparent in an unobtrusive but repeated tapping in Thomas's poetry of a reservoir of reading in folklore, legend and fairy-tale; the allusions are made discretely to play off a touch of mystery, of the unknown, against his solid natural physicalities. And the allusions stand, fairly obviously, for those regions of the mind in which Thomas and Keats quest for their intangible and elusive fulfilment, the 'place where men have wished to go and stay'. That this is partly looking back to a legendary past, partly nostalgia for childhood dreams, indicates its close connection with the pervading retrospection, the 'groundwork of regret', the 'love for vanished, inaccessible, inhuman things, almost for death itself' which his poetry shares with Keats's.

This very similar psychological patterning in the work of the two poets brings me to the question of melancholy and its association with 'sensitive passive qualities'. In writing of Keats, Thomas dwells almost obsessively on passivity and stillness. The 'Ode to Melancholy', he writes,

is one of the central poems of this period, admitting, as it does so fully, and celebrating, the relationship between melancholy and certain still pleasures. Nowhere is the connoisseurship of the quiet, withdrawn spectator so extremely and remorselessly put . . . 28

I have already touched upon 'The Brook' - there are many such poems - where Thomas himself appears as something of a 'quiet, withdrawn spectator', absorbing mood and sense-impressions, passively opening himself up to the perceptions and experience of the moment. He also presents a connoisseur's delicate handling of that experience. Of his own passive temper he wrote to Gordon Bottomley in 1907:

Why have I no energies like other men? I long for some hatred or indignation or even sharp despair, since love is impossible, to send me out on the road that leads over the hills & among the stars sometimes. I was told the other day that I seemed a calm dispassionate observer with no opinions. I hope I am more. I have no opinions, I know. But cannot the passive temperament do something a little? For I have impressions of men places & books. They often overawe me as a tree or a crowd does the sensitized paper; & is that nothing or as good as nothing? 29

In a sense, neither poet was without energies, but both seemed susceptible to this lassitude. 'I have this morning such a Lethargy that I cannot write', wrote Keats on one occasion, 'I am in that temper that if I were under Water I would scarcely kick to come to the top'.³⁰ And this incapacity for strong active drives not only sets the poet somewhat apart from 'other men', but is also, it seems to me, a constituent of the famous 'negative capability'. The photographic analogy (I take Thomas to mean this) is apt: the Keatsian or Thomasian temperament is able to give itself up totally to 'impressions' or images of an 'overawing' kind, to receive their imprint with minute fidelity, in the process undergoing an extinction of self, a 'taking part in'. It will be remembered that the 'poetical Character' which 'enjoys light and shade'³¹ is usually linked by Keats's commentators with the separate reference in the letters to 'negative capability'.

Thomas, too, repeatedly admits and celebrates 'the relationship between melancholy and certain still pleasures', and records 'the consolations offered by the intensity which makes pleasure and pain so much alike'. He seems to be pointing to this intensity in himself when he writes again to Bottomley:

But seriously I wonder whether for a person like myself whose most intense moments were those of depression a cure that destroys the depression may not destroy the intensity. . . . 32

The 'Ode on Melancholy', writes Thomas,

taken literally, seems to say that the bitter with the sweet is worth while - is the necessary woof of life 33

It is an essentially romantic idea, and many of his own poems turn on something very like it. The coupling of 'Pleasure and pain' that we notice in 'Parting' recurs in many poems. His own 'Melancholy' employs throughout a Keatsian-romantic notation; the misting over, the retreating into vagueness at the end, is also deeply romantic:

Yet naught did my despair
 But sweeten the strange sweetness, while through
 the wild air
 All day long I heard a distant cuckoo calling
 And, soft as dulcimers, sounds of near water falling,
 And, softer, and remote as if in history,
 Rumours of what had touched my friends, my foes,
 or me. 34

In part, the poem is a posing of the Keatsian question, 'Do I wake or sleep?'³⁵ The poem, pivots, however, on the line and a half preceding those quoted - 'What I desired I knew not, but whate'er my choice/Vain it must be' denotes Thomas's central dilemma, the crippling incapacity to define the fulfilment which is always sought; yet growing directly out of this - inextricably bound to it - is the melancholy which is so savoured, the strangely sweet despair (not a 'sharp despair'). The dilemma is voiced in 'The Glory' with a typical simplicity of paradox: 'In hope to find whatever it is I seek',³⁶ while a more convoluted statement of the paradox occurs in the fourth stanza of 'The Other'.³⁷ The desire is active enough, one might say, but the passivity lies in the recalcitrance towards that 'choice'; the longing is, in its strange sweetness, its 'pleasant pain', almost self-sufficient. Keats's version in the 'Ode on Melancholy' of the same psychological phenomenon is famous:

Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine.

Keats and Thomas share the fine palate. Referring to this passage in his Romantic Image, Professor Kermode says it is a necessary condition of the Romantic artist in the modern world to 'be cut off from life and action, in one way or another. . . a man who experiences it /the power of joy/ will also suffer exceptionally . . .'.³⁸ Such an artist's isolation is strongly suggested in 'Melancholy'; the poet is drawn towards and intensely conscious of the 'dear' human world, and at the same time jealous of his own difference. He wishes to lose contact with human

voices, and yet regrets doing so - joy and suffering come together: the vacillation and ambiguity of feeling are wholly typical of the kind of temper to which 'negative capability' is natural. There is no pressure towards a resolution of dilemmas and ambiguities; it would seem to be the case that in such poetry a cure for the depression would be a destruction of the intensity.

II. 'The Cost of the Image'.

The poet who presents this savoured melancholy of Keats and Thomas - the co-existing eagerness and lassitude, suffering and joy - is torn between energy and dream; he wishes to create a poetic 'image' which can stand in place of the actions of ordinary men, and which is itself a form of energy, life, completed act.

Similarly, if suffering and joy cannot, for him, be separated as they can for other men, this inhibits action and prevents him expressing himself in normal life as a coherent personality. 'A Poet . . . has no identity', wrote Keats,³⁹ and Vernon Scannell finds in the "image of the Search" which recurs in Thomas's poetry an endlessly unresolved quest for the poet's own distinct identity and for the healing peace of "the reconciliation of the divided self". Such a poet - this kind of Romantic artist - would appear to present something approaching a schizoid personality (I return to this point in later chapters), which he may, according to the individual, succeed in stabilizing to a greater or lesser degree. In Coleridge's writings, for example, the over-anxious stress on "wholeness", with its connotations of "health", seems an indication of such a condition, and nearly all the Romantics and post-Romantics seek, to use Yeats's phrase, some sort of "Unity of Being". In such a context, indeed, we may see Eliot's notion of the "dissociated sensibility" as not only an historical phenomenon, but something from which poets in the Romantic tradition inherently suffer. V. de S. Pinto makes such a dissociation

of sensibility his hypothesis to explain the "crisis" in earlier twentieth-century English poetry.⁴¹ The crisis, the dissociation, involves, interdependently with a divided self, a divided allegiance to the inner and outer worlds. The Romantic conflict, A.E. Rodway succinctly says, is "conflict between the poets and their society as well as conflict within the poets themselves".⁴² And it is, in Kermode's terms, through the perception and re-creation of the 'Image', a radiant truth embodied in an inviolable poem-structure, that the poets attempt to achieve some kind of stabilization of the personality problem, to stake out their claim in a world for which they are, in the ordinary way, unfitted.

These two beliefs - in the Image as a radiant truth out of space and time, and in the necessary isolation or estrangement of men who can perceive it - are inextricably associated.... The artist's devotion to the Image developed at the same time as the modern industrial state and the modern middle class. From the beginnings of Romantic poetry, the artist has been, as M. Beguin says of Lichtenberg, 'malade de sa difference avec son temps'.... Some difference in the artist gives him access to this /the 'vision'/ - an enormous privilege, involving joy but the power of joy being possible only to a profound 'organic sensibility', a man who experiences it ... must be lonely, haunted, victimised, devoted to suffering rather than action - or, to state this in a manner more acceptable to the twentieth century, he is exempt from the normal human orientation towards action and so enabled to intuit those images which are truth, in defiance of the triumphant claims of merely intellectual disciplines. 43

Lonely and haunted - the Thomas of the poems often is, and his letters show an awareness of the limitations of merely intellectual disciplines:

the way in which scientific people & their followers are satisfied with data in appalling English disgusts me, & is moreover wrong. 44

On the whole, however, he seems to have accepted the encroachments of 'merely intellectual disciplines' with stoicism. He was never tempted to seek refuge in a Yeatsian myth-system or a religious commitment like Eliot's; even his deliberate cult of country life is clear-eyed and

disenchanted. But undoubtedly he felt in many ways at odds with his time, and indisposed towards action and social involvement:

But with me social intercourse is only an intense form
of solitude.....45

And the Keatsian 'poetical character' which enjoys light and shade reflects the divisions within himself; the interdependence of opposites within the totality of being is in the nature of things, Thomas's poems seem to say. The very organicism of this sensibility (in Kermode's phrase) dictates that it should be divided, undecided, incoherent. This is essentially how things present themselves to Thomas's awareness: there appear for him to be no other terms in which to feel and think; that there is no possibility of separating one side of the antithesis from the other is of the essence of his mode of consciousness. The Keatsian passive receptivity of mind makes such a response to experience possible. And in his poems Thomas deliberately exploits what Scannell calls 'dichromatic tensions' as strategic indirections towards the perception of some elusive subjective essence; he hopes to catch some stray shadow of 'radiant truth' flitting between the light and the dark.

Thus, though Thomas does sometimes express the idea of all things having a right to existence irrespective of their moral use or rightness, this is less a conscious philosophical dualism than an inveterate habit of mind which becomes a function of his poetic method. In Robert Frost's poetry we will notice the same kind of dualities - it was an aspect of the two men's shared interests - but any comparison shows, in Frost's work, the conscious epigram much nearer the surface. Thomas's mind does not deal in philosophical abstractions. Kermode, having defined the work of art as itself "symbol, 'aesthetic monad'.... out of the flux of life, and therefore, under one aspect, dead; yet uniquely alive because of its participation in a higher order of existence", goes on to ask:

What concretion, in poetry, takes the place that refutable abstraction occupies in philosophy and other merely intellectual disciplines? 46

Thomas's 'Tears', despite the modest manner, the reluctance to call attention to itself, which it has in common with so much of his work, is a poem which presents the whole range of these considerations in rich concentration. Within the context of a poem about his subjective state - a state of emotional exhaustion in which certain linked experiences produce a curiously heightened awareness - Thomas explores exactly this dilemma of the romantic artist, his relationship to life and the world of action, his striving for perception of images or truths, the cost of these in terms of suffering; while the poem itself may be said, as a structure, to exemplify that inviolable concretion which is 'out of the flux of life'. In recording, that is, a particular state of consciousness, the poem manifests a way of making despair beautiful. So much, indeed, has the poet suffered, that he has no tears left; he is untouched by that "life" and action which should stir emotion in him, and yet it is precisely at this point that he is suddenly able "to intuit those images which are truth"⁴⁷ - the "truths" and the "beauty" of the poem's final lines:

It seems I have no tears left. They should have fallen -
 Their ghosts, if tears have ghosts, did fall - that day
 When twenty hounds streamed by me, not yet combed out
 But still all equals in their rage of gladness
 Upon the scent, made one, like a great dragon
 In Blooming Meadow that bends towards the sun
 And once bore hops: and on that other day
 When I stepped out from the double-shadowed Tower
 Into an April morning, stirring and sweet
 And warm. Strange solitude was there and silence.
 A mightier charm than any in the Tower
 Possessed the courtyard. They were changing guard,
 Soldiers in line, young English countrymen,
 Fair-haired and ruddy, in white tunics. Drums
 And fifes were playing 'The British Grenadiers'.
 The men, the music piercing that solitude
 And silence, told me truths I had not dreamed,
 And have forgotten since their beauty passed. 48

On one side of the account we have: tears, emotional sterility, ghosts, a double-shadowed Tower with its suggestions of imprisonment and isolation, strange solitude, silence. Opposing these are such details as: the hounds, the rage of gladness, Blooming Meadow which once bore hops and hence suggests fertility, the sun, the stirring and sweet April morning, the fair-haired and ruddied young soldiers, the music. Yet there are charms within the Tower; the gladness of the hounds is nevertheless a rage; the tears didn't fall but their ghosts did; both hounds and soldiers with their abundant life portend destruction; those scenes which should have been met with joy and elation (and in effect are joyfully celebrated), would have been, if the poet had any left, greeted with tears. Tears of joy? - tears of exasperation that he himself cannot either join the rage of gladness, or celebrate it without complication of feeling? Again, Thomas is exploring the nature, the "feel" of an experience; the complications are an effect of acute consciousness, which throws into heightened existence the universal paradox of cognition - we only know pleasure, light, warmth, by reference to our experience of pain, dark, cold. In a poem such as 'November' Thomas states this explicitly, and it dictates that even the suffering must be celebrated, a fact intrinsic to the burden which the passive, intensely sensitive and subjective man must shoulder.

The poem presents, then, two vividly realised images of action - the hounds on the scent and the soldiers changing guard - placed in exploratory tension with the artist's life of withdrawal and contemplation. The poet steps out of the Tower to secure images from life, then retreats again to form them into the concretion we have before us, his poem. He is frozen into a death of the emotions, yet can make a poem rhythmically and expressively alive, which yet freezes those moments of vital action into aesthetic finality. "Tears" is a clear statement of the cost of

the Image; the vision, the joy, can only be known by the artist in his moments of release from that Tower of which Kermode identifies "the root signification" in Yeats to be "the isolation of the artist". Such an artist's "chances of escape" from this "complex and tragic situation", thinks Kermode, "are in effect two, the making of Images, and death."⁴⁹ Thomas has chosen here the making of Images, but the other option for escape constantly nudges: if the shadow, silence, solitude and emotional deadness of the Tower - we recall the "cold art" of Yeats's images, or of the frieze on Keats's Grecian Urn - is the artist's life of withdrawal, it may also be seen as death. "The Romantic poet", comments Scannell, "will often make of death his true love".⁵⁰ The "ghosts" of tears, and the forgetting of the truths and loss of contact with their "beauty", suggest loss of a sense of vital experience.

The intimations of death may be directly related to certain facts in Thomas's life. An acute sense of mortality and its constant contemplation hardly need pointing out; an attempt at suicide is described by Eckert in his biography of Thomas, though it is not clear what evidence he has for it apart from a suggestion in Helen Thomas's World Without End.⁵¹ There can be no doubt that the inroads of fatigue, constant overwork in interaction with his innate morbidity, were disastrous for Thomas.

R. George Thomas, in editing the letters to Gordon Bottomley, has pointed out the Herculean nature of Thomas's labours; roughly a hundred reviews a year in addition to his commissioned books and other occasional writings.⁵² "My great enemy is physical exhaustion", he wrote,⁵³ and other poems besides 'Tears', such as 'Beauty' and 'The Long Small Room', touch upon a feeling of emotional exhaustion accompanying physical fatigue. Cooke quotes Norman Douglas's belief that "the lyrical core of his mind" had become "submerged, imprisoned, encysted in an impenetrable capsule" (p.119),⁵⁴ and this seems to be one signification of the Tower in 'Tears'. Though one feels Thomas

would never have been capable of great spontaneity of feeling, the interminable hackwork must have had a detrimental effect on "the lyrical core of his mind", as well as on his feelings for his family and friends. Finally, Cooke shows that the poem was written in January 1915 when Thomas was preoccupied with the question of whether to enlist; this brings the images of life and action into sharp focus, and gives irony to these particular images, of hounds and soldiers, abundant life pursuing the ends of death.⁵⁵ There is, or used to be, a view of Thomas choosing to enlist rather than accompany Frost to America, deliberately embracing death. Despite the fact that some poems seem prophetically laden with forebodings of such an outcome, there seems to me no question that like everybody else Thomas feared death and wanted to live. Yet it does seem, as with Keats, that there was, despite himself, something within him compelling him in a fatal direction.

For Thomas there seems no way of formulating the "truths" in abstract terms; they are only perceived in the presence of the seen and felt physical phenomena, to be forgotten once the beauty of these has passed. Like the Symbolists, the poet can only intuit the truths through sensory experience, but can only form them into the aesthetic concretion by retreating into his lonely Tower, which has (like Tennyson's Palace of Art) "charms" of its own, but is also the cost of his joy. The music and silence must come together, like Yeats's dancer and the dance: a fusion of the perfection out of space and time, with its tangible and sensible embodiment. Indeed, what the truths are scarcely matters; it is the quality of the moment of perceiving and the success in rendering it which counts. Again Thomas surrenders to the experience or perception of the moment, which seems to exist as a self-sufficient and unchanging eternity, at least until the spell is broken.

The scenes of the hounds and the soldiers changing guard are realised by means of an organically expanding sentence and rhythmic movement: as the sentence expands one perception follows another, building up a hinterland of association and symbolic meaning, until the whole solidifies into a 'kind of stillness'.⁵⁶ Furthermore, these images suggest co-ordinated or collective action - the hounds "made one", and the "Soldiers in line". The artist is cut off from participation in any such collective expression of energy; yet he can celebrate it with a uniquely full sense of its "rage of gladness", its "mightier charm". He is aware of it in a way the participants themselves cannot possibly be, because he is not "made one" or "in line". The striking way in which the two images are fused in a single complex of thought and emotion has often been remarked upon - "That day" and "on that other day" link the two scenes, and unite the two images to bear upon the direct authorial statements of the opening two and closing two lines. There is something of Eliot's "amalgamating disparate experience" to form a new whole. Thus, if 'Tears', in its sinuous movement and linking of ideas, is close to a Metaphysical mode of expression, it contains the nebulous "truths", the mysteriousness, the emotional extremity, of the Romantics; and approximates, in its realising of an "intellectual and emotional complex", or amalgamation of disparate elements into a new whole, to the tenets of Imagism and modernism. From such a blending of manners Thomas's expressive indirectness emerges, enabling him to map out the feel and quality of an experience, a phenomenon of feeling. The operations of the mind are delicately traced; the truths have been forgotten and yet are as close to the edge of consciousness as a poem - a structure of mere words - can register them. The death of feeling is set in tension with feeling's fullest moments, moments which are, as Thomas says in 'Celandine', "a short swift eternity".⁵⁷ The ramifying meanings and what Cooke calls the "profound ambiguity of the

poem's basic emotion", are not only effects of the Keats-Thomas poetical character, reflecting the dilemma of the acutely-conscious artist, but conform to the notion of a "romantic image" which "lacks separable intellectual content, her meanings constantly changing".⁵⁸

We may now consolidate these points and take the discussion a stage further by looking for points of contact with 'Tears' elsewhere in Thomas's poetry. In 'Two Pewits' the continuous change and movement of the birds' flight - marvellously realised by the flickering iambic trimeters and tetrameters and the single revolving rhyme - is contrasted with the permanence of 'earth':

Their cry
Is the one sound under the sky,
They ~~alone~~ move, now low, now high,
And merrily they cry
To the mischievous Spring sky
Plunging earthward, tossing high,
Over the ghost who wonders why. 59

Thomas's habit of picking out a single sound against silence, and a single movement against stillness, shows itself here as in 'Tears'. The poet appears as "the ghost who wonders why"; "ghost" echoes "ghosts of tears" to suggest an individual who has "died" out of the normal life of action and participation. Such words as "sport", "merrily", "mischievous", applied to the pewits, recall the "rage of gladness" of the hounds. The birds seem to the ghostly poet never to "choose 'twixt earth and sky", echoing his own recalcitrance towards choice, the Keatsian paralysis of active volition. Similarly, in 'The Watchers', a gulf separates the two watchers of the title, the carter and the ghost-like 'visitor', who is associated with the lifeless "no fire" and a range of stuffed creatures which suggests a negation of the variety and exuberance of nature Thomas elsewhere celebrates:

By the ford at the town's edge
Horse and carter rest:
The carter smokes on the bridge
Watching the water press in swathes about his
horse's chest.

From the inn one watches, too,
In the room for visitors
That has no fire, but a view
And many cases of stuffed fish, vermin, and
kingfishers. 60

The carter is everything the poet is not: he is indigenious, part of the town's life, and his watching suggests rest and contentment. The poet is an endless traveller, a situation we find imaged in so many of Thomas's poems about travelling, inns and strangers; he has no part in the ordinary uncomplicated activities of men, and his watching is a troubled, Hamlet-like contemplation. Claudius on Hamlet might be any of Thomas's contemporaries who remarked on his extreme melancholy:

There's something in his soul,
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood
(III, i)

It smokes aloft
Unwavering:
It hunches soft
Under storm's wing.

It has no care
For gleam or gloom:
It stays there
While I shall roam,

Die, and forget
The hill of trees,
The gleam, the wet,
This roaring peace. 62

What troubles Thomas is, as Coombes puts it, 'the perplexing dichotomy of being, and knowing',⁶³ - exactly one of those fundamental questions which beset Hamlet; the carter and the woodman are concerned merely with being, hardly at all with knowing. Within a more elaborate dramatic and psychological structure the wild girl and the isolated country inn of 'Up in the Wind' develop similar significances. The girl had once left the inn to work as a servant in Kennington; she has a Cockney accent, and has hated the inn since she gave up her place in London to return to it. However, asked 'What about Kennington',

She bent down to her scrubbing with 'Not me:
Not back to Kennington. Here I was born,
And I've a notion on these windy nights
Here I shall die. Perhaps I want to die here.
I reckon I shall stay. But I do wish
The road were nearer and the wind farther off,
Or once now and then quite still, though when I die
I'd have it blowing that I might go with it
Somewhere distant, where there are trees no more
And I could wake and not know where I was
Nor even wonder if they would roar again. 64

In Kennington the girl felt cut off from her roots - there is perhaps a hint of the larger malaise of urban man estranged from the soil which I discuss in Chapter 4 - and she must return to a place which is wild, with 'a spirit of wildness much older'. There is a Hamlet-like guessing at what might lie beyond death, beyond normal consciousness; the girl wishing to be taken when she dies 'Somewhere distant' images Thomas's longing for release from that burden of consciousness of which the

ceaseless roaring of the wind in the trees is the conspicuous symbol in this poem. Thomas, like the girl, wants release, yet fears oblivion; he seeks freedom from "knowing", yet paradoxically wishes to know he is free. He wrote to Gordon Bottomley:

How nice it would be to be dead if only we could know we
were dead. That is what I hate, the not being able to turn
round in the grave & say It is over. 65

The inn is a resting place, it provides the girl with a sense of identity and the journeying poet with refreshment, it has about it a certain homeliness and a feeling of being a relic from the immemorial past which gives it a reassuring permanence. Yet the wildness of the country around permeates the inn itself, the girl is "wild", the inn is haunted by "ghosts" and the wind harrows it. It is not a final home, that is "somewhere distant"; but at the same time the land Thomas describes in the poem, though based upon an actual place he knew, is the no-man's-land of his mind. We note, moreover, that the inn is veiled from sight except to "one that knows", a detail which recalls the final stanza of 'I Never Saw that Land Before':

And what was hid should still be hid
Excepting from those like me made
Who answer when such whispers bid. 66

- both of which reflect the romantic artist's ambiguous privilege, as Kermode sees it, of 'difference'.

We feel in 'Interval' that such an antithesis as "gleam or gloom", with its insisted-upon consonance, is too heavily indulged; there is something a little too readily available about the significances with which Thomas invests the observed physical details. He is striking an attitude - "Die, and forget" - heightening his own situation (Hamlet-like) by brooding on the drama of the natural scene. The "suffering" which is the cost of, and seems to be all-of-a-piece with, the "Image" in 'Tears', is here a

shade indulged; the innate morbidity of temperament introduces an imbalance into the poem. On the other hand, in 'The Owl', which effectively dramatises the continual flux of Thomas's mind and the antithesis within it of rest and unrest,⁶⁷ Thomas seems to attempt not to indulge his feelings without warrant:

And salted was my food, and my repose,
Salted and sobered, too, by the bird's voice
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice. 68

The romantic tenor of the poem is modified by the fact that Thomas attributes an objective cause to his disquiet: he is troubled, he would have us believe, by the contemplation of poverty and human suffering. There can be no doubt of Thomas's sincerity here; he praised Keats's love of his fellow men, his democratic feelings:

But he loved life too well to turn his back on anything by
which men were moved... His poetry shows his concern for
Freedom, for the lot of those who toil

"In torched mines and noisy factories",
for the

"people of no name
In noisome alley, and in pathless wood",⁶⁹

Thomas's sympathy with Keats certainly extends to a shared and profound concern for "the giant agony of the world".⁷⁰ He was a political as well as religious agnostic, "wholly without belief in a religious or political panacea for the ills of the world";⁷¹ but he seems, despite his antagonistic relationship with his father, to have inherited his father's radical and free-thinking views. There are caustic references in his letters to the monarchy and the "higher orders". One gains the impression that he too, as he said of Keats, "knew clearly that he wanted to put his mite on the Liberal side before he died".⁷² And Thomas is aware that this springs in Keats, as it does in himself, from the primary value set, though in the framework of the unity of nature, on human consciousness: "Much though he loved scenery, human nature was finer

in his eyes".⁷³ Yet we cannot quite accept the objectification of his unease given in 'The Owl'; we remain convinced that it is something more deeply subjective and intangible. The cost of the image involves for Thomas considerations beyond these.

III. The experience itself.

'Melancholy' certainly betrays traces of that temper which when under water would 'scarcely kick to come to the top'; elsewhere in the poetry there are references to a certain 'poison' at work, recalling Keats's dreamer who because he cannot keep pain and pleasure apart 'venoms all his days'.⁷⁴ There is also in 'Melancholy' something of what Thomas finds in relation to Keats's sonnet 'Bright Star':

a man troubled by the principal unrest of life cries out for that same calm, for the oblivion of 'melting out his essence fine into the winds', for 'soothes sleep that saves from curious conscience'. . . 75

Thomas is also attracted in 'Bright Star' to 'would I were steadfast as thou art' and 'steadfast, still unchangeable'; he is like Keats in his apprehension of mortality and transience. The continually changing effects of light and weather and of the seasons on the English countryside seem to image for him "sublunary" alteration; but these changing effects are valued. Detail is unnecessary here; Thomas's critics have shown how, in poems such as 'Health', Thomas is at once infinitely troubled by the burden of human consciousness, and yet celebrates its uniqueness. Some poems may exhibit a Keatsian embracing of death, but at the other pole there is the statement in 'The Other': "And yet Life stayed on within my soul".⁷⁶ He himself makes a point of Keats's love of life: "But he loved life too well to turn his back on anything by which men were moved".⁷⁷ The poetry of both is finally affirmative, but the affirmations are interpenetrated with indulged attitudes in the treatment of transience, melancholy, the past, death itself.

A romantic intensity thus characterised, then, is intrinsic to the psychological condition which disposes the poet towards a handling of experience like that in 'Parting'. But I must elucidate the point more exactly. Thomas's well-known 'Wind and Mist' dramatises the 'psychological theme of attempted escape (to the house on the hill) and necessary return (to the earth below)'. In doing so, it records the ceaseless flux of Thomas's consciousness, in which what is 'in the mind' can become actual, the 'firm ground' can turn to cloud ('the visible earth . . . like a cloud'), in which reality and 'fancy' co-exist and interchange. The 'one word' with which the poet leaves us confirms the vacillation between earth and cloud-castle, the impossibility of 'choice' -

'I want to admit
That I would try the house once more, if I could;
As I should like to try being young again.'

- other than that imposed by irresistible external circumstances. The subject of 'Wind and Mist' was the house at Steep in Hampshire in which Thomas and his family lived from 1909 to 1913. Dr. Cooke puts it succinctly: 'The house was magnificent, but they never felt at home there'.⁷⁹ Thomas's wavering about Frost's invitation to return with him to New Hampshire in 1914 shows itself as part of an inveterate indecision, and of a deep sense of his own incapacity to 'feel at home' any more in New Hampshire, as he put it to Frost, than in old. In his book The South Country he spoke of those modern people who belong nowhere, and no less than three poems have the title 'Home'. One of these takes stock of the poet's past life, and adopts a posture for whatever the future may bring:

Not the end: but there's nothing more.
Sweet Summer and Winter rude
I have loved, and friendship and love,
The crowd and solitude;

But I know them: I weary not;
 But all that they mean I know.
 I would go back again home
 Now. Yet how should I go?

This is my grief. That land,
 My home, I have never seen;
 No traveller tells of it,
 However far he has been.

And could I discover it,
 I fear my happiness there,
 Or my pain, might be dreams of return
 Here, to these things that were.

Remembering ills, though slight
 Yet irremediable,
 Brings a worse, an impurer pang
 Than remembering what was well.

No: I cannot go back,
 And would not if I could.
 Until blindness come, I must wait
 And blink at what is not good. 80

This and 'Parting' (both written, as Dr. Cooke shows, in February 1915 under the pressure of Thomas's impending enlistment) not only have similar movement and verse-form, but are obviously contiguous in terms of material. 'Remembering ills' here, for example, immediately connects with 'Remembered joy and misery' in the other poem. But here the mood modulates, clearly enough, into an acceptance barely suggested in 'Parting'. The first two stanzas, despite 'I weary not', express the Thomasian longing for release from the burden of consciousness, but then comes the definitive self-diagnosis - 'This is my grief': it provides a fixed point of reference for much of the rest of his poetry. Not only is 'my home' almost certainly a delusion, like the cloud-castle in 'Wind and Mist', but the poet knows that he can never escape the curse of dissatisfaction. He can never be finally certain that it is 'there' he wants more than 'here', just as there can be no final abandonment of the present - 'I cannot go back' - for the refuge of that 'strange land', the past. The dilemma is complicated by the fact that he does value the here and now, and such a

poem as 'The Sign-Post' indicates a possible preference for this over the unknown. So, in the final quatrain of 'Home' both aspects of the romantic solution to the dilemma - refuge in nostalgia and retrospection, or release into 'countries of the mind', 'enchanted treasure-caves', death or 'whatever it is I seek' - are rejected.

A poem which satisfactorily objectifies this dilemma, by reflecting the dialectic of romantic and counter-romantic tendencies in Thomas's consciousness, is 'The Chalk-Pit'. Like 'Wind and Mist' the poem is a dramatic dialogue between two voices, here more clearly than ever the two sides of Thomas's mind. The two speakers have followed a road which leads to an abandoned chalk-pit and one thinks that he has visited 'the place' - these are familiar Thomas symbols - before, looking like an 'amphitheatre', with a few trees for actors; but these have now been cut down. There is a certain Hamlet-like note in the poem, a straining to peer into the unknown:

its emptiness and silence
And stillness haunt me, as if just before
It was not empty, silent, still, but full
Of life of some kind, perhaps tragical...
... better leave it like the end of a play
Actors and audience and lights all gone;
For so it looks now. In my memory
Again and again I see it, strangely dark,
And vacant of a life but just withdrawn.
We have not seen the woodman with the axe.
Some ghosts has left it now... 81

That 'In my memory . . . strangely dark' recalls again 'Parting'; there is something of that Keatsian hovering between stillness and action which is so often for Thomas an effect of the way memory operates. This, indeed, is again what Thomas seems to be examining, while at the same time battling with the way the mind colours reality - the shape, the feel which consciousness gives to an experience. In fact, the whole of the old conundrum about appearance and reality is under debate here:

For another place
Real or painted, may have combined with it.

The poem shares with 'Parting' and 'Home' a sense of the past being just beyond reach and yet impinging crucially on the present; there is, too, something of the same curious distancing of the experiencing mind from the subject of its ruminations, together with a similar 'feel' and intensity of that mind's operations realised in the structure and movement of the verse.

Each speaker in 'The Chalk-Pit' attempts to come at some suspected inner 'core' of significance ('I cannot bite the day to the core', says Thomas in 'The Glory') from a different direction. But this never totally yields itself to the mind's grasp, as the last of the two to speak virtually admits. At the same time, he again rejects the 'romantic' solution; he will have nothing to do with what his companion calls 'fancies':

'You please yourself. I should prefer the truth
Or nothing. Here, in fact, is nothing at all
Except a silent place that once rang loud,
And trees and us - imperfect friends, we men
And trees since time began; and nevertheless
Between us still we breed a mystery.'

Yet still there is no positive resolution of romantic and counter-romantic, or of the dilemma of which is more real - here and now, or 'there', the past, the 'legendary or fancied place'. The potency of the romantic experience is still felt: the speaker cannot deny that 'mystery' existing in the relation of man to nature, and the implication seems to be that any 'truth' which does not take account of it will be insufficient. The emphasis of these final lines, though, confirms our sense of the poem's metaphysics again having primarily to do with psychological rather than mystical phenomena. But Thomas is, more fully than most, a poet who can never come to the point of 'final truth'; this is absolutely characteristic of the sort of temper, something very close to 'negative capability', we have seen Thomas to possess in common with

Keats. His chronic restlessness and acute self-consciousness - he repeatedly complained of both in his letters - combine to eliminate from his poetry the possibility of experience being precipitated towards some definite end. Hence we are left with the experience itself, which is pored over incessantly; valued, and despaired in, for its own sake alone.

D.W. Harding in his article "A Note on Nostalgia"⁸² helps to focus the psychological patterning which appears so similar in Keats and Thomas, drawing attention to the connection of acute consciousness and regression. With Dr. Cooke, I would question some of the specific evaluations of nostalgia in Thomas's poetry, but Harding's quotation from Problems in Dynamic Psychology by J.T. MacCurdy may be applied as an apt diagnosis of Thomas's condition:

If reality is difficult to endure, and if acute consciousness is developmentally connected with the recognition of external reality, and if contact with the environment is essentially a function of consciousness. . . then a most natural regression would appear with a dissolution of consciousness associated with some return to the earlier type of existence. One would expect the latter to be formulated as ideas of death . . .

All his poetry in some way records, with infinite subtlety and complexity, the ceaseless flux of the consciousness making contact with and then retracting from external reality, and the many forms taken by the dissolution of consciousness in it certainly include death and regression into the past. The peculiar operations of memory and contemplation, the detachment of the suffering and experiencing mind, are functions in Thomas of an excess, an unusual intensity, of self-consciousness. 'The central evil is self-consciousness', he wrote to Eleanor Farjeon,⁸³ and made similar complaints to Gordon Bottomley.⁸⁴ Even his love of the countryside, he felt, was too self-conscious - he compares modern writers with Izaak Walton: 'I suppose our love of the green country is too self-conscious now; anyway we can't write like that.'⁸⁵

No doubt we can diagnose a certain maladjustment in the ambivalent attitude towards reality and in the endemic dissatisfaction and irresolution. At the same time, this is a 'poetical character' which, in giving concrete verse form to the process of the acutely conscious, sensitive individual attempting to manage experience, imparts an astonishing freshness to some permanent enigmas. The Keatsian 'intensity', the passive, melancholic mental state in which desire and fulfilment are held in almost willing solution, helps to make the poetical character what it is. It is in large part what allows Thomas to make poetry from his peculiar troubled 'connoisseurship' of certain kinds of experiential phenomena.

NOTES

1. A shorter version of this chapter appeared as an article, 'The "Poetical Character" of Edward Thomas', in Essays in Criticism, Vol. XXIII, no.iii (July 1973), 236-253.
2. Collected Poems, 1949, p.146.
3. The phrase is F.P. Wilson's, quoted by J.B. Leishman, The Monarch of Wit, 1962, p.162.
4. 'Keats and Edward Thomas', vol. VII, no.iv, 404-15.
5. See Eleanor Farjeon, Edward Thomas: The Last Four Years, 1958, p.13.
6. Essays in Criticism, Vol. VIII (1958), no.ii, 227-8.
7. 'Over the Hills', Collected Poems, p.127.
8. Edward Thomas, Keats, 1916, p.53.
9. Ibid., p.16.
10. Ibid., p.38.
11. Ibid., p.84, p.36.
12. Ibid., p.57.
13. Collected Poems, p.84.
14. Ibid., p.136.
15. Ibid., p.173.
16. Ibid., p.92.
17. William Cooke, Edward Thomas: A Critical Biography, 1970, p.201.
18. Op.cit., p.39.

19. H. Coombes, Edward Thomas, 1956, p.205.
20. Op.cit., p.53.
21. Collected Poems, p.20.
22. Ibid., p.133.
23. Letters, ed. Rollins, Vol.I, 188.
24. Op.cit., p.11.
25. Ibid., p.51.
26. Collected Poems, p.34.
27. Edward Thomas: A Biography and a Bibliography, 1937, p.11
28. Op.cit., p.53.
29. (Ed.) Thomas, R.G., Letters from Edward Thomas to Gordon Bottomley, 1968, p.148.
30. Letters, Vol.i, 287.
31. Ibid., Vol.i, 386-7.
32. Op.cit., p.178.
33. Op.cit., p.54.
34. Collected Poems, p.65.
35. 'Ode to a Nightingale', l.80.
36. Collected Poems, p.64.
37. Ibid., p.174.

38. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, Routledge Paperback, 1961, p.6.
39. Letters, Vol.i, 387.
40. Vernon Scannell, Edward Thomas, 'British Book News' Supp.163, p.22.
41. V. de S. Pinto, Crisis in English Poetry, 1951.
42. Allan Rodway, The Romantic Conflict, 1963, p.vii.
43. Romantic Image, pp. 2-6.
44. Letters to Gordon Bottomley, p.140.
45. Ibid., p.53.
46. Op.cit., p.45, p.49.
47. One is reminded of the existentialists' 'moment of truth' which comes at the point of utmost despair.
48. Collected Poems, p.23.
49. Op.cit., p.31, p.30.
50. Op.cit., p.23.
51. Op.cit., pp. 103-4.
52. Op.cit., pp. 8 - 10. See my Introduction. p. 31.
53. The letter, to Gordon Bottomley, appears in John Moore, The Life and Letters of Edward Thomas, 1939, p.295.
54. Op.cit., p.119.
55. See Cooke, pp.221-2. The poem has also been related to a passage quoted from Jefferies in Thomas's Richard Jefferies, His Life and Work, 1909: 'So subtle is the chord of life that sometimes to watch troops marching along in rhythmic order, undulating along the column as the feet are lifted, brings tears into my eyes'.

56. Kermode's phrase. See Romantic Image, p.85.
57. Collected Poems, p.102.
58. Kermode, p.85.
59. Collected Poems, p.24.
60. Ibid., p.185.
61. Edward Thomas: The Last Four Years, p.12.
62. Collected Poems, p.32.
63. Op.cit., p.219.
64. Collected Poems, pp. 98-9.
65. Letters to Gordon Bottomley, p.174. cf. the passage quoted from Coleridge in the Introduction, p. 11.
66. Collected Poems, p.100.
67. Rest and Unrest was the title of a book of essays Thomas published in 1910.
68. Collected Poems, p.26.
69. Keats, pp. 78-9.
70. See Chapters 4 and 5 for discussion of this phrase of Keats.
71. Scannell, Edward Thomas, p.22.
72. Keats, p.82.
73. Ibid., p.82.
74. The Fall of Hyperion, Canto I, l.175.

75. Keats, p.72.
76. Collected Poems, p.175.
77. Op.cit., p.78.
78. Collected Poems, p.132.
79. Op.cit., p.58.
80. Collected Poems, p.156.
81. Ibid., p.166.
82. Scrutiny, Vol.I, no.i, 8-19.
83. Op.cit., p.13.
84. e.g. Letters, p.140.
85. Letter to E.S.P. Haynes, John Moore, Op.cit., p.277.

CHAPTER 2

HAROLD MONRO AND T.S. ELIOT

I. The Haunted Consciousness.

'He was a hero of that period' - so Colin Falck concluded in a review of the 1970 edition of Harold Monroe's Collected Poems:

... he was a hero of that period in so far as it was Monroe, as much as anyone else, who helped to change the situation. In 1910 poetry in England was shut off from the real world in the worst kind of sub-Tennysonian irrelevance. By 1920 almost anything could happen. 1.

Moreover, that Monroe is 'there', like a 'huge and noble figure of bronze', as Stephen Spender remarked when he reviewed the Collected Poems on its first appearance in 1933, remains indisputable, whatever qualifications we may make:

The poems are preceded by a short sketch of Monroe by F.S. Flint and a critical note by T.S. Eliot. Neither of these writers attempts to over-praise Monroe and if these two essays are read with that of Ezra Pound, which appeared a year ago in the Criterion, one has a picture of Monroe which is consistent with his poetry, and which is all the more vivid and impressive because one realises that he was a man who did not wish his memory to be idealised. Mr. Eliot's note ends with the bitter reflection: 'There was no way out. There never is. The compensations for being a poet are grossly exaggerated; and they dwindle as one becomes older, and the shadows lengthen and the solitude becomes harder to endure'. This may well be true. It is none the less true because as one reads Monroe's poetry the compensation seems so stupendous. One has the impression of a blind, erring and suffering man, but the enormous reward his valid suffering has to offer is that his very incoherence should acquire significance and gradually mould him into a figure of strange and powerful consistency as inescapable to the eye of the observer as a huge and noble figure of bronze. 2.

This fact has to do not only with Monroe's role in propagating the poetry of others and in 'changing the situation' - to which English poets certainly owe much - but with the poetry he himself wrote, with its consistency despite its awkwardness, with the way in which through the medium of his poetry his 'valid suffering' gradually 'acquired significance'. Yet critics, both contemporary with Monroe and more recent, have never been

able to avoid an ambivalence in their attitude towards the man and his poetry. The ambivalent note was struck by Pound no less than others: Monroe was, he wrote, 'a slow-witted, absolutely honest man' who possessed 'none of the consolations which stupidity brings to them who have it unwittingly'.³ The ambivalence is, I think, essential and inevitable. Monroe and his poetry were what they were because of a very individual mixture of strengths and weaknesses.

More worth reading than all but a handful of the Georgians and Imagists who were his contemporaries, his achievement remains limited; not until shortly before his early death did he produce a few poems which promised something of more major status, and it may be, as Michael Thorpe suggests, that he could in any case only have written one 'Bitter Sanctuary'.⁴ I would largely concur with Falck's judgment that 'for personal psychological reasons, but also for technical poetic ones, Monroe never got more than a fraction of his experience into poetry',⁵ and it is no part of my intention to inflate Monroe, to 'over-praise' him or to 'idealise' his memory. I am, however, centrally concerned with that experience which did get into his poetry, and with the states of mind which it involves, which are, from time to time, strikingly realised. Geoffrey Bullough, writing in 1934, found one of the elements in Georgian poetry a 'preoccupation with memory' together with 'a desire to investigate the half-apprehended notions, the obstinate questionings and blind misgivings of sensitive and introspective souls'.⁶ It seems likely that Bullough had Monroe in mind here, but this exactly describes the poetry of subjectivity which is the subject of the present discussion, and with minor modifications might do very well for T.S. Eliot. Eliot, according to C.K. Stead, gave 'adequate formulation' to 'a number of ideas which had existed, half-realized, in the minds of the literary avant-garde for a number of years'.⁷ F.O. Matthiessen wrote that 'his reaction against the

loosely prevailing standards of taste and value was not idiosyncratic but part of an emerging general state of mind'.⁸ Both these comments apply primarily to Eliot's criticism, but it is obvious enough that his criticism emerges largely from his needs and experience as a practising poet. My purpose is to affirm the view that Eliot 'was not idiosyncratic' in a wider sense: he was essentially part of something larger than himself and his own work, not an isolated explorer in new realms of poetic consciousness.

Here I must meet an objection, if we are to see Eliot and Monro as in some way directly involved and associated in the same field of poetic exploration, which seems indicated by Eliot's own comments on Monro. He stresses Monro's difference from everybody else. 'The historical point of view', wrote Eliot, 'tends to emphasise what a man has in common with others, in subject matter, in manner of style and technique, in his social background and assumptions'. This was bound to be unfair to Monro, he felt, since his importance lay in what he did not have in common with others. Eliot went on to observe that 'the vision is the personal vision of Harold Monro', and that 'he does not express the spirit of an age; he expresses the spirit of one man'.⁹ To this we may add Stephen Spender's comments:

The strength of Harold Monro's poetry lies entirely in the expression of a personality . . . we are gradually compelled to accept the reality of a world which was exclusively Monro's own. 10

Like all poets of any interest Monro does, of course, express a 'personal vision', but fundamentally Eliot's position is the commonplace one that a poet can be totally individual and yet at the same time universal. Indeed, he admits that though Monro 'expresses the spirit of one man' he does this 'so faithfully that his poetry will remain as one variety of the infinite number of possible expressions of tortured human consciousness'.

This is perfectly compatible with his view of the relation between the individual talent and 'tradition', and must lead us to ask why Eliot makes a special point of the difference of Monro. What prompts Eliot and Spender, I think, to emphasise this aspect of Monro is precisely their feeling of ambivalence towards his work. They meet the difficulty by asserting that though Monro's work was the expression of a consciousness totally unlike that of any other poet, it is for special reasons valid. Eliot does not admit, or did not realise when he wrote this 'Critical Note' prefacing the Collected Poems, how much - as I hope to show - he himself is like Monro, how much that 'tortured human consciousness' which Monro's poetry expresses has in common with his own. In fact, the sympathy and generosity which pervade the note already suggest the association, and Eliot's acceptance, shortly before his death, of his 'Bitter Sanctuary' for publication in The Criterion indicates that Monro's poetry had by that time become sympathetic to the Pound-Eliot critical orientation. This impression is reinforced by what Eliot apparently said to Pound when asking him to write Monro's obituary for The Criterion: he suggested that Monro's poetry was in certain respects 'like our own'. Taking this up, Pound wrote:

I doubt if it /Monro's work is clearly distinguished by 'character' from all the work in Eliot's first 'Prufrock' or from a good deal of my own, both before and after the period of break (vorticism; 1917, etc.). I should be inclined to think that it is disjunct from that part of 'ours' rather by personal colouring, personal modification than by any very clear categoric division of craft. A matter of degree rather than of kind. There is a far deeper element in some of Eliot's later work to which Monro's best seems more akin. ll.

The association of the two poets has been further pursued by more recent critics, though they have not sought the larger pattern at which I hope to arrive here. 'Eliot', writes Joy Grant in her Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop, 'by demonstrating how adequately symbols, unassisted by comments and explanations, could define complex psychological and

spiritual states, assisted Monro towards self-expression in such poems as 'Introspection' and 'Bitter Sanctuary'.¹² She points out resemblances in 'Introspection' with 'Gerontion' and 'A Game of Chess', and if we consider this particular poem, the title of which immediately suggests the introspective states which we may associate with the poetry of consciousness, we will come at once to what is important, for our present purposes, in this association of Monro and Eliot.

Introspection

That house across the road is full of ghosts;
The windows, all inquisitive, look inward:
All are shut.
I've never seen a body in the house;
Have you? Have you?
Yet feet go sounding in the corridors,
And up and down, and up and down the stairs,
All day, all night, all day.

When will the show begin?
When will the host be in?
What is the preparation for?
When will he open the bolted door?
When will the minutes move smoothly along in their hours?

Time, answer!

The air must be hot: how hot inside!
If only somebody could go
And snap the windows open wide,
And keep them so!

All the back rooms are very large, and there
(So it is said)
They sit before their open books and stare;
Or one will rise and sadly shake his head;
Another will but comb and comb her hair,
While some will move untiringly about
Through all the rooms, for ever in and out,
Or up and down the stair;

Or gaze into the small back-garden
And talk about the rain,
Then drift back from the window to the table,
Folding long hands, to sit and think again.

They do never meet like homely people
Round a fireside
After daily work. . .

Always busy with procrastination,
 Backward and forward they move in the house,
 Full of their questions
 No one can answer.
 Nothing will happen... Nothing will happen ...¹³

The poem exists, according to Joy Grant, in a manuscript book of 1918-19, and was published in Poetry in March 1920. It thus follows Prufrock, roughly coincides with Gerontion, and precedes A Game of Chess and Sweeney Agonistes (to which it also bears certain resemblances). Probably in 1915, Eliot himself wrote a prose-poem called 'Introspection', not in the Collected Poems but surviving in manuscript in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.¹⁴ Those undefined beings 'always busy with procrastination' certainly call to mind the various protagonists of Eliot's earlier poetry.¹⁵ There are suggestions of what L.G. Salingar, in a good phrase about the Prufrock volume, calls a 'coming-and-going of many lives across fixed points of loneliness and boredom'.¹⁶ It may be objected that the 'coming-and-going' in Monro's poem is of a different kind, since the poem is about a closed house from which the inhabitants, apparently, cannot escape; and that, moreover, it does not deal at all with actual people, as 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' appears to do, since the house is entirely a metaphor for the poet's state of mind. But this is exactly the crux of the matter; needless to say, we are not concerned with literal resemblances so much as with an imaginative affinity. Eliot's early poems are not essays in descriptive realism, they express states of mind. The poems take place largely or entirely in the consciousness of the protagonist, and their world is essentially a closed, claustrophobic one. Stead is echoing other commentators when he speaks of 'a dream labyrinth of smoke-filled streets, stairways, rooms, which lead only back into the uncertain mind which created the labyrinth as an image of its own vain endeavour to find itself.'¹⁷ Houses are a recurring image in Monro's poetry, and they are invariably associated with some kind of haunting, as in this parenthetical

stanza of 'The Empty House':

(Ghosts are like instincts, little occupied
With time, and free of knowledge where they died.
They haunt, not having found the force to go,
Old houses they may know.) 18

It is the expression of some kind of haunted state of mind, or to use Eliot's phrase, of 'tortured human consciousness', which is at the centre of any connections we can make between Monro and Eliot. And if, as Salinger puts it, 'Prufrock's irony is made to reflect a general human predicament besides being directed against himself', we can as plausibly claim that 'Introspection', despite Eliot's 'he does not express the spirit of an age', at once constitutes a metaphor for modern life and an exploration, as the title indicates, of the poet's own inner life. Monro does express a 'personal vision', but so does Eliot, and the personal vision is intimately related to the world in which both poets found themselves. Eliot's Laforguean irony, the *recherché* self-mockery, may be wholly absent from Monro's rendering of this vision, but his poetry is 'directed against himself' inasmuch as it frankly exposes everything in his consciousness that went to make up that 'blind, erring and suffering man'.

The technical devices which in 'Introspection' accomplish this exposure, if less resourceful than those of the Prufrock volume, operate in a rather similar way. We will note throughout Monro's poetry a plentiful use of interrogatives, reflecting the poet's fundamental perplexity in relation to experience, the insecurity of his hold upon life. The repeated questions, the building-up of a claustrophobic atmosphere, the repetitions, the fractured lines and rhythms, the indeterminate form -

Have you? Have you?
Yet feet go sounding in the corridors,
And up and down, and up and down the stairs,
All day, all night, all day.

- may be technically a little crude beside Eliot's suave subtleties, but they reproduce, in an authentic tone of voice, obsessive and urgent anxieties which are not at all unlike J. Alfred Prufrock's or those of the protagonist of 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'. To a large extent what Pound and Eliot admired about Monro's verse was its negative technical virtues: it was free, after some initial struggles, of 'all the Wordsworthian left over' which Pound abhorred. 'His tendency is steadily towards a definite image and clear speaking in a contemporary idiom' wrote Pound, and in his 1917 review of Strange Meetings Eliot thought that 'Mr. Harold Monro has a vocabulary less rich, less astonishing, than Rupert Brooke's, but at the same time less rhetorical' - he was 'less literary, often more natural' than other Georgian poets.¹⁹ Both recognised, however, that as Monro developed he gradually acquired a style of his own:

With the fragment from 'The Trees' one comes on what I suppose Mr. Eliot calls the 'character', and what one must at any rate agree is the 'personal quality', a certain weight, a certain immediacy of his impression, his own simile (elaborated and, alas, described) but indubitably poetic matter contained in its expression if not absolutely coterminous with it. 20

Eliot comments in this connection that

Had Monro been a poet who could have worked out his own method in isolation, and ignored the attempts of his contemporaries, he might earlier have found a more personal idiom. 21

But only in a handful of his best poems does Monro succeed in making of his negative technical virtues positive expressive triumphs, eliminating the elaboration and description Pound deplored, and making his poetic matter 'coterminous' with language and form. Colin Falck diagnoses the failings of 'Introspection' accurately enough:

... for all its Eliotish mood and echoes, the poem as a whole falls apart into fragments. The failure seems to be mainly rhythmic (from the point of view of content it is no more than the expansion of a single conceit: introspection as a closed-up house). Monro altogether lacks Eliot's rhythmic subtlety, and in this poem he fails to catch and sustain the mood that is the

poem's real concern. When Monro uses rhymes and couplets in this kind of poem they seem more like lapses into an older idiom than stages in a carefully judged emotional strategy. Some of his Eliotish lines are definitely banal:

A few hours we shall stand, a few hours sit,
A few hours talk, or walk, or read a book. 22.

This rhythmic weakness, linked to difficulty in sustaining the imaginative coherence of a poem, do seem to be at the root of much that is unsatisfactory in Monro's verse; the other serious defect being his enslavement to the adjective, his compulsion, as Pound put it, to elaborate and describe. This particular fault is not very apparent in 'Introspection', though it often mars potentially better poems:

O cool glad pasture; living tree, tall corn,
Great cliff, or languid sloping sand, cold sea... 23.

At the same time, Falck does not show, I think, an adequate recognition of the extent to which awkwardness, crudeness even, can be genuinely expressive in Monro's verse, inseparable from the authenticity with which the inner state is rendered. It helps to register what Pound called 'a certain weight, a certain immediacy of his impressions'. In the next chapter, I touch on F.S. Flint's problem of imparting expressive validity to ordinariness of language and naivety of style. Monro's case is related but different. He is not, either deliberately or unconsciously, naive in style; indeed, he is strongly dominated, even hindered, by conventional notions of the mot juste and of poetic craftsmanship, and his problem was to work through these to a personal voice. In his best poems the lists of adjectives, the incompatible rhythms and ingenuous repetitions, are fused into the imaginative scheme with conscious artistry. His 'Milk for the Cat', whatever Falck may say and however minor its interest, is a rhythmic triumph: it was with good grounds that Eliot spoke of this poem's 'extraordinary cleverness'.

Taking up Joy Grant's suggestion of parallels between 'Introspection'

and 'Gerontion', we may observe that, though Monro's house is hot, airless, haunted, whereas Eliot's is 'draughty' and has 'no ghosts',²⁴ the impression produced by the two poems is ultimately similar - one of debilitation and stagnation. Matthiessen discusses 'Gerontion' in terms of 'objective correlative',²⁵ and 'Introspection' is in much the same way an appropriate objective correlative into which Monro projects obsessive states of mind and emotion. The poems share 'the modern disintegration, the sense of directionlessness';²⁶ for the inhabitants of the houses in both poems a point has been reached where there are no longer any answers to the questions (we recall also the "overwhelming question" which was never posed by Prufrock):

Backward and forward they move in the house,
Full of the questions
No one can answer. . .

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors. 27

To set passages of each poem beside each other in this way is to remind ourselves that we are not dealing with two poetic talents on an equal footing. 'Gerontion' has a rhetorical weightiness, and a subtlety of thought and technique, lacking in Monro's poem. Yet more than one critic has responded to 'Gerontion' by suggesting that Eliot's evident intensity of feeling in fact does not find a fully satisfactory objective correlative; Salinger writes:

the poem as a whole is unbalanced precisely where it is most obviously dramatic. The concentration in Gerontion's mind, the urgent rhetorical 'Think now', gives way to an impulse to hypnotise himself with his own despair; the 'corridors' lead him to a private nightmare (like the streets in Prufrock), a maze where he loses his identity. 28.

Now, the 'private nightmare' here adumbrated is precisely the central theme, the principal state of mind, of much of Monro's poetry, and the same sort

of unbalance does not suggest itself as a limiting flaw of 'Introspection' simply because the poet does not allow himself to explore any other balancing dimension. Monro's poem concentrates on the nightmare itself, on the maze where identity is lost. He does not 'think now' about history's 'cunning passages, contrived corridors'; there is no intellectual examination of the dilemmas of history, no mulling over of the 'horror of a life without faith, its disillusioned weariness of knowledge',²⁹ merely a statement of the nightmare, the horror itself:

. . . feet go sounding in the corridors,
And up and down, and up and down the stairs,
All day, all night, all day.

The only suggestion of a balancing factor, a foothold in an alternative kind of experience is

They do never meet like homely people
Round a fireside
After daily work ...

and this touch of the domesticity in which Monro rather desperately sought security is, in its effect, little more than a momentary parenthesis heightening the nightmare. Perhaps the most limiting factor in Monro's poem is that the questioning is simply bewilderment - almost panic - not examination of a predicament. Those inhabitants of Monro's house who are 'Full of the questions No one can answer' are impotent in much the same way as the 'Gull against the wind' or 'old man driven by the Trades' in 'Gerontion', but the 'procrastination', the directionlessness, the disintegration, are presented in their raw form, without the intellectual gloss given them by Eliot.

The woman brushing her hair in 'A Game of Chess', and the general mood of that section of The Waste Land, are suggested by the line 'Another will but comb and comb her hair' in 'Introspection'. The repeated questions and then the indeterminate closing

No one can answer,
Nothing will happen... Nothing will happen...

suggest 'What shall we ever do?' and 'Nothing again nothing', as well as the whole passage of 'A Game of Chess' in which these lines occur, from l.III to l.138. These link in their turn with 'That's nothing to me and nothing to you' and 'Nothing at all but three things' in Sweeney Agonistes, where the claustrophobic flat, in which the action takes place, and the aimlessness of the inhabitants' lives, recalls the hot airless house of 'Introspection'. This, moreover -

When will the show begin?
When will the host be in?
What is the preparation for?
When will he open the bolted door?

points the way to Dusty and Doris's preparations at the opening of the piece for the 'party' and the guests who apply at the door for admission. It is, I think, a little more than a question of Falck's 'Eliotish mood and echoes' and 'Eliotish lines'. 'Introspection' may be one of those many honest but unsatisfactory poems by Monro, but the significant resemblance with Eliot is in the psychological state recorded as much as in the method; its material is quarried from the same substratum of modern experience as that of much of Eliot's earlier poetry. The stumbling, groping movement and the imagery of closed rooms - of isolation, procrastination and inertia - recur constantly in Monro's poetry, as in the following lines from 'Fate':

I have so often
Examined all this well-known room
That I inhabit.

There is the open window;
There the locked door, the door I cannot open,
The only doorway.

When at the keyhole often, often
I bend and listen, I can always hear
A muffled conversation.

An argument:
An angry endless argument of people
Who live behind;

Some loudly talking,
Some dimly into separate conflict moving,
Behind the door. 30.

These lines remind us of other modern writers such as Kafka, or Sartre in his Huis Clos, or the 'absurd' dramatists; in this last connection we may note how Sweeney Agonistes prefigures absurdist drama.³¹ Another comparison with Eliot springs to mind:

I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key 32

The ubiquitous theme in modern writing of non-communication, of the isolation of the individual, is given closely-related specificities in the poetry of Monro and Eliot.

That substratum of modern experience which is indicated alike in 'Introspection' and much of Eliot's earlier work was partially defined by Eliot when he wrote what remains a key comment for the interpretation of Monro's poetry:

I feel always that the centre of his interest is never in the visible world at all, but in the spectres and the 'bad dreams' which live inside the skull, in the ceaseless question and answer of the tortured mind, or the unspoken question and answer between two human beings. To get inside his world takes some trouble, and it is not a happy or sunny world to stay in, but it is a world which we ought to visit. The external world, as it appears in his poetry, is manifestly but the mirror of a darker world within... Under the influence of this sincere and tormented introspection, the warm reality dissolves: both that for which we hold out our arms, and that at which we strike vain blows. 33

Monro's 'Appointment' is another example of a poem which, like 'Introspection', takes place 'inside the skull' of the protagonist. This explores territory of sexual combat which has more in common with Lawrence than with Eliot, yet there is a pull towards Eliot in the painfully self-examining monologue of the earlier stanzas and in the nervous dramatic snatches of the later section. The way the experience is recorded, the way the verse is used to provide notations of psychological states, is like Eliot; the situation in the poem as a whole is almost as if Prufrock had suddenly pulled himself together and taken decisive action - had forced 'the moment to its crisis'.

Joy Grant thinks, too, that the 'knocking' in Sweeney Agonistes may owe something directly to this poem. In any case, there is no need to emphasise the extent to which 'Prufrock' and 'Gerontion' take place 'inside the skull', the ways in which The Waste Land and 'The Hollow Men' mirror 'a darker world within'. Although in the sentences preceding the passage given above Eliot seems to be describing the different sort of poet he thought he himself was, the 'centre of interest.... never in the visible world' directly connects the two poets. The ultimate burden of Eliot's writings (I give some consideration to this in my final chapter) is the rejection of the 'visible' and phenomenal world in favour of a hinted-at greater reality of a spiritual nature. As 'The Fire Sermon' emphasises, for Eliot all 'visible things' are 'burning with the fire of lust'.

Monro, of course, was not a Christian - some of his poetry deals specifically with the rejection of Christianity - and the nearest he comes to an interest in a 'spiritual reality' is a vague pantheistic mysticism, to which he gives expression in such poems as 'Trees', of the sort fashionable in the first decade or two of the century: the sort, indeed, satirised by Eliot in references to Madame Blavatsky and in such figures as Madame Sososttris. It may be objected, too, that the process described by Eliot has nothing to do with his own kind of religious rejection of the 'external world'; that he is describing a psychological process in Monro. I must try to establish, then, parallel instances in Eliot's poetry of the psychological process in Monro which causes the 'warm reality' to dissolve, and of the resulting state of consciousness which Monro's poetry records.

Neither poet, of course, was totally uninterested in the 'visible world'. As a practical religious man, Eliot believed that it was his duty to live in the physical world: 'even the most exalted mystic must return to the world, and use his reason to employ the results of his experience in daily life'.³⁴ Moreover, critics have always noted the strong pull back

in his poetry towards the visible and the sensuous - this is, indeed, an essential aspect of the struggle his poetry communicates - and there are times when we feel that the passages in which the phenomenal world is evoked convince more than those of philosophical generalisation or mystic half-apprehension:

Now the light falls
Across the open field, leaving the deep lane
Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,
Where you lean against a bank while a van passes,
And the deep lane insists on the direction
Into the village, in the electric heat
Hypnotised. In a warm haze the sultry light
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone.
The dahlias sleep in the empty silence. 35

The relaxed blank verse, with its extremely skilful deployment of stress, exactly creates the impressions and sensations which the verbal detail denotes. But this is largely impressionistic in method rather than realistic - the open field and the deep lane are only partially particularised, and 'you' need not be the poet himself on a specific occasion leaning against a specific bank. We feel that a real experience lies behind these lines, but what we are given is a partially generalised impression of it: a certain timelessness attaches to the scene, it is not wholly a defined 'moment in time'; which is of course exactly the effect Eliot wants. If we examine his poetry carefully we will see that this is almost invariably how its effects, where they depend upon the phenomenal world, work. This is related to what Matthiessen, in discussing the 'objective correlative', calls his 'definiteness of statement and indefiniteness of suggestion', which he achieves by 'building his imagery upon an objective structure';³⁶ there is at times, it seems to me, even a damaging conflict in Eliot's verse between generality - the desire to be 'impersonal' - and concreteness. This being so, we can note that Monro's apprehension of the visible world is in fact often more physical and more concrete, his handling of it more properly 'realistic', than Eliot's. There are a few poems in which Monro

consciously attempts impressionistic effects - he tried his hand at most things - but by and large Joy Grant is justified in stressing the objectivity and concreteness of his imagination. Except in some early pieces there is none of the mistiness - what Pound called 'the crepuscular' - of late Romanticism. Neither could we apply the term 'impressionism' to this sort of thing - singled out for praise by Pound - in Monro:

And the quiet flames are licking up the soot,
Or crackling out of some enormous root:
All the logs on your hearth are four feet long.
Everything in your room is wide and strong
According to the breed of your hard thought.
Now you are leaning forward; you have caught
That great dog by his paw and are holding it,
And he looks sidelong at you, stretching a bit. 37

His unique realisations in verse of the characteristic behaviour of cats and dogs, though they set, as critics have gleefully remarked, an unfortunate precedent for the Georgian poetry of pets, are solid and actual. (Lawrence's animal poems are more 'quick', but less objective). Having said this, however, it is surprising how quickly the objectivity crosses the line into hallucination. The animistic tendencies in Monro's verse give us the clue to this; his brilliance in rendering animal qualities often transfers itself to his descriptions of inanimate objects - we can see a germ of this in 'the quiet flames are licking up the soot'. We have what Eliot called his 'talking Beds and Teapots'. Whimsy is the wrong word for this in Monro, for there is absolutely nothing of the cosiness of whimsy in the operations of consciousness which attach to it: we are not in a fairy-tale world of whimsical fancies, but in painful territories of hauntings and hallucinatory mental impressions.

There is, then, undoubtedly a shadowy aspect of Monro's relation to 'visible' phenomena, and this is connected with his alcoholism; the shadowiness becomes more pronounced as Monro grows older and more ill, the 'darker world within' asserting itself more and more. Stephen Spender

commented:

Wine created a macabre distorted world for him which finally seems to have become an end in itself... the country is never observed: trees lean over brooks, cows (like golfing pairs) stroll on lawns, and after he has drunk a certain amount of wine, the weekend landscape obligingly pours itself into Monro's skull. 38

This is bound up with Monro's whole attitude towards the countryside, to which I return in a later chapter; he certainly does not 'observe' the countryside in the way Edward Thomas does, while on the other hand his observations of urban phenomena are more 'lived'. But 'a macabre distorted world' brings us back to a good deal of Eliot, and to its potent mixture of shadowiness and objectivity. Yet however ambiguous the relation to the visible world in the work of these two poets, Monro is, unlike Eliot, not a capable metaphysician. The centre of interest, we have agreed, is inside the skull, but for Monro it can only be grasped and explored in terms of definite images from the 'external world'. I am reluctant to entirely concede Spender's claim that 'Monro became more and more anxious to merge everything into himself and to blur the definiteness of every outline'. He certainly sought escape from the hard definitions of reality, but Spender's formulation suggests the crepuscular manner of which we must judge Monro not guilty. It is true, however, that he fails when he ventures into abstract or metaphysical realms, and here there is some justification for Spender's 'the intellectual compulsion behind the poetry is weak'. There was a messianic side of Monro, involving a garbled Nietzscheanism; he gave public lectures and pontificated, in print and out, on a range of nebulous subjects. As Michael Thorpe puts it, 'Monro spent most of his life exhorting man in exalted terms to save himself from mechanism and learn "the meaning and object of human life".'³⁹ But all this enters his poetry in an embarrassingly heavy-handed fashion. Falck observes that 'the poems in which he addresses himself directly to such

themes as God or marriage are never satisfying'.⁴⁰ His 'Dream Exhibition of a Final World' is a typical failure in this direction.⁴¹ In attempting a panoramic view of the human situation, Joy Grant comments, he was exceeding the limits of his talent - 'his scientific paraphernalia by its shallowness and banality makes him ridiculous'.⁴² The impeccably judged and phrased abstractions of Eliot's philosophical and religious verse are both outside Monro's range and incompatible with his real 'centre of interest'.

But it is in that 'centre of interest' that the real affinities with Eliot lie. Eliot remarked of 'Bitter Sanctuary': 'This one poem must at least demonstrate that Monro's vision of life was different from that of any of his contemporaries'. Ruth Tomalin makes the following comment:

Different; solitary; and often far ahead: in Great City, for instance:

When I returned at sunset,
The serving-maid was singing softly
Under the dark stairs, and in the house
Twilight had entered like a moonray....

and the companion piece, London Interior:

Time must go
Ticking slow, glooming slow.

The evening will turn grey.
It is sad in London after two...
How far is this twilit city from "the drowsy golden Georgian dream",
and how near to the post-war mood of The Waste Land, published
eight years later.... 43

That is (Ruth Tomalin is saying), how like Eliot Monro is, though he may be different from his Georgian contemporaries. Eliot also wrote that Monro

is obviously not a 'nature poet'. The attitude towards nature which we find again and again in his poems is that of the town-dweller, of the man who, as much by the bondage of temperament and habit as by that of external necessity must pass his life among streets. 44

Again we find that Eliot seems to be talking about himself as much as about Monro. Writing in 1913, before Eliot's urban poetry had made its impact on the English scene, Monro commented in a review of a book of poems called

Streets, by Douglas Goldring, on the fact that no poet had yet succeeded in writing 'a London poetry', for which there was an obvious necessity. Henley and Binyon, he said, 'can neither of them satisfy us, because the city has not forced them to write'.⁴⁵ What we find in Monro's poetry, in such lines as those quoted by Ruth Tomalin, is that the city has forced him to write. A discussion of the poetry of the city and the countryside is reserved for Chapter 4, where these points will be raised again, but here I must make such comments as are relevant to the association of Eliot and Monro.

The realism of Monro's 'Aspidistra Street' -

Go along that road, and look at sorrow.
Every window grumbles.
All day long the drizzle fills the puddles,
Trickles in the runnels and the gutters... 46

is contemporaneous with the cityscapes of Eliot's 1917 poems:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes...
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,

One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms. 47

The theme of uniformity, boredom and endless meaningless recurrence which so pervades Eliot's urban poetry - his 'Streets that follow like a tedious argument', his 'thousand lost golf-balls' of suburban Sundays, his city-dwellers who 'Droop in a hundred A.B.C.s', his 'If it rains, a closed car at four', his 'Birth, copulation, and death' - is reproduced in 'Aspidistra Street':

Uniformity, dull Master! -
Birth and marriage, middle-age and death;
Rain and gossip: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday...

What we have, clearly, is the poetry of urban complaint, what Leavis called 'that imagery of urban disillusion which has since done so much service in the verse of adolescent romantic pessimism'.⁴⁸ But there is no romantic pessimism in Monro; he has been forced into it, forced into writing of the Baudelairian ennui of modern city life. Some of his best poems convince

us that he knows about this at first hand. In 'Safe Passage' there are echoes of the famous passage beginning at line 60 of 'Burial of the Dead' - 'Unreal City' - Monro writes of the 'unreal town', of the traffic which 'flowed along the street' and of the face 'turned dustward down'.⁴⁹ Monro's poem is more about the sort of simultaneous longing for and fear of death we find in Edward Thomas than the living death Eliot describes, but it is clear that a strong resemblance marks the response of the two poets to the modern city. The theme of uniformity and ennui is handled in two accomplished and technically skilful poems, 'Suburb' and 'London Interior' (1914). In 'Suburb', of which I make an analysis elsewhere, the theme of sexual debility is close to Eliot, with occasional very Eliotish phrasings, although Monro seems to reveal a deeper insight into certain aspects of feminine sexuality than is to be found in Eliot's writings:

She trembles like the pampas plumes.
Her strained lips haggle. He assumes
The serious quest.... 50

In the final stanza it is implied that the suburban families reproduce their own kind in the same lazy and almost asexual way as the suburban 'villas' in which they live. The inevitability, the stereotype, which stamps the houses and gardens will stamp the couple's children. Eliot's 'young man carbuncular.... A small house agent's clerk' seems in this poem to have got a promise of promotion and decided on domesticity. 'Suburb' presents a vision which is at once authentically personal yet in the same category as Eliot's of the 'gloomy hills of London' and the 'land of lobelias and tennis flannels'.

In 'London Interior' Monro experiments cautiously with some of the elements of Imagist theory. Pound, in his obituary, expressed surprise at Monro not having been included by himself in Des Imagistes: 'Either at that time or later he certainly wrote poems that measured up to that

standard'.⁵¹ However, Monro never really concentrates his material in the manner of H.D.; he creates, in this case, what is rather an impressionistic mood or atmosphere piece, built up of free-verse rhythms married to irregular, refrain-like rhymes - somewhat in the manner, as in 'Introspection' but more successfully, of early Eliot. These produce a kind of intensity and insistence which is peculiarly Monro's own, while detail is well deployed to establish the mood:

Autumn is in the air,
The children are playing everywhere.

One dare not open this old door too wide;
It is so dark inside.
The hall smells of dust;
A narrow squirt of sunlight enters high,
Cold, yellow.
The floor creaks, and I hear a sigh,
Rise in the gloom and die. 52

Monro's old house motif appears again, its animistic quality in that last couplet perhaps more psychically ominous than in 'Introspection', though relating to the use of the motif in 'The Empty House' and elsewhere. The old house and the almost casual line about the children are not developed, but allowed to operate suggestively in the reader's mind through the succeeding images:

Through the hall, far away,
I can just see
The dingy garden with its wall and tree.
A yellow cat is sitting on the wall
Blinking towards the leaves that fall.
And now I hear a woman call
Some child from play.

Then all is still. Time must go
Ticking slow, glooming slow.

The evening will turn grey.
It is sad in London after two.
All, all the afternoon
What can old men, old women do?

It is sad in London when the gloom
Thickens, like wool,
In the corners of the room;
The sky is shot with steel,
Shot with blue.

The bells ring the slow time;
 The chairs creak, the hours climb;
 The sunlight lays a streak upon the floor.

The playing of the children is automatic, meaningless - we note the heaviness of the line and the debilitating effect of 'everywhere', as well as the juxtaposition of the children with 'autumn' and 'the leaves that fall'. These children do not appear to represent hope, new life. The child called 'from play' suggests, if anything, death, and this idea cooperates with the accumulating detail and the gloom of the atmosphere Monro creates, so that everything becomes redolent of endless decay. Monro does not attempt Eliot's impersonal vision: 'It is sad...' is too direct a comment for that, and he injects into the poem his personal sense of an engulfing, amorphous human suffering. Yet we are close to Eliot's vision of London as a dead land; as in 'Suburb' the theme is recurrent dullness, and the desolation of the old and superannuated in a great city is concisely and objectively evoked. There is perhaps some comparison with the ageing Gerontion and his sense of uselessness, impotence, though the resemblance is no more than an oblique one. More essential is the fact that we can see this as more than a mood poem; it is another of the poems in which Monro, like Eliot, explores a kind of psychological limbo.

II. Fragments and Symbols

It is commonplace of commentary on Eliot that he uses a fragmentary method, ironic juxtaposition and compilations of disparate images and ideas, to express the fragmented modern consciousness. There is little or no evidence that Monro, when he attempted to put poems together in a series of sections, had any conscious expressive intention of this sort, though he obviously felt that between the parts some kind of unity existed. Examples of such poems are 'The Earth for Sale', 'The Silent Pool', 'Gravity', 'The Garden', 'Strange Meetings', 'Week-end', 'Trees'. In some

cases there is no departure from the conventional poem-sequence - 'Week-end' is a sequence of ten sonnets - but at times the sections are more fragmentary than the established convention would appear to allow. On the whole - 'The Garden' is a notable exception - Monro lacks an adequate sense of thematic or symbolic coherence, or, where he assays anything resembling an Eliotish montage, of rhythmic continuity, to sustain such attempts.⁵³ 'Technically', wrote Eliot, 'he was not an innovator';⁵⁴

Colin Falck observes:

In his later period he found himself being driven more and more towards the modernistic vision of poets like Eliot, but he never came to terms with the fact that such visions required a technique to match them. Monro went in and out of the older forms, and on the whole did his best work within them. 55

This is about right, so long as we remember that in work like 'Suburb', 'The Strange Companion', 'Milk for the Cat', 'Hearthstone', or 'The Garden' he was capable of modifying or at least extending the 'older forms' to meet distinctive expressive needs. But the continuous process of going in or out of those 'older forms', or of attempting to build poems in sequences of parts or fragments, must be seen also in another light: it was undoubtedly part of that unrelenting search for the right vehicle to express a compulsive 'centre of intensity' which marks the dedicated artist. And among Monro's later work there are poems such as 'Bitter Sanctuary' which are no mean achievement of technique and diction, and others such as 'Elm Angel' which are at the very least of technical interest. Joy Grant claims that this poem is 'an agglomeration of unworked images, and as such its value is limited',⁵⁶ but Monro's intention appears to be to convey the effect of an entranced, hallucinated state of consciousness in which disparate images are run together, so that the 'unworked' incongruity of the images is precisely the point:

A quiet drooped upon the summer room.
 Now a blue hooded honeysuckle lane,
 A garden built of roses on the wane,
 Sahara buried under naked sand,
 A boy with large eyes from an eastern land,
 Muffled islands with hushed seas between
 And one white temple glowing through the green.... 57

Here perhaps is something of what Spender meant when he wrote of Monro's increasing tendency to 'blur the definiteness of every outline'; it links with such semi-mystical excursions as that in 'Trees'. 'Elm Angel' may be related to the narcotic mistiness, the drifting effect, of such Edward Thomas poems as 'Melancholy', which I have, in its turn, related to aspects of Keats and Coleridge. The poem may well reflect, written as it was when Monro was very ill towards the end of his life, either his alcoholism or an experience under drugs. The distortions of the sickroom seem to leave their mark on several of the late poems. But we also have here something like, say, Verlaine, in the shading of one brilliant or exotic image into another; there is an affinity with the French Symbolist method of attempting to convey some intangible non-material reality by breaking down the definitions and demarcations of objects and impressions in the normal phenomenal world.

Here we must refer to all that Eliot said at various times of imagery and symbol, and of 'the auditory imagination'. The impulse to write in this manner has its origin somewhere in that 'telescoping of images and multiplied associations',⁵⁸ which Eliot found so admirable in the Metaphysical poets, connecting it also with Laforgue and Corbière, and so desirable in a modern poet: 'When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience... in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes'.⁵⁹ Elsewhere he asks, 'Why, for all of us, out of all that we have heard, seen felt, in a lifetime, do certain images recur, charged with emotion rather than others?' and goes on to list some of the 'memories' which form the

imagery of his 'Journey of the Magi', commenting: '... such memories may have symbolic value, but of what we cannot tell, for they come to represent the depths of feeling into which we cannot peer'.⁶⁰ This links with his statement, in the essay on Matthew Arnold, that

What I call the 'auditory imagination' is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. 61

In such statements, Eliot is firmly in the Symbolist tradition, which has in turn the full weight of the Romantic movement going back behind it: the tradition that the meaning of a poem need not be necessarily logical, that images and symbols emerge from the 'dark depths' of our being, from 'the place below sleep', and may have a life and significance of their own. Basically, it is the Romantic method of using external objects to define an interior landscape, of attempting to define the indefinable. The Waste Land, says C.K. Stead, is 'the end product of successive movements against abstractable poetic discourse; it is the justification of the Symbolist enterprise'.⁶² The leaving out of links in the narrative chain, and the telescoping together of disparate images, however startlingly new they may have looked in Eliot, were a natural development from Romanticism and Symbolism, as well as consonant with Freudian and Jungian psychology. 'Connecting links are left out', commented Matthiessen, 'in an effort to utilize our recent closer knowledge of the working of the brain'.⁶³ The connections are to be made, that is to say, 'far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling'. So that when Eliot says, in connection with *Monro*, that

It is the poet's business to be original, in all that is comprehended by 'technique'.... only so far as is dictated, not by the idea - for there is no idea - but by the nature of that dark embryo within him which gradually takes on the form and speech of a poem. 64

and that 'The external world, as it appears in his poetry, is manifestly but the mirror of a darker world within', we begin to be aware of the extent to which he is talking about a poet with whom, almost despite himself, he closely identifies. 'This image of the writing of poetry as a birth in which the role of the conscious mind is that of midwife, will be seen to recur in Eliot's later critical writings', comments Stead on this passage.⁶⁵ It is true, no doubt, that the 'telescoping of images' in Monro scarcely generates the sort of excitement it does in Eliot's poetry, but it still does not seem inappropriate to ask whether Eliot himself is always successful in 'forming new wholes'. All the commentary on Eliot does not seem to me to have diminished the force of such remarks as these by Matthiessen:

Certainly some of his analogies with musical structure... have always seemed to me somewhat forced and over-theoretical.

Eliot, from the time of his earliest poems, has been more successful in posing a dramatic moment than in developing a sustained action. 66

In the last analysis it is individual scenes, images, phrasings and effects which one finds so striking and memorable; lines and short passages can be quoted independently without losing much force. My own experience of the poems is that it is extremely difficult to hold in the mind that overall and inclusive scheme which the poetry constantly seems to suggest, or to be sure that one has ever grasped such a scheme. The deficiency may be mine, but I am tempted to think that Eliot never wholly solved the problem of how to make his parts look as if they belong together, that the claimed coherence is only partially there. Thus, we need not be too censorious of Monro's failures in the 'fragmentary' method, and may look instead at the essential comparability of the ending of 'Elm Angel' -

Or, coming back, no place but only sound,
No elm that grew from any earthly ground,
But, heavenly throughout the atmosphere,
One ring dove cooing, crooning, cooing - Where? 67

with, for example, lines from 'Burnt Norton':

There they were, dignified, invisible,
 Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
 In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
 And the bird called, in response to
 The unheard music in the shrubbery.... 68

This comparability is in the reaching through images after elusive hints of some 'other reality'; the creation of what seems to be a trance-like or hallucinatory state of consciousness in which is involved an attempt at an escape from normal consciousness into some extra-physical dimension of experience.

Insofar as unity exists in Monro's poems made up of fragments or sections, it often has to do - in 'Strange Meetings' or 'The Silent Pool', for example - with a preoccupation with the question of consciousness. Something reminiscent of the 'eyes' symbolism of 'The Hollow Men' is used in 'Strange Meetings' to symbolise human consciousness, to which the 'gods' are seen to be indifferent, or to represent the condition of the haunted, isolated individual, a condition, again, like that of Eliot's hollow men. The old or haunted house motif recurs in this poem, in a way which recalls the following lines from 'The Empty House':

Unendingly imagination pries.
 Through every chink; the hand of memory tries
 All darkened doors; the voice of habit falls
 Along the empty walls.
 And the strange dream lives on of those dead men
 Who builded it together bit by bit,
 And the forgotten people who since then
 Were born in it, or lived and died in it. 69

'His old houses', wrote Eliot, 'are not so much haunted by ghosts as they are ghosts themselves haunting the folk who briefly visit them'.⁷⁰ We may recall his own 'East Coker':

In succession
 Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
 Are removed, destroyed, restores.....

- lines which emphasise 'the inevitable decay of house, men and crops'.⁷¹
 As part of Eliot's meditation on the theme of 'In my beginning is my end',

these relate also to the main themes in 'Strange Meetings':

Often we must entertain,
Tolerantly if we can,
Ancestors returned again
Trying to be modern man.

Memory opens; memory closes:
Memory taught me to be a man. 72

Monro is referring here, of course, to the notion of a racial memory in which is embedded the pattern of our being and knowledge as 'modern men'. Eliot, as we know, was preoccupied with the paradox of continual recurrence, and with the idea of re-establishing some kind of connection between the individual and history or 'the race' as a whole. Joy Grant comments:

Eliot and Monro were alike concerned with man's image of himself, which after the battering of centuries was threatened with final disintegration by the war, and with finding a vital root beneath the surface chaos through which life might be renewed.

Monro thought, she continues,

that balance was to be sought in a new acceptance of dim primeval forces in the hinterland of the modern consciousness. Our real property lay underground. 73

In Monro, it is true, there is none of the finesse or intellectual rigour of Eliot's meditations on the theme of memory; at times it looks like the most facile kind of Georgian escapism. Neither was the 'vital root', at least in its rationalised forms, the same thing for the two poets. Both, as I have been attempting to show, express certain paralysing and agonising psychological problems of modern man. This is the 'surface chaos', but beneath it both seek that 'vital root. . . through which life might be renewed'. Both, that is, suggest some kind of solution to these problems. Monro's is, in a vague way, a psychotherapeutic solution, based on Jungian and Freudian notions; Eliot's is a more austere one, presented with all the authority of tradition behind it - an uncompromising acceptance of Christian asceticism. The rightness or wrongness of either proposed solution is not my concern here; it is in the nature of the psychological



phenomena recorded that the poetry of the two men seems to me close, seems 'not idiosyncratic'. Even closer, perhaps, is the nature of that 'dark embryo' which compels each poet's 'centre of intensity' and from which his obsessive imagery emerges. It is in this connection that the memory theme in the two poets is relevant; it relates to a searching in each of the unconscious or semi-conscious mind for compulsively significant imagery - or symbol - patterns. Seen in this light, what we have in the injunction of 'The Silent Pool' to 'Look down into the unconscious mind: There everything is quiet ... And deep and cool'⁷⁴ in order to discover a level of being at which men can share their 'real estate', or in the following lines from the poem called 'Real Property', is not simply Georgian escape, nor the Romantic flight into a dream world against which Eliot saw himself in revolt:

You only need to close your eyes
And go within your secret mind,
And you'll be into paradise:
I've learnt quite easily to find
Some linden trees and drowsy bees,
A tall sweet hedge with the corn behind.

I will not have that harvest mown:
I'll keep the corn and leave the bread.
I've bought that field; it's now my own:
I've fifty acres in my head.
I take it as a dream to bed.
I carry it about all day.... ⁷⁵

Here Monro travels into an unknown land, a country of the mind, like Edward Thomas's; this is an expression of the crisis of consciousness which afflicts all three poets at the centre of this study, Monro, Thomas and Flint. Eliot only differs in his capacity to erect his bastions of Tradition and Orthodoxy, his austere and authoritative religious resistance to the crisis. There is, of course, a psychological maladjustment detectable in such poetry; a sort of regression, a reluctance to face reality, such as we noted in Edward Thomas. Whether or not we denote this in some degree a psychotic condition, it has crucially to do with those 'spectres

and bad dreams which live inside the skull' which Eliot remarked in Monro's poetry, and it may strike us as ironical that what Monro appears to offer as a genuine means of contact with the 'vital root' - 'I've learnt quite easily to find Some linden trees and drowsy bees' - presents itself in the poetry with an effect of hallucination or nightmare, and apparently as a product of his own maladjustment.

We have seen in the previous chapter, citing D.W. Harding's 'A Note on Nostalgia', that this kind of maladjustment, this tendency towards regression, is a phenomenon closely related to 'acute consciousness'. One of the poems Harding uses to illustrate the point is D.H. Lawrence's 'Piano', and we may recall that it was while discussing this poem in his Practical Criticism that I.A. Richards drew attention to modern self-consciousness: 'A widespread general inhibition of all the simpler expansive developments of emotion (not only of its expression) has to be recognised among our educated population'.⁷⁶ Monro certainly recognised and commented upon this situation. In the first issue of his Poetry Review (January 1912) he wrote, reflecting his reading of Nietzsche, that the goal of the modern poet

is nothing less than the final re-welding of metre to meaning; and it cannot, in the nature of things, be achieved until man has attained a second innocence, a self-obliviousness beyond self-consciousness, a super-consciousness; that condition, in fact, produced by a complete knowledge of his own meaning. ⁷⁷

Of F.S. Flint he wrote, 'his writing is over-troubled with the burden of self-consciousness'; in his book Some Contemporary Poets (1920) he spoke of 'the generation ... that is tortured with self-consciousness and too uncertain of its powers ever fully to use them' and of modern man as belonging to 'a tribe over-burdened with a self-consciousness out of which it cannot succeed in passing'.⁷⁸ In a lecture called 'Can any Religion meet the Condition of Modern Society' he put it in this way:

....self-consciousness takes him /civilised man/ out of the fresh air into that dark tunnel through which he is at present passing. While he is fumbling about in the darkness muttering or shouting like a madman innumerable questions, nothing can help him - he must work his way through. 79

As we have seen, poems such as 'Introspection' and 'Fate' can be interpreted as representations of modern man 'fumbling about in the darkness muttering or shouting like a madman innumerable questions', and there are numerous parallels for this in Eliot. Moreover, Richards's 'inhibition of all the simpler expansive developments of emotion' certainly might apply to Prufrock; self-consciousness is a characteristic of the speaking personæ in virtually all Eliot's poems from J. Alfred Prufrock to the authorial voice of Four Quartets - they are all 'too much conscious and conscious of too much'. The barely tolerable burden of acute consciousness, its torturings and hauntings, from which Monro attempts to escape in pieces such as 'The Silent Pool' and 'Real Property', are strongly conveyed in 'Strange Meetings':

I can't learn how to know men, or conceal
How strange they are to me.

Eyes float above the surface, trailing
Obedient bodies, lagging feet.
Where the wind of words is wailing
Eyes and voices part and meet. 80

This again recalls 'death's twilight kingdom' and the 'dried voices' which 'Are quiet and meaningless As wind in dry grass' of 'The Hollow Men', though Monro's Strange Meetings volume appeared in 1917, long before Eliot's poem. 'One wonders what Monro might have made of Kafka', speculates Colin Falck. A series of Kafkaesque scenes in Section XIX, which look indeed like images dredged from the 'dark embryo within' and which partly draw their strength from the use of traditional imagery such as that of Death the mower which may be thought to be embedded at a deep level of shared consciousness, emphasise that a main element in the psychological limbo is the individual's sense of bewilderment and isolation:

A man who has clung to a branch and he hangs -
Wondering when it will break.

A woman who sits by the bed of a child,
Watching for him to wake.

People who gaze at the town-hall clock,
Waiting to hear the hour.

Somebody walking along a path,
Stooping to pick a flower.

Dawn; and the reaper comes out of his home,
Moving along to mow.

A frightened crowd in a little room,
Waiting all day to go.

A tall man rubbing his eyes in the dusk,
Muttering "Yes"; murmuring "No". 81

Monro himself was a tall man. Falck, who sees in Monro's poems a man 'who is reaching the end of his tether', says that 'The worries, in Monro's case, seem to centre on religion and on his own incompletely acknowledged homosexuality'; Spender put particular stress on his 'obsession' being 'the problem of personal relationships', and thought that his affection for dogs and cats reflected the unsatisfactory nature of his two marriages and his friendships. That the general emotional reticence in Eliot's poetry is associated with a lack of ease and warmth in human relationships seems to me obvious, and is a point I shall take up in later chapters. Monro's 'The Dark Staircase', employing as it does a classic nightmare image, powerfully reflects this aspect of the limbo:

Wheel within wheel, mystery within mystery.
Yet we continue our gaunt uncanny pathway,
We three who thought each other one time faithful;
Hysterical, hypochondriacal,
Wordful as only the twentieth century can be,
Swearing under the shadowiness of alcohol
Loud oaths of loyalty never to be kept.

.....

Oh now what are they doing,
Meeting and parting on a turret stair?
One at the top, one at the bottom, one
Or halfway up or halfway down, between them,
Carrying breathless messages to and fro?

.....

Are we playing
To some huge audience; or are we alone,
Without spectator, unimaginably.....? 82

The blurring of the imagery which makes us not quite certain whether these are three actual people, one Monro himself, or three warring elements of his own consciousness (the id, ego, and superego?) merely strengthens our sense that the inner crisis is linked to the crisis of personal relationships, both being exacerbated by that over-consciousness or self-consciousness of our century: 'Wordful as only the twentieth century can be.....'

III. An Absurd World

It is, then, this sort of tortured consciousness to which the poetry of both Eliot and Monro gives expression; a sense of ennui, of the emptiness of modern life, is intimately connected with the city and with failure of personal relationships. This is the significant connection to be found in two works of a different kind by Monro, 'The Strange Companion' and One Day Awake. Though a relatively early piece (1914), 'The Strange Companion' is one of Monro's most completely successful poems, the first in which he broke free from the stranglehold of convention to strike out in simple colloquial diction and authentic personal rhythms a record of the despair which even as a younger man underlay his romantic idealism. The poem follows the grain of its emotional material; there is none of Monro's inept explication; and a fully adequate objective correlative is found for the poet's inner condition. Prufrock fails to 'force the moment to its crisis'; the protagonist of 'Strange Companion' is similarly timorous and evasive about personal relationships. At the centre of the poem, indeed, is an insight into the attempt to cut the gordian knot of human relationship by dissolving it in alcohol:

That strange companion came on shuffling feet,
Passed me, then turned, and touched my arm.
He said (and he was melancholy,
And both of us looked fretfully,
And slowly we advanced together)
He said: 'I bring you your inheritance'.

I watched his eyes; they were dim.
 I doubted him, watched him, doubted him....
 But, in a ceremonious way,
 He said: "You are too grey:
 Come, you must be merry for a day".

And I, because my heart was dumb,
 Because the life in me was numb,
 Cried: "I will come. I will come". 83

The behaviour of the habitual drunkard, the mutually suspicious matiness of down-and-outs, is precisely observed; syntax and rhythm lurch and hesitate, rhymes and repetitions jingle or wheeze or attempt a false gaiety. The 'strange companion' is not only a drinking pal, but becomes a sort of alter ego leading the poet on to his destruction. He is at once mistrusted, despised, and longed-for, as a form of consummating fellowship in depravity; he has, too, a kind of fateful inevitability about him:

Then he murmured in my face
 Something that was true.
 He said: "I have known this long, long while,
 All there is to know of you".

This inevitability suggests the gradual undermining of the will by alcohol, so that the process of disintegration becomes irreversible. This theme - the decline of personality - interacts with that of the hopelessness of human relationships - 'We were always alone, he and I', - alone both despite and because of their companionship. From time to time the great questions of life and death, reminiscent of Prufrock's 'overwhelming question', loom ominously towards the poet from out of the alcoholic haze:

Can a man know
 Why he must live, or whether he should go?

A world of numbed lives, of human beings groping for an anaesthesia for their sense of being lost, is evoked:

He brought me that joke or two,
 And roared with laughter, for want of a smile,
 As every man in the world might do.

But if the anaesthesia is withdrawn, the hell of withdrawal symptoms is suffered:

He who lies all night in bed
Is a fool, and midnight will crush his head.

This reminds us, I think, of the 'bad night' motif in Eliot's poetry, in 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', for instance, or Sweeney Agonistes - 'When you're alone in the middle of the night.....' Gradually the wierd ménage-a-deux declines into violence and bitterness, the two drunkards having become mutually indispensable even in their capacity to inflict suffering on each other:

When he threw a glass of wine in my face
One night, I hit him, and we parted;
But in a short space
We came back to each other melancholy hearted,
Told our pain,
Swore we would not part again.

'"Strange Companion" and "Trees", said Pound, 'touch characteristically, the sombre, reach towards the macabre (on this side more akin to T.S.E.) centre of the personal variant'.⁸⁴ The macabre and violent element in this poem, together with a touch of desperate self-mockery, does particularly relate it to Eliot. Not only a Kafkaesque world, but here something of a Pinterish or Beckettian one; and I have already pointed out that certain aspects of Sweeney Agonistes prefigure the Absurdist drama. D.E.S. Maxwell writes: 'The relation of Eliot's poetry and Jacobean drama is that each has as its background a violent world, peopled by creatures unsure of their relations with each other, and with spiritual forces above them'.⁸⁵ He continues:

The background of the Sweeney poems is a 'cavernous waste shore', the sound of an epileptic's shriek, the plotting - in 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales' - of Rachael and 'the lady in the cape' against 'the man with heavy eyes'. The atmosphere of 'Sweeney Agonistes' is best suggested by these lines at the close of the play:

You dreamt you waked up at seven o'clock and it's
foggy and it's damp and it's dawn and it's dark
And you wait for a knock and the turning of the lock for
you know the hangman's waiting for you
And perhaps you're alive
And perhaps you're dead

It is partly the unthinking violence of modern life that
this play portrays -

Any man might do a girl in
Any man has to, needs to, wants to
Once in a lifetime, do a girl in.

The importance of this aspect to the background of Eliot's
poems has perhaps been minimised. 86

Maxwell also refers to 'the drunken reverie' of Sweeney in 'Sweeney Among
the Nightingales', and, of course, alcohol appears to be freely consumed
in Sweeney Agonistes. (Though, as critics have pointed out, the Sweeney
of 1920 and the Sweeney of the short play are not the same man). We can
readily recognise the same drunken 'unthinking violence' in 'Strange
Companion' as it reaches its final stage of moral collapse:

One night we turned a table over
The body of some slain fool to cover,
And all the company clapped their hands;
So we spat in their faces.....

William V. Spanos, like Maxwell, sees Sweeney Agonistes as looking back to
the Jacobean, to the 'existential' apprehension of death in Donne and
Webster, to 'the metaphysical shudder in Jacobean poetry', and at the same
time compares it with the modern existentialist literature of Kafka, Sartre,
Camus, and to 'the "Ontological insecurity" of the absurdists' anti-heroes'.⁸⁷
Spanos assigns Sweeney Agonistes a more central place in Eliot's oeuvre than
most accounts have allowed it. I am inclined to agree; the piece seems to
me, despite its, in one way, misleading designation as 'fragments', more
satisfying as an achieved artistic whole than the more celebrated works -
there is a fine consistency of stylisation and a convincing structural as well
as rhythmic mimesis.⁸⁸ Spanos interprets the piece along these lines:

It is Sweeney's function as a Fury figure.....to drive the denizens
of the postwar Jazz Age wasteland into awareness of their bad
faith in thinking the entertainments in their flat will provide
security from death (Pereira) and thus into consciousness of their
radical alienation, or, in Heidegger's terms, of the non-relational
nature of and the impossibility of outstripping death. 89

The situation of the protagonists in Monro's poetry is often very much that of a similar kind of alienation and despair. Repeatedly we feel the imminence of an absurd world, and that Monro is trying to flee Angst (engaged in what Sartre calls 'la fuite'), yet that he is never really able to do so, ultimately being driven, as his poems present the case, into the so-called 'authentic consciousness' of the existentialist philosophers.

As a socialist, however, Monro rationalised the alienation of the individual in his urban environment, his loss of a sense of identity and direction, as having specific causes: it is the product of the economic processes which govern the modern world. His One Day Awake: A Morality without a Moral (1922), though unlike 'The Strange Companion' it is didactic (despite the 'without a moral') and not artistically satisfactory, puts Monro's view of what on another occasion he called 'the civilised, commercialised, machine-governed, religionless man living in the world of today'.⁹⁰ Written in prose, it recounts a day in the life of John Smith, who is waylaid by allegorical figures such as Hunger, Business, Death, and eventually 'saved' by Life. Early in the piece John Smith voices a sense of loss of identity, of the modern problem of consciousness:

Am I awake, or asleep? For that matter, alive, or dead?

Now, Smith, rub your eyes for the last time, and ask yourself to decide that vital question: John Smith, are you John Smith, and, if not, who is John Smith? 91

John Smith can establish for himself only an apparently meaningless form of identity:

John Smith of John Smith & Co. Ltd. That, I may certainly be; but who, then, am I, myself? 92

The theme of economic necessity, like that in F.S. Flint's poetry, is introduced:

He [Traffic] and Hunger are in league. I know their idea. Every

day the same panic is raised. 'There will be no bread on your table this evening unless you go out and win it'. Cashier presents his bill, and men bolt from their houses.

The ennui of modern life is linked to this economic necessity:

Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow. Then, next week - next month - next year. The only escape from thought is Habit. Here's the little altar at which I officiate every day. This correspondence is my bible. Those mutes are my acolytes. (The clerk enters and receives a pile of documents from his hands. The telephone bell rings). That is the voice of God. 93

Business relations 'begin where human relations end', says the character called Business, and in a passage very characteristic of Monro, John Smith muses on his incapacity to communicate with others:

Or you may have been talking to someone who had his back to the sea, closely staring into the friendly eyes, absorbed only in them.... Suddenly, as if a vast curtain had been lifted, you saw the ocean beyond, and heard it. Then you lost your companion, who immediately became a dot in the vision. I don't know how to explain what has happened to me; I can't - even to myself. 94

Once again, an effect of hallucination creeps in; the whole piece has been moving in this direction, towards the bewilderment of the modern individual, his incapacity to take a firm grasp on reality; it is the bewilderment of Prufrock and Sweeney (of the 1920 poems), Gerontion, Doris and Dusty, as well as of many of Monro's own poems. Monro's modern 'morality', with its final triumph of 'Life' over 'Business', is too much of a tract, and it suffers from the sort of half-baked notions and intellectual quackery to which Monro was susceptible. Its material, however, seems drawn from the same inner crisis, the same sense of an absurd world and existential despair, as that of the poems we have previously discussed.

IV. Poésie des départs

The solution which both Monro and Eliot seek to the psychological problems with which they deal, the renewed contact with some 'vital root', might be formulated in rather different terms as a desire for escape from

the burden of acute consciousness, from its haunted and tortured nature in the modern world. Eliot, of course, is more aware of the metaphysical paradoxes involved in any such attempt at escape:

It seems that I shall get rid of nothing,
Of none of the shadows that I wanted to escape;
And at the same time, other memories,
Earlier, forgotten, begin to return
Out of my childhood. I can't explain.
But I thought I might escape from one life to another,
And it might be all one life, with no escape. 95

As Harry discovers, there is no final escape, and I shall come in a moment to the theme of attempted escape and necessary return. Eliot weaves together the memory theme, and its suggested element of nostalgia, with something akin to the crisis theology of Christian existentialism - Harry, as in Spanos's interpretation of Sweeney Agonistes, is driven to a point of 'authentic' recognition - which at the same time, and perhaps more obviously, resembles the traditional theme of contemptu mundi, a release from worldly contingencies ('one life') into a state of being spiritually 'made one' ('all one life'). One can legitimately say, then, that Eliot finds his 'escape' in embracing Anglo-Catholic religious beliefs, in the ideal of a Christian asceticism which may reveal glimpses, hints, of a greater spiritual reality; though he readily concedes that it is necessary to return to ordinary reality. Monro remains a sceptic and agnostic, gradually shedding the romantic socialist idealism of his earlier life, and finding nothing satisfactory to replace it, beyond the retreat into a shadowy world of alcohol, and the state of consciousness represented by his imagery of the paradise garden, or, at a more mundane level, of the country weekend. Irrespective of whether it is 'right' or not, a matter which will be differently viewed by different readers, Eliot's may appear, as a strategy for coping with despair and remaining a reasonably useful member of society, the more satisfactory 'escape'. Monro's escape led, and perhaps could only lead, to premature death. Richard Aldington,

discussing F.S. Flint's poetry in The Egoist, quoted a statement by George Duhamel to the effect that the modern artist must choose between 's'accepter ou s'évader'. There was every temptation in the modern world, thought Aldington, to 'evade one's life and surroundings';⁹⁶ this does seem to have been an acute problem for a whole array of poets who began writing in the early part of the century.

If alcohol, the country weekend, and the trance-like paradise garden, are the escapes Monro employs, Eliot pointed out that he is not just a spare-time scribbler, the much denigrated 'Georgian week-ender', but a professional poet taking the country weekend as a legitimate subject:

Some poets, such as Baudelaire, similarly possessed by the town, turn directly to the littered streets, the squinting slums, the grime and smoke and the viscid human life within the streets, and find there the centre of intensity. Monro's poetry, so far as it is concerned with the countryside, is rather that of the perpetual week-ender, oscillating between departure and return; his city is that of the man who would flee to the country, his country that of the man who must tomorrow return to town. Now, this is not only a state of mind important enough to deserve recording in poetry, but it also becomes, in some of Monro's poems, representative of something larger and less easily apprehensible, a poésie des brefs départs. 97

The reference to Baudelaire - the distinction made between Monro and the French poet exists only within a larger affinity - is significant. In his essay on Baudelaire, written about three years before that on Monro, Eliot describes Baudelaire as having sought a means of 'salvation from the ennui of modern life', even if in Christian terms that salvation should be, paradoxically, damnation. Involved in this quest is his 'poetry of flight', which is reaching out towards something, dimly apprehended, beyond the 'romantic idea':

Baudelaire has all the romantic sorrow, but invents a new kind of romantic nostalgia - a derivative of his nostalgia being the poésie des départs, the poésie des salles d'attente. In a beautiful paragraph of Mon Coeur mis à nu, he imagines the vessels lying in the harbour as saying: 'Quand partons-nous vers le bonheur?' and his minor successor Laforgue exclaims: 'Comme ils sont beaux, les trains manqués'. 98

That 'romantic nostalgia' is an element of the sort of poetic consciousness I am discussing has already been seen, and that Eliot so often appears to regard the flight as beautiful means, it seems to me, that we cannot limit our view of it in his poetry to an existentialist significance, that of Sartre's 'la fuite'. Maxwell describes the poésie des départs as

a specific aspect of French symbolist poetry, the vague nostalgic regret associated with voyages and departures, a regret that is at the same time exhilarating.

For Eliot, he says, it has a 'deeper meaning', and proceeds in his book to use the phrase to imply 'Eliot's departure from the beliefs of his earlier poetry to full acceptance of the Christian faith'.⁹⁹ When Eliot speaks of a reaching out towards something beyond the 'romantic idea', and of 'something larger and less easily apprehensible', he is applying the implications of the phrase poésie des départs, I think, to two specific things. The condition of 'oscillating between departure and return', the condition of the salle d'attente, images the condition of modern man - his rootlessness, his irresolution, his lack of a sense of spiritual fixity or direction. Secondly, the phrase applies to the mentality, the state of consciousness, which involves 'escape'. I doubt if Eliot means that poésie des départs is in Monro what he says it is in Baudelaire, a 'dim recognition of the direction of beatitude'. But he feels that it is at least a condition which expresses man's thirst for the spiritual, and that where there is a choice of departures, the route towards beatitude is at least a possibility. As he makes clear in the essay on Baudelaire, a knowledge of the choice between God and the Devil is, for him, at least as important as making the right choice, and I think he infers that some such knowledge was experienced by Monro in his 'darker world within'.

I scarcely need draw attention to the departure which is made, the journey or quest which is begun, at the very outset of Eliot's Collected Poems - 'Let us go then, you and I....' Indeed, there is an atmosphere

of salles d'attente, of trains manqués, if we take that as implying missed opportunities, about the whole of the 'Love Song', and this, together with passages such as the following from 'Portrait of a Lady':

'And so you are going abroad; and when do you return?
But that's a useless question.
You can hardly know when you are coming back,
You will find so much to learn'.
My smile falls heavily among the bric-a-brac. 100

relates the poésie des départs to Salingar's 'coming-and-going of many lives across fixed points of loneliness and boredom'. The term 'bric-a-brac' itself suggests a haphazard coming and going which accumulates meaningless objects. These poems are, moreover, subtly pervaded with an atmosphere of 'vague nostalgic regret'. In the 1920 poems, Eliot's assortment of 'déraciné cosmopolitans' - the Jew who squats on Gerontion's window sill, Burbank (Chicago Semite Viennese), Grishkin, Rachael nee Rabinovitch, as well as their counterparts in The Waste Land - suggests another kind of 'coming-and-going'. We may compare these lines in Monro's 'Strange Meetings', which, though undefined, suggest an image of waiting refugees:

A frightened crowd in a little room,
Waiting all day to go.

The epigraph to The Hollow Men refers to Conrad's 'Mistah Kurtz', of whom it is said in Heart of Darkness: 'His mother was half-English, his father half-French. All Europe contributed to his making'. The poems in French, 'Mélange Adultère de Tout' and 'Lune de Miel', contain comic versions of rootlessness and poésie des départs. The basic symbolism of The Waste Land, of course, is that of the quest of the Holy Grail; while, as commentators have pointed out, a journey or journeys are in some way or another involved in each section of the poem. The opening paragraph of 'Burial of the Dead' is in Eliot's characteristic mode of poésie des départs, introducing another of the rootless refugees:

Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
 And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's,

 In the mountains, there you feel free.
 I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

Further detailed examples from The Waste Land are hardly necessary, except perhaps to mention the line quoted, in 'The Fire Sermon', from Verlaine's Parsifal, which connects both with the Grail legend and with the nostalgic regret of the French Symbolists.¹⁰¹ In 'Ash-Wednesday VI' we have the 'brief transit where dreams cross', followed by the image of a journey out to sea which seems to prefigure the later 'Dry Salvages':

The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying
 Unbroken wings 102

Here the poésie des départs is assuming its movement in 'the direction of beatitude'. Two of the Ariel poems have journeys at the centre of the imaginative conception - 'The Journey of the Magi' and 'Marina'. In each, in Maxwell's words, there are 'glimpses of the world's affairs seen during a journey which, when ended, will mean that the world can never again be seen in the same way, and that its interests must be put aside'.¹⁰³ It is in this 'direction of beatitude' that Baudelaire's ships in the harbour asking 'Quand partons nous vers le bonheur' are ultimately, for Eliot, pointing; and this line of Baudelaire's is echoed again in 'Marina':

.....let me
 Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
 The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships. 104

'Concentration on the journey which is the present', comments C.K. Stead, 'offers the only area in which the world may be transcended'.¹⁰⁵

It is in the 'state of mind.....representative of something larger and less easily apprehensible' which underlies this poésie des départs that Eliot and Monro again associate. In Monro, the poésie des départs takes its simplest form in such Georgian productions as 'At Midnight' (1916):

I want to leave the ugly town,
Where people talk all night, and all day.
Tomorrow I'll be lying down
Snug in the hay.

I'll take my large and crooked stick,
Close all my books and quickly go;
Then I'll be sleeping in a rick,
And nobody shall know. 106

This may be negligible as poetry, but when we read it as part of a total output, as Eliot recommended we should - 'it was not until re-reading the whole of his published work that I recognised completely how distinctly.... the vision is the personal vision of Harold Monro' - we become aware of it as 'representative of something larger'. The recurrent, often affectionate, reference to trains is another aspect of this poetry of departure:

From hopeless London we can find a way,
Surely, to daylight and the biting spray?
Trains there will be that go
We know
Rasping along the rails at gorgeous rate. 107

'Journey' is a poem virtually in praise of trains - 'Dear gentle monsters' - and ends on the note of vague regret characteristic of poésie des départs, as the passengers on the train alight to their 'separate purposes', becoming 'decent strangers once again'.¹⁰⁸ 'Love in the Autumn Forest' reverses the formula of the city-dweller longing for the country:

There in London we will laugh again.
The tame trees in the square will be enough.
We need not see their leaves fall at our feet. 109

'Unanswered Question', a poem employing an imaginative scheme and cadences remarkably similar to those later developed by Robert Graves, asks whether 'you and I' can depart westward, eastward, northward or southward. Westward will give freedom from the burden of consciousness - 'Not wonder ever again what consciousness may mean'; eastward is opposite to this, the haunted, introspective way. Northward leads to public ambition, but southward is the escape into a self-contained paradisaal trance:

Can you and I go southward without blame
 Into the region we love,
 Fading without desire for famous name,
 Or calculated move?
 Can we in sunlight, both contentedly,
 Live without ambition, gazing at blue sea? 110

This may be compared with the similar imagery of trance in 'Elm Angel'. Another attempt to escape into trance is 'Trees', a conscious exercise in seeking mystical experience written under the influence of Edward Carpenter and other fashionable 'mystics'. The attempt is made through concentrated contemplation of an object, in this case the trees of the title:

The trees throw up their singing leaves, and climb
 Spray over spray. They break through Time.

This may remind us, allowing for the differences both of doctrinal character and intensity, of Eliot's attempted breakthrough to a dimension beyond 'Time', of the journey in 'the direction of beatitude'. Moreover, warns Monro:

It is a dangerous journey. If you go
 Think carefully of this, which now I know -
 Tree-growth is but a corridor between
 The Seen and the Unseen. 111

Joy Grant, who discusses the poem in some detail, comments: 'Monro does not achieve union, but he is in no doubt of a Something behind appearances with which human beings can have fructifying contact'. The key poem, however, is the 'Week-end' sonnet sequence, more than any other verse responsible for fixing the image of the 'Georgian week-ender' in the public and critical mind. The sequence opens:

The train! the twelve o'clock for paradise.
 Hurry, or it will try to creep away.
 Out in the country everyone is wise:
 We can be only wise on Saturday. 112

and ends with the train, by contrast, as a symbol of the return to economic enslavement in the city:

It is over. Now we sit
Reading the morning paper in the sound
Of the debilitating heavy train.
London again, again. London again.

But in between a good deal has happened - enough to justify Eliot's 'a state of mind important enough to deserve recording in poetry', as well as Colin Falck's extremely interesting and suggestive analysis. The sequence, he says, begins unpromisingly:

And yet the tone of this poem, from the second stanza onwards, is one of mounting desperation. The Georgian heartiness turns quickly into a highly self-conscious whistling in the dark and the country scenery reveals itself on closer acquaintance to be inane and inhospitable.... Far from being a piece of escapism, this poem shows the search for escape coming to a near-hysterical dead-end:

We're cows. We're kettles. We'll be anything
Except the manikins of time and fear.

....The Georgian weekend is for Monro a symbol of the lost Eden. Here, briefly, it might seem, one could be free of the curse, of the knowledge of good and evil..... And yet finally it is all useless.....The doors of the week-end cottage never shut properly, and a Grimm fairy story atmosphere hangs over everything, with the furniture talking and ghosts everywhere. 113

That burden of knowing, the problem of acute consciousness, of which we have studied a representative expression in Edward Thomas's poetry, is clearly indicated here; it is a pity, as Falck adds, that 'Monro could only get his deepest concerns into poetry in this oblique way. When he tackled them head-on, his technique failed him'. But what makes Monro stand out like a 'huge and noble figure of bronze' is that, whatever conscious intentions he had, he could not prevent what Spender called his 'valid suffering' entering his poetry in this way. It is clear that the poésie des brefs départs is in fact a poetry of desperation. As Eliot said of him with the appearance of speaking from personal experience, 'There was no way out. There never is'. There was no escape in the country week-end. It is a tribute to Monro that finally he never pretended there was; the Christian asceticism which brought Eliot a means of coping

with the 'valid suffering' was not possible for him, and he never pretended that any such option was open to him.

The authentic, disillusionsed voice invariably comes through in some 'oblique' way; the poems are not experienced by the reader as efforts to persuade him that the attempts at mystical 'union' were successes, least of all does Monro try to disguise the hopelessness of the way out through alcohol. In 'At Midnight' he confesses that he is only dreaming and must return to his 'London bed'; in 'Invitation to a Sea-Holiday' he speaks only of a holiday. In a similar way to that I have discussed in Keats and Edward Thomas, Monro has always to return to everyday reality, just as Eliot concedes that we must live in the ordinary world; the desperation, and the incapability of pretending that the week-end was a real escape is apparent in the transition between these two sonnets of the 'Week-end' sequence:

We'll start away tomorrow wandering,
And nobody will notice in a year.....
Now the great sun is slipping under ground.
Grip firmly! - How the earth is whirling round.

IX

Be staid; be careful; and be not too free.
Temptation to enjoy your liberty
May rise against you, break into a crime,
And smash the habit of employing Time.
It serves no purpose that the careful clock
Mark the appointment, the officious train
Hurry to keep it, if the minutes mock
Loud in your ear: "Late. Late. Late. Late again". 114

'Unknown Country', on the face of it another collocation of the Georgian simplicities, reveals, with its 'other world' and 'dream-like movements', a characteristic state of trance:

Here, in this other world, they come and go
With easy dream-like movements to and fro.
They stare through lovely eyes, yet do not seek
An answering gaze, or that a man should speak....
I am a stranger from the distant town. 115

Parallels with the 'new country', the inn, and the 'strangers' of Edward Thomas's 'Over the Hills' suggest themselves, and Monro's problem of relating to others is implied:

Must I always stand
Lonely, a stranger from an unknown land?

The necessary return follows the attempt at escape, and the poet's nostalgic reflections are in fact an admission of failure:

When I go back to town some one will say:
"I think that stranger must have gone away".
And "Surely!" some one else will then reply.
Meanwhile, within the dark of London, I
Shall, with my forehead resting on my hand,
Not cease remembering your distant land.....

'Look! Look!' cries the poet in 'From an Old House', 'Those are the fields of Paradise'.¹¹⁶ The completest and most successful of Monro's expressions of the attempted escape to 'paradise' and of the subsequent necessary return is 'The Garden' (1922). It involves a figure who has an obvious kinship with the 'strange companion' of the earlier poem; the shared quest for the garden of the title is an objective correlative which fully comprehends the relationship in Monro's poetry between the journey or quest, the paradise garden, the country visit, alcohol and the desire to relate to another human being. The poem opens:

He told me he had seen a ruined garden
Outside the town.
"Where? Where?"
I asked him quickly.
He said it lay toward the southern country;
He knew the road well: he would take me there. 117

They repeatedly re-fill their glasses as they discuss the garden, and it is clear that the garden is a construct of their own minds, like Edward Thomas's 'new country':

He said that no one knew
The garden but himself;
Though hundreds passed it day by day,
Yet no one knew it but himself.

The simple repetitive language reinforces the drunken and willed self-

delusion. Eventually the pair decide to go in search of the garden, walking all day in the direction it is thought to be - 'Out from the city we go.... Mile after mile': the city must be left behind, for the garden is necessarily in the country. In Section IV of the poem, they come at dusk to what the poet's companion claims is their destination:

He came upon the garden in the dusk;
He leaned against the wall:
He pointed out its beauties in the gloom.

They fall asleep, intending to enter the garden next day, but when they awake,

We had not reached the wall, he found.
It was a little further on.
We walked another mile or two,
And stood before a ruined gate.

The blank self-deception of the man is conveyed in the baffled end-stopping of the lines:

He was not satisfied at all.
He said the entrance was not here.
I hardly understood his talk,
And so I watched him move about.
Indeed, it was the garden he had meant;
But not the one he had described.

But in Section VI the pair share a vision of the garden - 'I saw it in the light of his own thought'; and in Section VII, as they decide to return next week when there will be more time to explore, the reader is further convinced that the garden is seen only in the two companions' 'own thought'. The slightly Frostian verse at this point has a circuitous structure and movement, reflecting the discursive evasions of the speaker:

I have affairs in town. If you don't mind,
We will go back directly. After all,
The garden cannot run away, or change.
Next week I'll have more time, and, once inside,
Who knows.... who knows? How very curious too,
Hundreds of people pass it day by day
Along that high road over there; the cars -
Look at them! And the railway too! Well. Well,
I'm glad that no one cares for Eden now.
It would be spoilt so quickly. We'll go back
By train, if you don't mind.....

The speaker betrays here either an alcoholic blurring of his mind or a more generally defective grasp of reality. The poet proceeds to explain in Section VIII that he did not see the man again for a year 'or more', but that then he met him by accident on a 'country road'. The man greets him coldly until the poet mentions the garden; they then share a final vision of it - share the illusion, indeed, that they are at that very moment at the gateway. The final section records this vision and the fearful shrinking away from it - the incapacity to face the implications of their desire, which would, presumably, mean a complete forsaking of normal consciousness; and thus the necessary return:

An angel with a flaming sword
 Stood large, and beautiful, and clear:
 He covered up his golden eyes,
 And would not look as we came near.

Birds wheeled about the flowery gate,
 But we could never see inside,
 Although (I often think) it stood
 Slack on its hinges open wide.

The angel dropped his hopeless sword,
 And stood with his great pinions furled,
 And wept into his hands: but we
 Feared, and turned back to our own world.

Monro has faced that madness which is the poet shut forever in his paradisaal Tower, and been forced to return to the absurdity of the world we know. The angel can only weep at man's helpless plight. This is both a fully individual and fully modern poem. A desire for escape which has behind it the Symbolist and Romantic traditions is recorded almost entirely without Romantic notation; there are no large, vague or exotic gestures. The imaginative pressure is sustained because Monro's 'centre of interest' is engaged throughout; the colloquial language and authentic personal rhythms of 'The Strange Companions' are used again, but despite its simplicity and directness the poem is rhythmically taut and expressive and has subtleties such as the conscious poeticism with which the angel

is described, or the irony of 'The garden cannot run away, or change'.

'To have written some poems he thought worth while, and to have his work accepted by T.S. Eliot and published in The Criterion, must have been a source of pride, even in his last illness', comments Ruth Tomalin.¹¹⁸ One might add Michael Thorpe's summing up in his review of Joy Grant's book:

Monro the poet was middle-aged when the Eliot-Pound revelation broke, and unlike Yeats, he couldn't catch up....Monro the honourably lapsed Georgian broke through in the end to a genuine realism, as one of the smaller voices that have asked in our Waste Land, 'What shall we ever do?' and dared to record a mocking echo as the only reply. 119

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28. Op.cit., p.336.
29. The phrases are Matthiessen's, p.49.
30. Collected Poems, p.67.
31. See William V. Spanos, '"Wanna Go Home Baby?": Sweeney Agonistes as Drama of the Absurd', P.M.L.A., Vol. lxxxv (1970), 8-20.
32. The Waste Land, ll. 411-14.
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41. See Collected Poems, p.36.
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49. Collected Poems, p.52.
50. Ibid., p.159.
51. Op.cit., p.586.
52. Collected Poems, p.157.
53. See Joy Grant, p.259, for 'errors of judgement' in ~~this~~ respect.
54. 'Critical Note', p.xiii.
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57. Collected Poems, p.8.
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59. Ibid., p.117.
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64. 'Critical Note', p.xiii.
65. Op.cit., p.136.
66. Op.cit., p.43, p.192.
67. Collected Poems, p.9.
68. 'Burnt Norton', ll. 23-27. Compare the two passages also with Edward Thomas's 'July', Collected Poems, p.144.
69. Collected Poems, p.33.
70. 'Critical Note', p.xvi.
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72. Collected Poems, pp. 109-10, p.116.
73. Op.cit., pp. 216-7.
74. Collected Poems, p.62.

75. Ibid., p.82.
76. I.A. Richards, Practical Criticism, 1929, p.269.
77. 'The Future of Poetry', Poetry Review, no.i (January 1912), pp. 11-12.
78. Harold Monro, Some Contemporary Poets, 1920, p.143.
79. Quoted by Joy Grant, p.195.
80. Collected Poems, pp. 109-10.
81. Ibid., pp. 114-5.
82. Ibid., p.25.
83. Ibid., p.170.
84. Op.cit., p.592.
85. Op.cit., p.61.
86. Ibid., pp. 62-3.
87. Op.cit., p.13.
88. However, Spanos's view of 'the existential dimension in Eliot's via negativa' as issuing in a positive statement about God - i.e. to achieve Nothingness is to achieve knowledge of All, or God - seems to me to involve a sophism, which does not at all answer the objections I bring, in Chapter 6, against this kind of use of paradox by Eliot.
89. Op.cit., p.11.
90. The Chapbook, no.xxvii (July 1922), 3.
91. Harold Monro, 'One Day Awake. A Morality without a Moral', The Chapbook, no.xxxii (Dec. 1922), 3.
92. Ibid., p.25.

93. Ibid., p.11. cf. Monro's poem 'The Hurrier', Collected Poems, p.10.
94. Ibid., p.21.
95. Harry, in The Family Reunion, The Complete Poems and Plays, p.306.
96. 'The Poetry of F.S. Flint', The Egoist, Vol.II, no.v (1st May 1915), 80.
97. 'Critical Note', p.xv.
98. Selected Prose, p.193.
99. Op.cit., p.136.
100. Complete Poetry and Plays, p.20.
101. The Waste Land, l.202.
102. 'Ash-Wednesday' VI, Complete Poems and Plays, p.98.
103. Op.cit., p.151.
104. Complete Poems and Plays, p.110.
105. Op.cit., p.174.
106. Collected Poems, p.150.
107. 'Invitation to a Sea-Holiday', Ibid., p.147.
108. Ibid., p.119.
109. Ibid., p.106.
110. Ibid., p.44.
111. Ibid., p.139.

- 112. Ibid., p.125.
- 113. Op.cit., p.43.
- 114. Collected Poems, pp. 128-9.
- 115. Ibid., p.94.
- 116. Ibid., p.86.
- 117. Ibid., p.72.
- 118. Op.cit., p.xxvii.
- 119. Op.cit., p.271.

CHAPTER 3

F.S. FLINT AND THE TRUE VOICE OF FEELING

I. The Autumn of the Heart: Imagist or Symbolist?

Pound learned of the modern French poets, wrote Herbert Read in The True Voice of Feeling, 'from Hulme, and from Hulme's adjutant, F.S. Flint.'¹ It is chiefly in passing references such as this that the account of F.S. Flint's contribution to twentieth-century poetry has been given. 'This rather dilettante and precious collection (i.e. Des Imagistes, 1914) includes work by the English poets F.S. Flint, Richard Aldington and F.M. Hueffer....'² 'We liked F.S. Flint, although the nearest he had got to Imagism was reading masses of young French poets and imitating Verlaine.'³ Although Flint associated himself with the Imagists, and although he was a contributor to their anthologies and polemicist for their cause, his work, as Aldington suggests, was somewhat atypical. Pound told him that his poetry accorded more with the 'impressionism' of Ford Madox Hueffer than with Pound's own notion of Imagism.⁴ Glenn Hughes notes that Flint 'stresses the human note' and that 'his work sometimes grows softer than imagist poetry should be.'⁵ Coffman draws attention to the insistent element of personal feeling in Flint's poetry, and calls him a 'symbolist rather than an imagist' poet.⁶ That 'human' or 'personal' note, the non-imagist softness and impressionism, the symbolism and imitation of Verlaine, together with Flint's compendious reading of French poetry, all suggest that there is more in question than an easy filing-away in the 'Imagism' pigeon-hole, and something more deeply involved in the striving for 'the true voice of feeling' than Read's passing reference seems to allow.⁷

We may perhaps begin to see this by turning first to the brief poem which opens Flint's second volume, Cadences, the volume in which he started to find his feet as an individual poet.

November

What is eternal of you
 I saw
 in both your eyes.

You were among the apple branches;
 the sun shone, and it was November.

Sun and apples and laughter
 and love
 we gathered, you and I.

And the birds were singing.

Despite the resemblances to Imagist method - the free verse, the brevity, the avoidance of traditional diction, the images suggestive of emotional states - there is a diffuseness here which runs counter to that clarity of outline which the Imagists sought; there is a certain deliberate smudging of the emotional edges, an indefiniteness. Aldington's 'the nearest he had got to Imagism was.....imitating Verlaine' has some justification; the feeling here - wistfulness, nostalgia, fitful autumn sunlight - is from Verlaine's poetry of the 'autumn of the heart'. It is 'what is eternal of you', or what is eternal of the relationship or the transient experience suggested in the poem, which the poet seeks to intimate, to reach inwards towards some tenuous rapport with, in his images of apples, sun, laughter, birdsong. The term 'impressionism' might do for this, but Coffman's 'Symbolism' also seems acceptably close to the mark.

William Pratt, in the Introduction to his anthology The Imagist Poem summarises the distinction drawn between Symbolism and Imagism by René Taupin in L'influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine:

The Symbolists used images as part of a poem; the Imagists thought of an image as a complete poem. The Symbolists tried for diffuseness and suggestiveness; the Imagists insisted on concentration and directness. Taupin said of the Imagists, 'The pleasure of their poetry is not the satisfaction of discovering little by little, but of seizing at a single blow, in the fullest vitality, the image, a fusion of reality in words.'.....Imagism was chiefly a movement toward making the poetic figure - be it simple metaphor or complex symbol - more definite

and more real....All symbolism was not ruled out of the Imagist poem....He [Pound] recognized that to believe in 'absolute rhythm' and 'permanent metaphor' was tantamount to believing in 'a permanent world' - an ideal world, in other words, beyond or within the world of appearances....If 'Imagism is not symbolism', as Pound insisted, it is a direct descendant: given the different native traditions and the different historical moments, the 'Image' and the 'Symbol' are at their best aesthetic equivalents, the difference being, as Taupin, admirably stated it, 'a difference only of precision.'

Not only does Flint make recurring use of the characteristically French Symbolist emblems of vases, swans, the moon, stars, roses and other flowers, perfumes, hair, and, as in 'November', eyes (but not jewels), but that 'difference....of precision' places him where he belongs. What Edmund Wilson called 'the characteristic tendency of the Symbolists to intimate rather than speak plainly and their cult of the unique personal point of view',¹⁰ helps to complete the perspective, though in a somewhat different sense Flint at times speaks too plainly. 'November' is right on the edge of banality, and unless there is somewhere present in it a Symbolistic ideal or eternal world it is negligible as poetry. But here we encounter a curious ambiguity in our responses to Flint's habits of poetic expression. It is true, as Gerald Solomon has said in an essay on D.H. Lawrence, that 'banality is not to be equated with matter-of-factness as technical simplicity of expression', and that the severe difficulty of naivety in style is that it seems to aim at 'a style of art that is artless', requiring an exceptional fineness of instinct.¹¹ Yet there is in Flint's verse a peculiar quality in the handling of the cadence, a limpidness of movement and phrasing, a certain fine-spun tension - a gossamer touch - which suggest not only control but a deeper delicacy of mind and emotion, and which even in 'November' perhaps just succeed in rescuing the piece from banality. 'And the birds were singing' may look like the asterisks in a cheap novel, yet there is a tremulous sort of build-up which reaches its climax in the reader's mind at some point beyond the final line.¹²

'November' is a preface to a number of shyly erotic, slenderly beautiful love poems using a similar method and motifs and eddying in the same way around the 'eternal'.

Where H.D.'s and at times Aldington's Imagism inherits the harder side of French Symbolism, and where Pound's Imagism is already on the way towards the neo-Parnassian style of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, Flint inherits the softer side. 'The thing that puzzles me in attempting to appreciate both Romaine and Vildrac,' wrote Pound, 'is just this question of 'hardness', and a wonder how poetry can get on without it - not by any means demanding that it be ubiquitous.'¹³ Flint seems to have been aware that the extreme hardness which Pound in his Imagist and Vorticist phases demanded would betray the personal and peculiar in his own work, though he was lectured by Pound for not attempting it. Also in that essay Pound exclaimed: 'And how the devil a poet writing English manages to find or make a language for poems is a mystery.'¹⁴ To that mystery too Flint addressed himself. He was concerned with formulating and acting upon a programme for bringing into English poetry something which it seemed had already been achieved in France: a method, a voice, which would renew it and reorientate it to the conditions of the contemporary world and the exact shades of feeling and consciousness which sensitive men, under such conditions, seemed to manifest.

If we compare this programme of Flint's with Verlaine's in response to the French situation in the eighteen-seventies - the dominance of Parnassian classicism - we discover a closeness which is itself indicative of a deeper affinity of sensibility. The unsatisfactoriness of 'Art Poétique' (1874), either as a poem or a statement of poetic principles, has been noticed often enough; but the attitudes it expresses were very influential on the younger Symbolists, and accord sympathetically with much in Flint. Unlike Verlaine in one way, who claimed 'Je n'aurai pas fait de théorie!' - 'Verlaine was never a theorist: he left theories to Mallarmé,' says Arthur

Symons¹⁵ - Flint was given to making theories, and some of the theories perhaps originate here:

De la musique avant toute chose,
Et ~~pour~~ cela préfère l'Impair
Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,¹⁶
Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose.

Musicality is important in Flint's notion of the making of a poem both as a principle of organisation and in his insistence on the expressive values of 'cadence', and certainly there is a good deal of 'solubility' ('plus soluble dans l'air') of effect in Flint's own verse. Neither does Flint like poetry which goes in for weighty questionings and deliberations; a certain animus against intellectualising is at times as much like Lawrence as like Verlaine:

- their lice, the critics;
- and the superlice, philosophers
who expounded, ¹⁷ life....
expounded it!

(The critics are lice in relation to poets). Anti-intellectualism is, of course, a persistent Romantic symptom, and A.G. Lehmann speaks of 'a pronounced correlation in modern times between the growth of anti-intellectualism and the heritage of symbolism.'¹⁸ In 'Otherworld' Flint describes the kind of poetry he would write under ideal conditions; a 'morning meditation' which is 'a feeding of the senses' would lead to

words and rhythms that explain nothing,
But that open the mind and the heart¹⁹
To a new sunshine and new perfumes.

This correlation of some kind of inner seeing with the physical senses takes us directly to Symbolist precedents. Arthur Symons, whose Symbolist Movement in Literature is important in this context as an immediate forerunner of Flint in importing French Symbolist notions into English, writes:

Reflection, in Verlaine, is pure waste; it is the speech of the soul and the speech of the eyes, that we must²⁰ listen to in his verse, never the speech of reason.

They [words] transform themselves for him into music, colours and shadow; a disembodied music, diaphanous

colours, luminous shadow.

With Verlaine the sense of hearing and the sense of sight are almost interchangeable....He was a man, certainly, 'for whom the visible world existed,' but for whom it existed always as ²¹a vision. He absorbed it through all his senses....

It is likely that Flint would have found himself to a considerable extent in tune with Symons's enthusiasms.

Verlaine's manifesto piece continues:

Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise
Ou l'Indécis au Précis se joint.

Much of Flint's work tends to shade off into that mode of 'chanson grise', an apparatus of mood and effect denoting the 'autumn of the heart':

Spirit in me,
why are you so sad?²²

In the following, reflections in water themselves image a predilection for mingling precise detail with suggestion and vagueness:

Under the lily shadow
and the gold
and the blue and mauve
that the whin and the lilac
Pour down on the water²³
the fishes quiver

The whole poem is overtly Symbolist, with its 'white rose of flame' which enters 'the black depth of my sorrow'. That quivering of fishes seen through the lucid yet distorting and distancing medium of water, water which itself passively receives the shadow and the colours of 'le monde visible', exactly configures Flint's Symbolist sense of phenomena and of some luminous inner 'mystery'; a mystery which is yet also some sort of essence, silent and tremulous, of life or life-force - fish quivering in water, or white rose of flame within a black depth of sorrow. A poem such as Mallarmé's sonnet 'Surgi de la croupe et du bond...', with its 'verrière éphémère', its 'veillée amère', its 'Naïf baiser des plus funèbres' and 'rose dans les ténèbres', where the rose is analogous to the poem itself, seems to stand

directly behind Flint's configurations here. This conjunction of 'l'Indécis au Précis' mirrors, too, the conflict in Flint between reality and dream, and can become at times an expressive formula for the predicament of the Prufrock-like suburban man who stands at the centre of many of Flint's poems; the modern anti-hero living a double life of squalid reality and dream-yearning for the ideal. This sort of doubleness of vision necessarily demands a verse which operates on nuance, the marrying of fine tones and shades:

Car nous voulons la Nuance encor,
Pas la Couleur, rien que la nuance!
Oh! la nuance seule fiancée
Le rêve au rêve et la flûte au cor!

The way the colour here, itself pale green, is filtered through an intermediary 'curtain':

the pale green sky
shimmering through the curtain
of the silver birch,²⁴

reflects Verlaine's 'C'est des beaux yeux derrière des voiles'. But that the nuance and shading is not generally ironic or satirical is also a point on which Flint and Verlaine are temperamentally in accord:

Fuis de plus loin de la Pointe assassine,
L'esprit cruel et le Rire impur,

(As I indicate in later chapters, when Flint wants to attack he does so directly and explicitly, moving away from his Symbolist manner). All this results in both poets in verse which is sensuous and lyrical, despite Flint's abandonment of traditional lyric forms, and of which a minor key is characteristic; a line in Verlaine's 'Claire de Lune', 'Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur',²⁵ may well be applied to his own and Flint's poems.

Both poets share in a rejection of eloquence and rhetoric, in the use of simple, even commonplace, diction:

Prends l'éloquence et tords-lui son cou!

It's a sentiment Flint forcefully echoes in his polemical writing; in part,

for him, it is a rejection of conventions felt to be moribund, in part an expressive necessity for the poetry of the modern anti-hero - 'No! I am not Prince Hamlet....' And Flint, constantly inveighing against 'the hurdy-gurdy tunes of rhyme and metre',²⁶ would have felt an immediate sympathy with Verlaine's 'Oh! qui dira les torts de la Rime?' It is true that Verlaine, an ingenious rhymers himself, did not mean to advocate a complete abandonment of rhyme, but while rhyme does create qualities of texture and resonance which Verlaine exploited but which Flint wanted out of the way for his own expressive purposes, the impulse to loosen up the tyranny of rhyme - 'ce bijou d'un sou' - is essentially the same drive in both the French and the English poet towards what Symons calls 'liberty in verse':

It was partly from his study of English models that he [Verlaine] learnt the secret of liberty in verse, but it was much more a secret found by the way, in the mere endeavour to be absolutely sincere, to express exactly what he saw, to give voice to his own temperament, in which intensity of feeling seemed to find its own expression, as if by accident. L'art, mes enfants, c'est d'être absolument soi-même, he tells us in one of his later poems....²⁷

Symons's 'absolutely sincere' may be set beside Flint's own references to 'sincerity' in poetry. Symons further says:

'Sincerity, and the impression of the moment followed to the letter': that is how he [Verlaine] defined his theory of style, in an article written about himself.

That 'setting free' of verse, which is one of the achievements of Verlaine, was itself mainly an attempt to be more and more sincere, a way of turning poetic artifice to²⁸ new account, by getting back to nature itself....

Flint wrote: 'The test of poetry is sincerity. The test of sincerity is style',²⁹ and that

Clarity and sincerity of speech and purpose are the perennial qualities of all good poetry, and those who will strive after these qualities....and who will disburden themselves of the lumber bequeathed to³⁰ them from the past, are the men who will be heard....

The pronouncements could without much inconsistency be run together; it is a question of the 'setting free' of verse, a disburdening of 'the lumber bequeathed.....from the past', in order to get closer to the thing or the emotion itself. The felt need is to 'express exactly what he saw', to render 'the impression of the moment', but also 'to give voice to his own temperament', a matter of the expression of personality, of personal 'intensity of feeling' - an attempt to forge a poetic medium for the true voice of feeling. All this, of course, is related to the Imagist manifesto; we may compare Pound's Credo: 'I believe in technique as the test of a man's sincerity'.³¹ But we feel that there is more insistence on the element of personal feeling: 'L'art, mes enfants, c'est d'être absolument soi-même.' It is as good a reason as any for not considering Flint an Imagist; he could not commit himself to the dehumanized abstraction at which the contemporary rebel movements in the arts, of which Imagism was the poetic version, aimed. And this can without much difficulty find its correlation in the fondness for nuance and a conjunction of 'l'Indécis au Précis', for if this can create a subjectivity and an insubstantiality in the verse which may sometimes degenerate into what Pound called 'swash', it can also record fine shades and fleeting moments of consciousness.

Verlaine desiderates

Que ton vers soit la chose envolée
 Qu'on sent qui fuit d'une âme en allée
 Vers d'autres cioux à d'autres amours.

These lines register the autumnal sensibility and the reaching towards some other world; Flint's is certainly a verse which shares in those and which deals in fleeting shades of consciousness, which seeks to register the intimate and the indefinite at once:

Stairs, banister, a handrail:
 all indistinguishable.
 One step further down or up,
 and why?
 But up is harder. Down!

Down to this white blur;
it gives before me.

Me?

I extend all ways:
I fit into the walls and they pull me.³²

This series of impressions of a man rising from his sickbed is played upon by a flicker of hallucinatory distrust, distrust of 'le monde visible' and also of the poet's own sense of self, of coherent personality. It is a state of consciousness, obviously, between waking and dream, between reality and illusion. The Symbolist method modifying towards modernist expressionistic techniques is necessary for such a response to life. Not only is it a response caught between these two dimensions of awareness, but there is also a seeking to soar away 'Eparse au vent crispé du matin' to the 'other-world' of ideal beauty and poetry and fullness of experience:

Que tons vers soit la bonne aventure
Eparse au vent crispé du matin
Qui va fleurant la menthe et le thym....
Et tout le reste est littérature.

The pull of this against the demands of actuality - Flint certainly shared Verlaine's view of a distinction between poetry and 'littérature', or the mere craft of language suitable for the expression of ordinary non-poetical ideas - is fully explored in 'Otherworld'.³³

But the ingenuousness and intimacy have a further implication. 'He was occupied,' says Symons of Verlaine, 'with the task of an unceasing confession....The verse murmurs, with such an ingenuous confidence, such intimate secrets.'³⁴ It is perhaps here that the affinity is strongest; Flint is one of the initiators of a confessional mode in twentieth-century poetry.

II. 'The wrong of unshapely things.'

Symons, of course, wrote (at least in his first version) in the

context of the Nineties, and his book was dedicated to Yeats, who at that stage of his career was preoccupied with 'The wrong of unshapely things.' Flint was born in 1885: an exact contemporary of Ezra Pound and D.H. Lawrence, with both of whom he has something in common, a little younger than Harold Monroe, Edward Thomas and Robert Frost, a little older than his friend Richard Aldington and the young poets who emerged in the war. Flint was so placed as to make a wholesale absorption of late-Victorian romanticism and the Nineties, as well as of such enthusiasms as are represented by Symonds's book, more or less inevitable; yet young enough, like Pound, to make this a jumping-off point for other development. That his first notions of poetry are formed on these models can be borne out by reference to his apprentice volume, In the Net of the Stars, published in 1909. As Hughes says, the prefacing note prepares the reader for something more radical than what follows -

I have, as the mood dictated, filled a form or created one. I have used assonance for the charm of it, and not rhymed where there was no need to. In all, I have followed my ear and my heart, which may be false. I hope not.

Certainly a striving for the true voice of feeling is already apparent in such words, but the hints of radicalism are countered by something of 'nineties' pose and aestheticism in the tone; there is no real emancipation being announced, though the note is suggestive of how easily the latter can shade into the former. In what follows there is a facile handling of the stock-in-trade of late Victorian poetry; 'A Country Lane', for example, is a Wordsworthian sonnet, fitted out with the standard 'all forlorn', 'mournful voice', 'wind-tossed', 'chanting', 'Afar', and 'winding of a horn'.³⁵ Much else in the book, as Hughes notes, is derivative from Keats, Shelley and Swinburne. But if writing like this suggests a candidature for the Georgian anthologies (all the worst side of them), the 'nineties' paraphernalia which also abounds in the book helps to determine

a leaning in a somewhat different direction. Pound's Personae were published in the same year by the same publisher (Elkin Mathews). Pound's earliest poetry, it hardly needs to be said, is quite as much absorbed in the prevailing Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite modes; his diction is deliberately archaic and literary; the Browningsque manner sometimes adopted is Victorian modernism and as G.S. Fraser has said, the psychology in it 'is basically romantic-Victorian'.³⁶ All this highlights the extent to which Flint and Pound were formed in the same mould, and they were to gravitate in the same direction, towards Imagism. The Nineties, it has been said, were not a period but a point of view; and a point of view derived chiefly from Pre-Raphaelitism, French Symbolism and nineties' aestheticism was to inform the Imagist anthologies to a considerable extent, part of a sort of group sensibility. Along with this went, of course, the desire for a radical stylistic and linguistic renovation in poetry; Flint shared in it all, and indeed led the field in the matter of French influences.

What Flint does not manage is the way Pound is at once absorbed in the past and yet detached from it. He has yet to detach himself in any meaningful way from his romantic inheritance, and in the main his early verse is only a slightly individual incantation of well-worked gestures and material, though many of his later preoccupations are broached. It is often essentially artificial; here the key word is 'painted':

And ripples gilded by the whin,
Painted, too, with a gloom of green,
Mingled with lilac blue and mauve,³⁷
Dropped from an overhanging grove.

(The quotation on p.137 is from Flint's rewriting of this poem in his later manner). This betrays a lack of real contact with nature; what we really have here is a prettifying of nature from the drawing-room of the suburban aesthete. It is present again in the 'damask leaf' of the following, which explains Flint's notion at this time of poetry:

silver rhyme
 With the green damask leaf
 And rhythmic³⁸bine
 Of verse

The state of sensibility behind this is later turned to individual account; as yet it is artificiality for art's sake, the kinship is with the Nineties or with the (ironically placed) 'aesthetic' attitude of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley himself. The love poems endorse our sense of a lack of contact with reality in their adolescent idealisation of sexuality, sometimes disastrously bathetic:

Dear, lift your breasts like two white roses to³⁹
 The stars. The moon will have no shame of you.

In the Net affects all the Nineties' weariness and sense of futility; 'He tells of the Eternal Wistfulness' - 'wistfulness' in Flint's own word for the autumnal mood which dominates his work - uses the Aesthetic recipe of estranged, sorrowful beauty, though there is a hint of Imagist method:

But you can be to me
 No more than a mirrored vase.

A little murmur in the leaves -
 A cold, calm night of many stars.⁴⁰

We are very much in the company in these early pieces of the 'phantom, Beauty' of Nineties' Yeats. The titles of the poems from which I have been quoting, and numerous others such as 'He calls on Her to forsake the Earth', 'He tells how a Vision of Her saved him from Death', have the preciousness we associate with the Nineties, and echo Yeats's titles in The Wind Among the Reeds (1899 - the same year as The Symbolist Movement in Literature): 'He mourns for the Change that has come upon Him and his Beloved, and longs for the End of the World', 'He bids his Beloved be at Peace', and so on. Sorrow (note 'mourns' and 'the End of the World' in Yeats's title), estrangement, 'the net of the stars', the sea, night, roses, 'a mirrored vase', are all ingredients derived from a marriage of French Symbolism and such early Yeats. Yeats exactly states a large element of the Aesthetic

the interests of 'beauty':

But beauty, - ...
Do you not feel it upon you?...
Strive to reach the grape, but do not pluck it.
The gesture is all.⁴⁴

Early in his career as a commentator on poetry, Flint described poetry as the result of 'art directing the emotions and moving in a dream; and Nature, as Oscar Wilde has said, and as Scott proved, is a bore. She only provides poetry with the ornaments that set off or suggest the intensity of the vision.'⁴⁵ The reference to Wilde flies a banner and provides the placing: Flint is exactly restating the Symbolist-aestheticist position, with its 'art.....moving in a dream' and its notion, to which I shall return in later chapters, of the phenomenal world as merely a decorative surface veiling 'the intensity of the vision'. The statement, in its anti-naturalism or realism, runs in some respects counter to Flint's developing awareness of the need for a revitalising of poetry, and he might later have wished to modify it. 'The aesthete,' says R.V. Johnson, 'aspires to treat life, not as a battle but as a spectacle.'⁴⁶ But Flint moves gradually away towards life as a battle, while preserving, and seldom fully bridging, the Aesthetic - and indeed Romantic - dichotomy of Art and Life. Such poems as 'Otherworld' and 'Dusk' enact this tension, though the ideal is always a reconciliation or fusion of art and life, which in real circumstances seems impossible to effect (I enlarge upon this in Chapter 6). And 'Envy' is not typical of the later work: the attitude that 'the gesture is all', the spectatorial attitude, is not confirmed by the experience embodied in the majority of the poems. What is more remarkable is the extent to which Flint becomes a poet committed to the 'battle' of real life; the poems record a finely sensitive response to the modern

urban environment. Flint brings his 'Aesthetic Sorrowfulness' into mesh with actuality and makes it expressive of a more radical, more modern, unease. The aestheticist impulse survives in the delicate shaping of the cadence, the autumnal mood, the desire for escape, but the concern for life and for stylistic renovation pulls strongly against it.

An affinity in Flint with something markedly other than Verlaine and the Nineties crystallises in his enthusiasm, repeatedly articulated in his critical writings, for the poetry of Emile Verhaeren. Whatever Verhaeren's rating may have been since, those people in England who in the years leading up to the war were casting about for sources of inspiration in the struggle to renew English poetry, seem to have recognised in the Belgian poet one model of what they were seeking. Flint regarded him as the greatest European poet living at the time. However, though Glenn Hughes listed Verhaeren and Jean de Bosschère as particular influences on him, Flint's translation of Verhaeren's Love Poems suggests a certain disparity of feeling as well as of method between the two poets.

The form of translation for the Love Poems was influenced by a conversation with Verhaeren when Flint met him in 1915 - the translation appeared in 1916 - the Belgian poet having fled to England on the last boat to leave after the outbreak of war:

We talked about translating poetry while waiting for his audience. He agreed with me that the honestest way to translate a poem was to put it into prose.... Verhaeren said that he had been rather anxious about the translators of his own poems. As for the English

translation....he was quite content that it should be
in prose or at least in prose rythmée.⁴⁷

But if the prose rythmée was suggested by Verhaeren himself, it does not allow many of the effects of the rhymed and metric original; it has the limitations of the 'unrhymed cadence' Flint used in his own poetry. Indeed, if we compare the domestic life and setting of these Love Poems as Flint's English evokes them:

Here is our pleasant house and its airy gables, and
the garden and the orchard.

Here is the bench beneath the apple-trees, whence⁴⁸
the white spring is shed in slow, caressing petals.

with the ideal domestic life envisaged by Flint in his own 'Otherworld':

I can see the lilacs in great bushes about my house....

The plum-trees are in bloom,
And the air smells sweet with hawthorn.⁴⁹

we begin to feel that Flint has made Verhaeren's almost too much his own poem. He immensely admired the Belgian poet's sweep and force, but the fuller texture and more muscular movement of Verhaeren's verse are not carried over into the translation, perhaps because Flint, in transit between Verlaine and modernism and stopping off at Imagism by the way, was himself as a poet searching for some rather different manner of expression.

What most attracted Flint, I think, to the work of Verhaeren was a sense of contact with life, a rehabilitation of the lines of communication, become so attenuated in the work of the Symbolists, between the experience of inner or metaphysical worlds and the experience of 'le monde visible', the outer and public realities. Yeats had, of course, also begun to move in such a direction. The more public and humanitarian concern of Verhaeren's 'The Poor', for example, certainly marks a shared sympathy, as Flint's translation suggests:

And so there are poor hearts, poor hearts,
With lakes of bitter tears in them,
And they are death-pale like the stones
Of cemeteries.⁵⁰

Flint knew what poverty was. Verlaine and Verhaeren may stand, in an approximate and simplified way, for two polarities of Flint's experience and sensibility. In Chapter I we have focussed, in the poetry of Keats and Thomas, upon a pattern formed of a tension between lassitude and energy; between the impulse to escape from everyday reality, in dream or fantasy or even death, and acceptance of, or adjustment to, that reality. The most strongly individual and characteristic of Flint's poems are often those which enact this pattern:

Into the dark of the arch the swan floats
and into the black depth of my sorrow⁵¹
it bears a white rose of flame.

The two kinds of escape are interchangeable or even interwoven; the enervation, the movement towards extinction of consciousness because consciousness is unbearable, is most strongly felt in the adolescent work of In the Net; but persists later even when partly transmuted, first into a Symbolistic and near-mystical sublimity, as in 'Roses':

Let a strong mesh of roots
feed the crimson of roses
upon my heart;
and then fold over the hollow⁵²
where all the pain was.

and then into Flint's visionary 'otherworld', where, paradoxically, actuality tends to become seen as anti-life, while the dream otherworld becomes identified with ideal beauty and fullness of life. This process can be seen in the re-writing of 'A Swan Song' to become 'The Swan'; what in the earlier version looked like a metaphor of life extinguished in darkness - 'White rose of flame the swan beneath the arches'⁵³ - becomes a near-mystical illumination of 'sorrow' similar to that in 'Roses'.

Flint was certainly interested, however, in Verhaeren's expression of 'life', and in using his example as a propaganda model for the revitalisation of English poetry; and if in the Love Poems Verhaeren used metric forms, his experimentalism elsewhere also attracted Flint. But the

introduction into some of his work of industrial imagery⁵⁴ which led him to be celebrated by the advocates of a 'machine' art to suit the modern world, was offset by something with which Flint was more in sympathy. Verhaeren was capable, he wrote, 'of poems of infinite tenderness'⁵⁵ - the poems he later translated. Such an expression of life, regulated by tenderness, is what we find in much of his own work.

III. Having a Programme

When we come to examine Flint's commentaries on poetry, we see that he was not just a reporter of trends, though he liked to try to give clear definition to these. It is true, indeed, that a large part of his writing addressed itself to the task of giving a concise account of the work of contemporary French poets, whether young and obscure, or established and well-known, and of generally making them available to the English reader of that time. 'Flint's talent,' says Joy Grant, 'was always to exhibit poetry persuasively rather than to criticise it';⁵⁶ on the whole his criticism is expository and classificatory, with a light flavouring of personal commentary and idiosyncrasy. He is less exploratory and makes less reference to touchstones in a continuous English tradition than, say, Edward Thomas, whose articles often appeared alongside his own, and he repeatedly moves from consideration of particular writers to general theory. He declared himself opposed to 'rules and laws' in poetry:

Le Combat (Duhamel) is soberly written, with no romantic fustian, the language always being adequate to the situation.....The distinction between prose and verse has begotten the illusion that there is a distinction between prose and poetry. Poetry is a quality of words put together at the behest of the emotions and the imagination, irrespective of forms, the establishment of which has been due to a natural human desire to lay down rules and laws whereby effects once obtained may be repeated. They have been repeated - alas!

His insistence on the 'distinction between prose and poetry' being an 'illusion' - his greatest hobby-horse - is symptomatic of the curious way in which, even while ostensibly breaking down old 'rules and laws', he is in effect erecting a new dogma. He wants to set out clear rules and prescriptions for how things should be done in the future, and seems unaware of this inconsistency. There is, perhaps, an inherent danger of theoretical constructions becoming inflexible and dogmatic; still, Flint did have what Pound attacked Harold Monroe for not having - 'HELL,' wrote Pound to Monroe, 'you never had a programme.'

A formulation of this programme occurs in his Presentation: Notes on the Art of Writing; on the Artfulness of Some Writers; and on the Artlessness of Others, which appeared along with essays on contemporary poetry by T.S. Eliot and Aldous Huxley in The Chapbook for March 1920. It is here that the statement 'The test of poetry is sincerity' occurs, as part of a series of axioms on which the Art of Writing should be based, and Flint continues:

Personality in art is the character given to a work of art by the refraction of life through the uncommon mind, the artist's.

Style in writing is the character given to it by the selection of word and phrase rendering as exactly as possible the idea, emotion and vision of the artist, and by the rejection of everything foreign and superfluous.

Sincerity⁵⁸ in writing is the conjunction of personality and style.

There is an obvious relation to Imagist theory; we note, too, the familiar claim of the specialness, the 'uncommon mind', of the artist. In the second part of the article Flint makes an excellent critical analysis and comparison of passages by J.C. Squire and H.D., providing a certain field of reference for the stated axioms; nevertheless, we feel that terms like sincerity, personality, style, are combined in rather casuistical formulations, in a tone which unjustifiably invites us to believe that a definition has been achieved and some incontrovertible principle of good writing established.

No doubt by 'insincerity' Flint meant automatic use of diction and forms, the expression of received attitudes towards accepted subjects, a lack of concentration on the thing or the emotion itself. To require of poetry that it be 'soberly written, with no romantic fustian, the language always being adequate to the situation' was to locate exactly the discipline needed, and Flint rightly felt, like Pound, that strong measures were called for. But Flint's very desire for frankness and clarity in formulating these measures leads him into a position which lacks flexibility. However, the real bearing of these abstractions about 'sincerity', 'style' and 'personality' is seen in the passage on Duhamel - 'Poetry is a quality of words put together at the behest of the emotions and the imagination, irrespective of forms': it is, once again, a bearing upon the true voice of feeling.

In commenting on individual writers, moreover, we find Flint repeatedly stressing examples of poets who take their material directly from the life around them, the life of the time, and who use technical innovations of all kinds; to trace his preoccupations through these commentaries is to fill out and illustrate the abstract axioms of his 'Presentation'. He writes of Cocteau's Cap de Bonne Espérance:

The poem, in fact, is a collection of images placed one against the other, with few of the ordinary connecting links of speech, it being left to the reader to form the fusion in his mind. If the fusion takes place, you have the sensation of poetry; if not, you are bewildered. The subject is flying, the hero, Roland Gurros. The text jumps about over the page. 'The margin does not frame the text; it is distributed over the page.' 59

Of Apollinaire's Calligrammes:

There are many eccentricities in the latter volume, the least of them being the absence of punctuation; but words arranged in the form of pipes, trees, cravats and in complicated designs, and rain trickling down the page in single letters were amusements that kept Apollinaire's mind alert. He was an adventurer of the mind, but a fine poet when the right mood came. 60

And of Paul Claudel:

The development of his thought does not proceed by a logical dovetailing of phrases,⁶¹ but by the accumulation of images and rendered visions.

All this is between six and three years before the appearance of The Waste Land. Flint understood the expressive possibilities of free verse, typographical variation, and of 'the development of thought' which 'does not proceed by a logical dovetailing of phrases, but by the accumulation of images', of a 'fusion' which gives 'the sensation of poetry', before most of these techniques were put into practice by English or American poets.

In 1910 Charles Vildrac and Georges Duhamel published their Notes sur la technique poétique, a defence of vers libre. In 1912 Vildrac gave three lectures on French poetry in London; according to Coffman, there is some doubt as to whether the other two propagators of French poetry, Pound and Aldington, attended the lectures, but Flint certainly did.⁶² Vildrac and Duhamel wanted, Coffman observes, to break the rigidity of the French Alexandrine, replacing it with a line determined by natural definition into units of speech or thought, but gaining pattern from the rhythmic constant in each line. This is very suggestive of Flint's own later method, and the recognition that something like it might be applicable to English poetry was part of Flint's important contribution, through his work on French poetry, to a crucially formative stage of the new poetic. Reviewing Pound's Ripostes in 1913, he energetically demands a flexible concept of what poetry should be, an open approach to questions of form and tradition, and touches on the belief which he was later to expound more fully, that free verse has a more respectable pedigree than rhyme and set forms:

La versification, said Marmontel, est une mosaïque dont il faut replir le dessin. It is a common error in England to suppose that poetry is versification, thus defined. Mr. Pound's work is a vehement protest against this stupidity; he has sought to prove by example that poetry is, what its name implies, creation, and not the kindergarten art Marmontel thought it to be.... Mr. Pound has earned the right to put his poetry into any form he pleases; he has given his vers libre a solid

basis in tradition, and may laugh at his critics. The laugh has all along been on his side. The vers libre was not, after all, invented by Whitman, nor even by Gustave Kahn.⁶³

This was in 1913, a little before the other Imagists, Flint included, broke away from Pound's domination; the ensuing quarrel between Flint and Pound is well documented in Christopher Middleton's article 'Documents on Imagism from the Papers of F.S. Flint':

Flint had obviously been incensed not only by Pound's manner but also by the fact that nobody recognised his own [Flint's] pioneering work on contemporary French poetry, published in The Poetry Review of August 1912.⁶⁴

The general lack of credit Flint seems to have been given either for the prodigious energy of his critical work and 'French Chronicles' or for the way in which his own poetry is at once very individual and intrinsic to a larger movement of poetic style and sensibility, may partly be explained by his background, which largely excluded him from the literary coteries of the time. The almost total and somewhat unaccountable termination of his literary work after 1920 may also help to explain its subsequent partial neglect. This was connected with the death of his wife in 1920, and a rapid but mistaken re-marriage to her sister; circumstances which, however, scarcely seem to explain so irrevocable a breakdown of his literary activity. However this may be, his work has been put in a necessary perspective by Conrad Aiken, who is quoted by Charles Norman as saying that he thought Flint's translation of Jean de Bosschère's The Closed Door in 1917 'influenced [T.S.] Eliot directly--"a cadenced, highly colloquial verse, the unacknowledged fountain of a lot of that period."⁶⁵ There are, I think, substantial grounds for regarding Flint as 'unacknowledged fountain of a lot of that period.'

As we have seen, Flint insists in his chronicles and critical articles that the renewal of poetry requires modernity of subject-matter to be attended by experiment in style and technique. In his own verse, he feels

his way towards an expressive medium as free as possible from received ideas of what poetry is, something which will respond with a plastic and supple fidelity to his sense of a type of consciousness unique to the twentieth century, affiliated only in the loosest possible way with recognised denominations of writing. This evolves as a kind of art-script which exists, to simplify, somewhere between the conventional territories of prose and verse (as he consciously intended), yet which, we become aware, operates in a way which is essentially that of poetic statement.

What Pound said of the 'songs' in his own 1916 volume Lustra is not inappropriate to the larger part of Flint's 1915 Cadences:

Here they stand without quaint devices,
Here they are with nothing archaic about them.

Both poets moved towards the treatment of the everyday life of the time in a verse which had discarded 'quaint devices' and archaisms, though both retained strong elements of aestheticist feeling. Flint attempts, avoiding 'poeticism' at all costs, to marshal the very ordinariness of common speech, even the use of the commonplace, in the direction of poetic communication. Of course, what Flint wished to do does not always accord with what he actually achieved. On the one hand, he did not always free his work of the literariness he deplored; on the other, the ordinariness tends to be overdone. There may be inert lists of words or details, and that sense of natural speech rhythms playing off against iambic expectations which enriches much twentieth-century verse is sacrificed; the shaping of the cadences sometimes acquires a monotonous sameness, or they become, as Bullough said of Aldington's free verse, 'a loose cloak for prosaic comments'.⁶⁶ The problem, as I have indicated earlier, is similar to Lawrence's: achieving expressive simplicity which avoids banality. 'The finest instinct is wanting too often in Lawrence's own practice', says Solomon; he attributes Lawrence's failures to his 'impelling fear of self-knowledge'.⁶⁷ Flint shows little sign of such fear, and he often achieves what he sought,

great directness and immediacy, redeemed from mere speaking by a varied and delicate shaping of the cadence which convinces us of a deeper delicacy of mind and feeling. He persuades and eases ordinary speech into the regulated expressiveness of art. We don't have to get through protective layers of artifice: we move directly 'inside the skull' (as Eliot said of Monro) of the poet. It is a different response to the problems of poetic expression at the time to that of Yeats, Pound and Eliot, with their adoption of impersonal masks, but the way it interrelates with what they were doing is discussed more fully in later chapters.

We have seen so far, then, that Flint's poetry displays much of the Nineties sensibility, cross-fertilised by French Symbolism and in particular Verlaine, acquiring, under the stress of the felt necessity of writing poetry to fit the times, a style and a subject-matter adapted to the conditions of the twentieth century. It is no very great step - the point is obvious enough - from ennui and Decadence to Leavis's 'modern disintegration' and 'sense of directionlessness'; the poète maudit has not far to go to become the isolated artist of the twentieth century, hopelessly at odds with his society and civilisation. Symbolism adapts itself naturally and easily to the social and psychological situation of the English poet in the second decade of the century. But, although we see in Flint's later two volumes a more extensive and maturing exploration of his personal predicament and a developing use of free verse, he never fully solved his expressive problems. Had he continued writing after 1920 he would almost certainly have had to face the need to come to terms with the limitations of his 'unrhymed cadence'. Nor is the discrepancy between reality and escape so richly brought into rapprochement as in the poetry of Edward Thomas. Coffman comments that Flint's concern extends beyond Imagist doctrine to the expression of direct personal feeling; this is certainly so. He then says that Flint 'often did not make the intellectual

effort necessary to give the emotion aesthetic significance.'⁶⁸ The poetry does give the impression that Flint perhaps lacked the sort of rigorous artistic intelligence which pursues expressive problems, as Yeats or Eliot did, to the bitter end. This partly results from a reluctance, like that of Verlaine, to analyse the emotion, the material of the poem emerging from the 'dark embryo' of consciousness. Flint seeks, as it were, to keep this all-of-a-piece, not to subject it to any reducing or refracting action of the intellect. This does not mean that there is no engagement of the poet's intellect and intelligence with the material out of which the poem is made, or with the aesthetic processes involved. Indeed, what Flint is really doing in his commentaries on poetry is constructing a theoretical programme for poets confronted with particular problems of consciousness; problems arising from their historical situation, from their relation to the Romantic, Symbolist and 'Decadent' traditions and from the urgent need to express certain newly-felt pressures of the age in which they lived; problems which come together, as we have seen in Thomas and Monro, to form a 'modernist' variant of ennui, and of the flight from reality it may precipitate, or the struggle against it. Like many radical theoreticians, he goes further than most of his sympathisers might care to follow, and, though he could write responsive analytical criticism (in the second part of his 'Presentation', comments Joy Grant, Flint 'does some textual analysis which looks forward to the new critics'⁶⁹), has the tendency noted above to dogma and abstraction. But, as I shall try to show in more detail, there is a consistent relationship between the theoretical programme, the poetry he wrote, and the context in which they stand.

IV. 'Le temps nécessaire': prose or verse?

Flint's francophile enthusiasms attracted him to the idea of participating in the Imagist 'school':

I was delighted that such a thing as the founding of a poetic school in London had been possible. The French device on the pennons Des Imagistes of its lances at first shocked my English ear; but a school is a criticism; the language of criticism is, incontestably, French; and French criticism is my special pleasure....⁷⁰

But strict Imagism formulated a programme which concentrated on too narrow a range of effects to suit Flint. As Coffman notes, Flint's own programme amounted, in effect, to a repudiation of all restrictions. It is basically very simple (I summarise Coffman⁷¹): a demand for 'fresh vigour' in poetry, mainly to be achieved through the divorcing of poetry from 'measure', and the use of 'new rhythmical forms'. His proposition that there is no essential difference between prose and verse is inextricable from the logic of his position, as well as firmly in the Symbolist tradition. Mallarmé had expressed the idea that prose and poetry are interchangeable; Rimbaud had rejected prosody; and A.G. Lehmann quotes the following statement by the Symbolist critic Wyzéwa:

La musique des mots peut en effet être aussi clairement et plus entièrement exprimée par une prose: une prose toute musicale et émotionnelle, une libre alliance, une alliance harmonieuse de sons et de rythmes, indéfiniment variée suivant l'indéfini mouvement des nuances d'émotion.⁷²

In a letter to J.C. Squire in defence of Imagism Flint wrote out a sentence first in lines like verse, and then as prose, commenting:

Whether they are prose or verse is beside the question; whether they are printed in regular or irregular lines is of no consequence, except that, printed irregularly, they are easier to read, and the rhythmic intention is better marked....Prose or verse, prose or verse: the rocks on which all English criticism of poetry breaks. What do you call the form of Gide, in Le Roi Candaule, of Claudel, in all his odes and dramas, of Vildrac, in Le Livre d'Amour, of Fort, in his Ballades Françaises, of Peguy, in his Mystères, of Porché in Le Dessous du Masque?⁷³ Prose or verse, and, if not verse, therefore not poetry?

In his 'Presentation' he declares:

There is no difference between prose and verse. Since they are both words in order, and both have rhythm, it is obvious that they are essentially the same. Verse, however, has measure as well as rhythm. It may also have rhyme. 'Free verse' has no measure, and it cannot, therefore, properly be called 'verse'. 'Cadence' would be a better word for it. Cadence differs in no way from prose. Its rhythm is more strongly felt, and it is printed in lines of varying length in order that this rhythm may be marked. But there is no justification for printing prose in this way, except to point to a definite rhythmic intention.⁷⁴

It was no anarchic impulse, however, that led Flint to seek the abandonment of all the conventions of verse-poetry, and it was accompanied by a firm insistence on a new discipline which has to do with that 'clarity and sincerity of speech and purpose' for which a disburdening of 'the lumber bequeathed from the past' is necessary; with the directness and frankness of statement in his own work; with Lawrence's 'let us be honest and stick by what is in us' involving 'the purging of old forms and sentimentalities';⁷⁵ and it involves the poet's complete servitude, complete fidelity, to his own 'sense of movement' or sense of 'dramatic necessity'. We are reminded of Eliot's well-known strictures, in 1917, on vers libre:

Vers libre has not even the excuse of a polemic; it is a battle cry of freedom, and there is no freedom in art. And as the so-called vers libre which is good is anything but 'free', it can better be defended under some other label.⁷⁶

As Pratt points out, René Taupin maintained that vers libre and free verse are in any case not the same, since in French speech syllables are given much more equal quantities than in English; for the same reason, English verse has in a sense always been more 'free' than French.⁷⁷ But Flint carefully avoids the 'free' by adopting his own label, 'unrhymed cadence'. This does not mean, of course, that Flint and Eliot are on exactly the same tack. Certainly, there is a characteristic touch of elegant sophistry

in Eliot's attempt to persuade us (or himself) that free verse is really a relaxed variety of a 'form, like iambic pentameter', and that iambs are really a sort of regularised free verse. As so often, Eliot does not quite come off the fence; Flint faces the issue perhaps less subtly but more squarely - he does not even want 'unrhymed cadence' to be the same thing as formal verse. He does not actually say anywhere that formal verse is bad verse, but he says almost everywhere that the formal conception of verse is not usable in the situation which existed at the time. However, Eliot's essay tackles a very real difficulty about the term 'free verse' - as he rightly says, 'there is no freedom in art' - and we cannot quarrel with his general findings. 'It is this contrast between fixity and flux, this unperceived evasion of monotony, which is the very life of verse,' is well said indeed. It is only too easy for free verse, whatever label we attach to it, to fall into monotony; yet in practice Flint can achieve 'a style of art that is artless', which does consist of fine discriminations between fixity and flux.

Flint's chronicles provide a running commentary on what the discipline of such an art requires:

Like all the rest of M. Vielé-Griffin's work, these poems are written in free rhythms - free, that is, from regard for a conventional form, but absolutely in servitude to the poet's sense of movement; and the rhyme, or, in its⁷⁸ stead, the assonance, is used to mark the rhythm.

And this cadenced speech, this parole intelligible, pours forth with the changing speeds of dramatic necessity, of which its beat has the strength; it is easy to see therefore why Claudel's lyricism broke the bondage of the alexandrine. It is moreover a lyricism that amplifies speech by the⁷⁹ constant creation of new metaphors, new images....

the verse-form Claudel uses for preference has neither rhyme nor metre (it has measure and balance), and it is the art⁸⁰ of breathing that regulates the length of a verse.

To enforce this last observation Flint quotes some lines expressing

Claudel's own views on the matter:

Ainsi un poème n'est point comme un sac de mots,
 il n'est point seulement,
 Ces choses qu'il signifie, mais il est lui-même un
 signe, un acte imaginaire, créant
 Le temps nécessaire à sa résolution
 A l'imitation de l'action humaine étudiée dans ses
 ressorts et dans ses poids.

Paul Fort provides Flint with further ammunition in pressing home the crucial importance of this quest for 'le temps nécessaire à sa résolution':

His poems are printed in their prose form, he says, in a note.....to prove the 'superiority of rhythm over the artifice of prosody. It has been said that I 'sacrifice' my books to 'the cause' of this truth, which - if it were once recognised - would very much help to relieve our poet's craft, would endow it with much more liberty, much more suppleness, and would allow of infinitely more personal discovery (fantaisie) in the traditional forms of French poetic language, which would be rejuvenated thereby. Thus the poet would be less inclined to think in fine lines: the expression of his thought would be translated directly into fine musical strophes, which to my mind are the characteristic of true poetry.'

By 1922, though he had ceased to publish poetry himself, there are, for him, only two possible kinds of writing: that used for practical purposes, and literature, which is synonymous with poetry:

.....the function of poetry is what it has always been: to amuse or to inspire, or, in other words, to make men forget death or brave it. There are no other kinds of literature. There are (1) poetry and (2) description and explanation, though these, now and then, are touched with poetry.

Prose has virtually displaced verse. The writing of verse is like the playing of squash-rackets - very exciting and absorbing, no doubt, to the players, and amusing to a handful of spectators. But the vast majority of us take no more interest in verse than we do in squash-rackets; yet we need poetry as we need food.....

There is a note of impatience here; the death of his wife may have influenced this view of the function of poetry. All the indications are that this was a shattering experience for Flint, and he does not appear to have possessed that kind of artistic resilience which can sometimes translate such an experience into major poetry. Not, of course, that one has necessarily

any right to expect this of a poet; but some such momentous experience is exactly what, we sometimes feel, could make Flint's poetry a thing of power as well as sensibility. On the other hand, perhaps the mode mineur of Flint's poetic voice is so native to him as to exclude such possibilities of development from the start. However this may be, as a response to the sort of verse-writing almost universally perpetrated circa 1910, or even by the late Georgian Poetry clique at the time of writing this, the analogy with squash-rackets is apt enough; but by 1922 the polemical thrust had been largely overtaken by events.

The polemic finds its most sustained expression, however, somewhat earlier; Flint's Preface to Otherworld (the Preface is dated March, 1918, although the book did not appear until 1920) represents the culminating flourish to ten years' campaigning exemplified in the poems which follow. His opening gambit is characteristically assertive:

There is only one art of writing, and that is the art of poetry; and, wherever you feel the warmth of human experience and imagination in any writing, there is poetry, whether it is in the form we call prose, or in rhyme and metre, or in unrhymed cadences⁸³ in which the greater part of this book is written.

Flint insists that it is he and not the workers in the artifice of prosody (those self-absorbed squash-rackets players) who is in the central poetic tradition. Did not Cynewulf, he asks, use the words 'a cadenced song', and can it not be said that 'that form is the real tradition of English poetry, and my own unrhymed cadences and those of other writers are, in fact, a reversion to that tradition?'⁸⁴ (In the letter to J.C. Squire in 1917 Flint says that he and the imagists had been praised for 'our return to the true English tradition.') The traditional forms, he continues, 'such as the English iambic decasyllable, the French alexandrine, the Italian hendecasyllable' were 'gradually evolved.....as the least common multiple of technical excellence and the greatest common measure of the experience of the age', but, and this is the crux of the matter for Flint,

neither has grown nor could grow with our needs, and.... they now strangle and stifle the natural cadence of our emotions, which are the driving force behind all poetic expression. The history of English poetry in verse is the story of the exhaustion of the effects to be obtained from rhyme and metre, - of the exploitation of a mine in which the main lodes have at last given out....there is no writing nowadays in metre and rhyme that does not echo with all the feet and all the rhymes of the past....Swinburne gave the coup de grâce....to English rhyme and metre.⁸⁵

The use of these outworn effects of rhyme and metre, he continues, 'brings poetry into contempt', but at the same time people only recognise poetry to be such if it is written in rhyme and metre. He then moves on to ground which is more generally that of the various poets who subscribed to the Imagist manifestos:

The European was bound in the end to tire of those trickeries and acrobatics of verse-writing which satisfied his forefathers, and to need and to force the issue of a more flexible form of expression, in which the word would, to use Flaubert's phrase, be glued down tight on to the thing. The European of to-day....demands a clear presentation in his own language of the emotion that moves the writer and the vision he has before him; and this means the dismissal of our thous and deems and doths and prithees, of unnatural inversions....⁸⁶

That what he goes on to speak of as 'clarity and sincerity of speech', and a renovation of poetic style and language, an avoidance of the 'stereotyped and conventional', are for Flint interdependent is borne out in some of the axioms of his 'Presentation':

All writing which seeks to astonish by an invented singularity is vicious in principle....

All stereotyped and conventional forms of speech and thought will be avoided by a poet.

All inversions which are not the natural inversions of emotional stress are clumsy and inexcusable in modern poetry.⁸⁷

That Flint is aware of dangers in relinquishing the 'lumber...bequeathed from the past', is evident in the first of the above axioms; again it is a question of the discipline involved in the new poetic. The preface winds

up, however, by reverting to its central concern: the particular medium in which poetry, in Flint's view, is in future to be written. There are to be two kinds of artistic writing:

prose, generally, will be used for the more objective branches of writing - for novels, plays, essays and so on....cadence will be used for personal, emotional, lyric utterances, in which the phrasing goes with a stronger beat and the words live together with an intenser flame. If you ask why cadence should not be printed as prose, the reply is that the unequal lines⁸⁸ mark the movement of the cadence and its tempo.....

Perhaps it is a little unfair to want to ask Flint what he thought English poetry would have been like if it had stopped at Cynewulf, and it is easy enough to pick holes in his argument such as pointing out that Old English verse employed structural devices such as alliteration which are by no means simply 'cadence'; the Preface is a model of over-reaction to the sins of the immediate past. Regular poetry reviewers such as Edward Thomas and Flint himself knew about these from bitter experience. As acutely as anybody else of his generation, Flint was aware of this giving out, in the first years of the century, of the old lodes of English poetry:

Imagism, like all other literary movements, was a general movement, a product and impulse of the time, brought about by the pressure of older and outworn work that has a tendency to accumulate towards the end of the trajectory of its impulse.⁸⁹

It is out of this sense that his intransigent insistence on a total break with the past grows. In the Preface he declared:

Every generation must find its own formula, express its own promptings, do the one thing that marks it⁹⁰ out as that generation, or perish from all memory.

This anti-conservatism is deeply rooted in Flint's response both to life and to literature. Christopher Middleton points out:

Like Lawrence, Flint had grown up in dreary and penurious circumstances; he was almost entirely self-educated and he had little love for⁹¹ the literary culture of the privileged classes.

That is to say, he had no investment in the status quo and hence no qualms

about its overthrow; like Pound and F.M. Hueffer in difference ways, he came to the historical situation from the outside and without deep-rooted preconceptions. And it was, more than anything, Flint's unparalleled reading in French poetry and criticism which allowed so radical a perspective on English poetry.

'Prose or verse, prose or verse: the rocks on which all English criticism of poetry breaks.' But it was not such a simple matter to clear these rocks out of the way. 'Whitman's originality', wrote Eliot in his introduction to Pound's Selected Poems,

is both genuine and spurious. It is genuine in so far as it is a logical development of certain English prose; Whitman was a great prose writer. It is spurious in so far as Whitman wrote in a way that asserted⁹² that his great prose was a new form of verse.

We may link these comments with the discussion of Whitman and Lawrence in Herbert Read's The True Voice of Feeling.⁹³ Read also insists that what Whitman, and Lawrence also, wrote is not really verse at all, but either a totally 'unformed' utterance, or a patterned prose:

There is no doubt that Lawrence (and Whitman) reject the superinduced shape of metrical laws. But Lawrence is asserting that what proceeds, spontaneously, has no recognizable or discoverable form. It is naked utterance, unformed.

I have already shown that what proceeds, in the case of Whitman, has a very positive structure, the figure of grammar, as Hopkins called it. Apart from this basic structure, Whitman's verse is full of rhetorical devices which are anything but spontaneous....

Instead of the immediate, instant self we have the conscious, rhetorical self of the volume Look, we have come through....⁹⁴

Read thinks that abandoning 'the superinduced shape of metrical laws' does not guarantee immediacy and directness, 'personal discovery' and 'sincerity', a view which seems to contradict Flint. Read's book is itself to some extent an effort to theorise about and to affirm the kind of poetry of

consciousness with whom I am concerned; he is attempting to make out a case for 'organic form', which he thinks Whitman and Lawrence often fail, in fact, to achieve. The thrust of Read's book is from Wordsworth and Coleridge, making the essential connections back from Modernism through the Romantics. We remember the famous passage from Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads:

If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which overturns what I have been saying on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose, and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the language of such poetry as I am recommending is, as far as is possible,⁹⁵ a selection of the language really spoken by men....

And Wordsworth adds in a footnote:

I here use the word poetry (though against my own judgement) as opposed to the word prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of poetry and prose, instead of the more philosophical one of poetry and matter of fact, or science. The only strict antithesis to prose is metre; nor is this in truth a strict antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose that it would scarcely be possible to avoid them, even were it desirable.

This is actually not so very far from Eliot's notion of verse as a system of limited and varied withdrawals from prose; but Robert Graves is a poet whose absolute insistence on the difference of prose and verse makes no concession in such directions:

One of the most difficult problems is how to use natural speech rhythms as variations on a metrical norm. And here we meet with the heresy of free verse. Until the time of Blake and his oratorical cadences, it was generally agreed that the reader should never be allowed to lose his sense of metrical norm. But Blake, finding the contemporary technique of poetry too cramping, burst it wide open and wrote something that was neither poetry nor prose. Whitman did much the same, though for different reasons.... All who, like Whitman, choose to dispense with a rhythmical norm are welcome to explore the new country which he opened up, but it now wears rather a dismal look. Robert Frost's poems, which combine traditional

metres with intensely personal rhythms, show the advantage⁹⁶ of staying put and patiently working at the problem.

'Oratorical prose' is what Graves finds in Blake and the King James Bible; in a footnote he adds: 'I expect verse to be verse, and prose to be prose.' Read also thinks that Whitman and Lawrence wrote a sort of biblical prose, with a rhetoric of parallelism; but there is a significant difference of emphasis between Graves on the one hand, who talks of 'the heresy of free verse' and combining 'traditional metres with intensely personal rhythms', and on the other, Read, with his 'superinduced shape of metrical laws' and interest in 'organic' form, or even Eliot's views on vers libre and Whitman's 'great prose'. Eliot's 'contrast between fixity and flux' is putting the emphasis less firmly on measure than Graves's 'variations on a metrical norm'; and although all these writers in effect agree on the use of 'a selection of the language really spoken by men', they all acknowledge that the rocks of 'prose or verse' are real ones which have to be taken into account.

Prose-poetry and its variations always seem to be unsatisfactory in English because of the near-impossibility of breaking away from the dominating echoes of the King James Bible, and it is a beguiling medium for the unwary writer. What Flint further seems to overlook is that the examples of poetic writing which he offers in support of his theories draw attention to their rhythmic qualities in a way that prose, in normal modern practice, does not. In other words, there is a distinction between those kinds of writing and prose, and why not mark the distinction by calling them verse? However, Flint wanted simply a 'phrasing' which 'goes with a stronger beat' and in which 'the words live together with an intenser flame.' This can be extremely plain and colloquial; the rhetoric of parallelism is there, but no writing can get by without some sort of rhetoric. But I have tried to place Flint's unrhymed cadence in a context

which shows both how directly Flint stands in a general movement of Romantic and Symbolist theory towards greater licence, and yet how this quest for licence can disallow 'the advantage of staying put and patiently working at the problem.' Eliot starts from a point close enough to Flint's:

I do not minimize the services of modern poets in exploiting the possibilities of rhymeless verse....
The rejection of rhyme is not a leap at facility....
Rhyme removed, the poet is at once held up to the standards of prose.⁹⁷

But there is a sensible complement which Flint refused to concede:

And this liberation from rhyme might be as well a liberation of rhyme. Freed from its exacting task of supporting lame verse, it could be applied with greater effect where it is most needed.

Many poets had within two or three years of Flint's Preface published rhymed and metric verse which is very much worthy of attention - to mention only the more conspicuous, Yeats, Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas and Robert Frost. The example of Frost returns us to Graves's point, and can take the discussion a stage further.

Flint himself, like Pound and Edward Thomas, had praised Frost's A Boy's Will in a review. He says of these poems, in which rhyme and metre are used copiously, that

Their intrinsic merits are great, despite faults of diction here and there, occasional inversions, and lapses, where he has not been strong enough to bear his own simplicity of utterance.⁹⁸

It was Edward Thomas who most clearly saw that Frost's poetry pointed at least one usable way out of the post-romantic impasse. Much in Thomas's various reviews of North of Boston echoes, or corresponds to, Flint's prepossessions and the context in which we have set them; these are poems which are

revolutionary because they lack the exaggeration of rhetoric, and even at first sight appear to lack the poetic intensity of which rhetoric is an imitation. Their language is free from the poetical words and forms that are the chief material of secondary poets. The metre avoids....the old-fashioned pomp and sweetness
....they depend not at all on objects commonly admitted

to be beautiful....Many, if not most, of the separate lines and sentences are plain and, in themselves, nothing. But they are bound together and made elements of beauty by a calm eagerness of emotion.' 99

Few that read the book

will have been as much astonished by any American since Whitman. Mr. Frost owes nothing to Whitman, though had Whitman not helped to sanctify plain labour and ordinary men, Mr. Frost might have been different.... But I have not met a living poet with a less obvious or more complicated ancestry....Mr. Frost has, in fact, gone back, as Whitman and Wordsworth went back, through the paraphernalia of poetry into poetry again. 100

Already in A Boy's Will Frost had

succeeded in being plain though not mean, in reminding us of poetry without being 'poetical'. The new volume marks more than the beginning of an experiment like Wordsworth's....There are moments when the plain language and lack of violence make the unaffected verses look like prose, except that the sentences, if spoken aloud, are most felicitously true in rhythm to the emotion. 101

Thomas's formulations may be more cautious than Flint's, but they are alive to a more complex range of possibilities. There is more than one way of being revolutionary, of achieving the true voice of feeling: metre, for example, is not necessarily a 'lode' which has 'given out', it can avoid 'old-fashioned pomp and sweetness'.

We have now considered, then, a range of views which suggest that a new poetic could be forged without jettisoning the rich possibilities which rhyme and metre may afford. All these writers connect renovated verse-forms of one kind or another, forms which can utilise the expressive values of prose without being prose, with the direct and living expression of inner states; expression which does not in any way infringe the 'quickness' - Lawrence's word seems appropriate - of such states. Pound as well knew that it was possible to import into poetry the prose virtues, to effect a pregnant adjustment of prose speech and verse patternings, without pretending there is no difference between the two kinds of writing:

Poetry must be as well written as prose. Its language must be a fine language, departing in no way from speech, save by a heightened intensity (i.e. simplicity).¹⁰²

As Eliot pointed out, it is the difference itself between the two kinds of writing which is 'the very life of verse'. Most critics nowadays, I suppose, adopt the rule that all writing where typographical division into separate lines is part of the structure may be called 'verse'. The division into lines automatically alters the way in which the words are read, and opens up the possibility of effects other than those which can be achieved in prose. Flint's own poetry often exploits such possibilities with a subtlety his polemic hardly allows for: 'unrhymed cadence' was a battle cry, and it would one day have to be abandoned.

But all this is a way of talking, in rather abstract terms, about something else: about a matter of expressive strategies, the more sensitive instrument for recording fine shades of consciousness which these poets were seeking to make of their verse. What is being sought is some sort of adjustment of image, or symbol, to discursive statement. Discourse in poetry is necessary not only to be able to talk about the symbols or images, which includes indicating to the reader how symbols and images are to be taken, but also, one would think, in order to render accurately what may in general terms be called the 'stream of consciousness', which is not a succession of pure images. This is a matter which bears on the whole question of 'prose or verse', about which we will find statements in Edmund Wilson's Axel's Castle, in Kermode's Romantic Image, and of which C.K. Stead says:

The English poetic tradition has always occupied middle-ground between pure discourse and pure Image. At times it has striven towards the Image; at others it has been content to be scarcely distinguished from prose except by its metrical form.¹⁰³

D.W. Harding, bringing psychological and literary theory together, suggests that creative writers

provide examples of nominally discursive statement which shows on inspection some of the characteristics of presentational symbolism and at times traces of a richer matrix, perhaps more confused, perhaps more complex, ¹⁰⁴ from which their words and images have emerged.

We are reminded of Eliot's 'dark embryo' within the poet 'which gradually takes on the form and speech of a poem'; and we may note that Eliot, whose distinction between prose and verse we have already considered, also distinguishes between poetry and verse, poetry being only that which emerges from this 'dark embryo'. He calls Kipling 'a great verse-writer' because nothing in his work seems to tap these more obscure areas of consciousness.¹⁰⁵ In Edward Thomas's description of Frost's 'separate lines and separate sentences [which] are plain, and, in themselves, nothing' - that is, discursive statement - but which are 'bound together....by a calm eagerness of emotion', he is hesitating towards the idea of some accommodation of language as informational statement to language as art-structure or image. It is a formulation which might very well apply to both his own and Flint's poems. But a Symbolist poem is the manifestation of some intangible inner or metaphysical reality, itself image or symbol; at once a message about something and an art-structure which is its own meaning. A.G. Lehmann defines two essential (and, he claims, incompatible) uses of the term 'symbol'; one applied to the word used as a 'sign' for communication, which can provide us with informational statements, with 'a message about'; and one which seems to refer to the kind of symbols used in Symbolist poetry.¹⁰⁶ And we have noted that Flint concurs with Claudel's view¹⁰⁷ that a poem is not merely 'un sac de mots', not merely 'ces choses qu'il signifie', that is, not just discourse. It is 'lui-même un signe'; it is in something like this sense that Lehmann finally chooses to use the term 'symbol',¹⁰⁸ and this is what Kermode, borrowing from Lehmann, describes as the view of the poem as 'aesthetic monad'. And yet the sign, the poem, creates 'le temps nécessaire à sa résolution', and the relaxed discursive

movement of Flint's own verse seeks precisely this.

In 1913 Flint wrote of a poetry of the future which would consist of 'a series of emotional ejaculations, cunningly modulated, and coloured by a swift play of subtle and far-reaching analogies.' This suggests that he is searching for something different from the conventional notion of imagery. In 1920 he considered the question of metaphor and simile:

Metaphor is the fusion of two or more ideas into one image, simile the juxtaposition of two or more ideas. The ancients used metaphor sparingly and simile freely. Metaphor, however, appeals more strongly to the modern mind....every new metaphor which takes root in the language lives its life as an image, and dies as a stereotype....There are, as a consequence, quite valid objections to metaphor, and a poet who purged his style of it completely and relied entirely on new simile to give life to his ideas, might create a strong, fresh and enduringly vivid style. A style into which dead metaphors have been allowed to pass freely gives a feeling of staleness.¹⁰⁹

Metaphor, certainly, 'appeals more strongly to the modern mind' - Imagism, after all, was a particular theory of metaphor, and 'the fusion of two or more ideas into one image' approximates its aim. An Imagist poem seeks, really, to be a perfect fusion of message about something and art-structure: the image serves a double and simultaneous function. In a very general sense, we may say that metaphor is more concentrated, more conducive both to the self-sufficient aesthetic monad, and more suggestive of that 'richer matrix' of consciousness, while simile is a more discursive form of imagery. This, in fact, seems more important than Flint's objection about metaphor becoming more easily stereotyped; he himself uses little metaphor because simile adapts better to his prosaic and discursive style of verse. He presumably would have known Pierre Reverdy's definition in 1918, 'L'image est une création pure de l'esprit',¹¹⁰ which was probably inspired by the earlier theories of Marinetti, and which was re-used by Breton in his Manifeste du surréalisme (1924) to apply to the spontaneous surrealist image. Reverdy was one of those theorists at the time who helped to place the

image at the centre of the twentieth-century poetic. 'L'analogie est un moyen de création', he wrote; 'Il ne s'agit pas de faire une image, il faut qu'elle arrive sur ses propres ailes.' But there is finally more insistence on the conceptualising mind in Reverdy's theory than in Flint's; the element of conscious wit in metaphor is alien to Flint's temper and expressive needs, and the more discursive spontaneity of his 'series of emotional ejaculations' and 'swift play of subtle and far-reaching analogies' suggests something between Reverdy's notion of 'création' and the totally non-rational image of the Surrealists. At the same time, he wishes by this means to capture 'traces of a richer matrix'.

But if Flint is deliberately trying to exploit the prosaic for purposes, and to fathom depths, more usually reserved for the concentrated structures of verse-poetry, we must consider such accounts as the following, by Elizabeth Sewell, of the poem as a 'system' which is totally different from that of prose (I quote this merely as an example of a certain way of looking at the 'system' which is a poem):

Each poem must be an independent self-sufficient and closed system, constructed in its own particular way, with its own premises, development, and conclusion, its own logic, in fact....This poem-universe will, like the universe of prose, have a potential double-connection with the universe of experience, but the nature of the connection will be different. A poem starts, as prose does, with the connection between words and experience implicit in the fact of reference; but since this is what makes language an open system, and the aim of the poet is to create a closed system, this connection must be attenuated in some way. This cannot be done at the level of the words themselves because the connection between sound-look and reference in the individual word or phrase cannot be shifted. It could only be done by distracting the mind's¹¹¹ attention from that connection.

Certainly, as Coleridge averred, a poem has its own kind of logic which is not necessarily that of prose, and seeks a more perfect or 'beautiful' structure than an informational prose statement requires. But in pressing this line of argument, we must be careful not to erect, in answer to the

dogma of which Flint is often guilty that 'prose and verse' is an irrelevance, the opposing dogma that prose and verse must be 'systems' unconnected with each other. In that direction we arrive at the 'pure' art which is the goal of the radical modernist impulse, at the pure poetry which Mallarmé found an impossibility. The poem can never become a totally closed system even though it may aim at that perfection; words refer, and it is difficult to see how the mind's attention can ever be 'distracted' from this fact. It is somewhere in that echo-chamber between the poem-universe, the aesthetic monad, and its meaning-as-discourse that poetry has its unique existence; it is there that the reader 'experiences' the poem's peculiar fusion of statement and harmonious aesthetic relationships. And Flint's theory and practice head ultimately in the direction of such an understanding, when taken together; what his programme is finally about is the quest for a personal expressive mode which will have that kind of poetic existence. He is a Symbolist poet seeking a means of 'discursive statement', hence all his stress on the poetry which inheres to prose, yet on something which will in the end be more than prose - 'the phrasing goes with a stronger beat and the words live together with an intenser flame.' Not only is he in revolt against the outworn past, but he is also, though he would scarcely have admitted it, in reaction against the new doctrines of Imagism:

For in the creation of beauty and the constant simultaneous criticism of what is created, you can cut too far and produce angularity, or too curiously and produce enigma, which was the fate of Mallarmé. In all art, it seems to me, there must be generosity and some pity for the spectator; and you may fall short of generosity by withholding in order that the gift be finer. The riddle the artist has always to answer is, How much shall he give; and the quality of his pity for the spectator will decide this.¹² An artist cannot be inhuman and be understood.

This is well said, and important in its anti-élitist implications. It is a criticism of the extremes of Symbolism, and a prophecy of what was to

flow in the twentieth century from the Symbolist-Imagist aesthetic, what Bullough in 1934 called modern poetry's 'vicious circle of increasing isolation and remoteness.' It is that sense of 'pity for the spectator' which turns Flint's radicalism back towards a more central stream of development. It is true that in refusing to recognise either a 'metrical norm' or even a 'liberated' rhyme he exiles himself from a whole range of expressive possibilities, but the positive side of this is that he did, in his best work, discover a means for creating 'le temps nécessaire' to the operations of sensibility which it is his concern to record. That 'cadenced speech' or 'parole intelligible', 'absolutely in servitude to the poet's sense of movement' or to 'the changing speeds of dramatic necessity', becomes a delicate seismogram of the vibrations of consciousness, a formal register both meeting his own artistic needs and germane to the wider needs of modern poetry.

V. 'Changed as the earth is changed.'

The following lines, towards the opening of Flint's Cadences, are entitled 'Fragment':

....That night I loved you
 in the candlelight.
 Your golden hair
 strewed the sweet whiteness of the pillows
 and the counterpane.
 O the darkness of the corners,
 the warm air, and the stars
 framed in the casement with the ships' lights;
 The waves lapped into the harbour;
 the boats creaked;
 a man's voice sang out on the quay;
 and you loved me.
 In your love were the tall tree fuchsias,
 the blue of the hortensias, the scarlet nasturtiums,
 the trees on the hills,
 the roads we had covered,
 and the sea that had borne your body
 before the rocks of Hartland.
 You loved me with these

and with the kindness of people,
 country folk, sailors and fishermen,
 and the old lady who had lodged us and supped us.
 You loved me with yourself
 that was these and more,
 changed as the earth is changed,¹¹³
 into the bloom of flowers.

The effect is disconcerting. There seems to be a personal voice speaking in these lines, but the poem takes risks: the alternate cliché of sentimental poeticality - 'casement' - or of standard literariness - 'lapped', 'the boats creaked', and on the other hand of everyday explicitness - 'and you loved me', 'the trees on the hills'; the artificiality of 'strewed the sweet whiteness of the pillows' and 'the sea that had borne your body / before the rocks of Hartland.' The language and imagery seem de-fused, neutral; this, of course, is a result of Flint's efforts to liberate himself from conventional poetic effects. And yet the poem's movement is not a simple flow; the gently intrusive character of the cadencing, an almost Imagist exactness in the selection of word and phrase for their quantity and euphony and to form distinctive patterns of intonation, make themselves felt, and at the same time we begin to form an impression of deliberateness in the presentation of the various categories of cliché. If in diction, as opposed to form, Flint is in practice not so radical as in theory and does not always seem to realise these are outworn phrases, at a deeper level of artistic deliberateness he does seem able to exploit their commonplace and prosaic qualities. The evocative fragments - candlelight, the sounds of the harbour, flowers, even such simplicities as the trees, the roads, the sea, the kindness of people, a particular old lady - form a loose but controlled progression of analogy - 'a series of emotional ejaculations, cunningly modulated, and coloured by a swift play of subtle and far-reaching analogies.'

A slightly more automatic movement, less subtle cadencing, in the last four lines marks a solidifying of the progression in a final image

of beauty and fertility, of organic growth or change. The woman is not only felt by the poet as having her inner nature expressed in the catalogue of tangible details: she is 'these and more' - her experience of her own love for the poet has (a reiterated word) 'changed' her into something more than the sum of her own qualities, something made concrete in that 'bloom of flowers' begotten of mere earth. There is no intellectual definition. Instead, there is an attempt to render the inner momentum or coherence of the experience by sequences of particularities - colours, sounds and so on - and if these are relative banalities, they are transmuted by the quality of feeling attached to the remembered shared occasions; the poet himself is 'changed'; the particular occasions are transcended and some new and finer element has been brought into being. Flint is again trying to delineate 'what is eternal of you' and of the experience. This image of the earth changed into flowers has obvious enough significations of the base or mundane changed into beauty, barrenness into fertility, but here a sense of the mystery of generation is extended into the realm of psychological mysteries - the generation of intenser awareness between two people.

Thus we find ourselves in the presence of a defined and specific psychological manifestation, certain grasped peculiarities of consciousness, for all the appearance of lulled reminiscence and banal nostalgia. One can say this without making special claims for the poem; it is consciously modest (a mere 'fragment'); some lines are either over-explicit or too precious, and we have infelicities such as the transitive use of the verb in 'supped us'. But the almost embarrassingly direct statements of personal feeling ask to be taken in complete good faith; the phenomena of consciousness, the psychological inscape, are placed plainly before us. The poem flows with the rhythm of the inner life, which, while striving to find its own organic form in Lawrence's

'instantaneous' manner, presses against and is resisted by a shaping fastidiousness which is almost Jamesian. Flint's sensibility is a curious blend of the fastidious and the natural - the Jamesian and the Lawrentian. This meeting of prose statement with shaping artifice releases the poem's imaginative substance. Despite the touches of poeticalness about 'Fragment', the details introduced are in themselves very ordinary, and the use of such ordinariness in his poems is part of Flint's attempt to achieve a more authentic record of experience. Unlike most of Flint's other pieces, which are divided into what he called strophes, 'Fragment' is formed of one continuous rhythmic movement or cadence, which in itself helps to image the psychological coherence of this 'fragment' of consciousness, and the process of organic generation or 'change'. The implied inverted commas round the poem - '....That night I loved you' - suggest a conscious attempt in the poet to grasp and frame his material. Yet there is, too, a certain dream-like and indefinite effect which results from the running-together of images; the experience has the dislocated intensity of dream.

Let us consider for a moment some other closely contemporary attempts to achieve an art which has the effect of artlessness. The 'insurgent naked throb of the instant moment', that poetry 'instantaneous like plasm', which Lawrence desired, is closely related to Flint's search for the true voice of feeling. Flint wrote nothing like Lawrence's animal poems, but in the following Lawrence records a situation somewhat similar to Flint's 'Fragment':

Now, in the morning
 As we sit in the sunshine on the seat by the little shrine,
 And look at the mountain-walls,
 Walls of blue shadow,
 And see so near at our feet in the meadow
 Myriads of dandelion pappus
 Bubbles ravelled in the dark green grass
 Held still beneath the sunshine -
 It is enough, you are near -

The mountains are balanced,
The dandelion seeds stay half-submerged in the grass;
You and I together
We hold them proud and blithe
On our love.
They stand upright on our love,
Everything starts from us,¹¹⁴
We are the source.

The plain statement, the directness - 'You and I together', 'our love' - are like Flint; so is the record of a significantly shared experience. The lines achieve a certain still poise; there are felicities of phrasing - 'Bubbles ravelled in the dark green grass' - and a closeness of observation which we don't find in Flint; there is a more confident eroticism. Flint might well have considered 'Bubbles ravelled' too much like a conventional effect; but the main difference, I feel, is that there are not such fleeting currents of feeling and consciousness embedded in delicate orchestrations of rhythm and phrase as in Flint. Some of the lines quoted by Herbert Read in The True Voice of Feeling to illustrate the 'conscious, rhetorical self' in Lawrence's verse will also serve to show that Lawrence despite the declared wish to be 'sensitive', 'subtle', and 'delicate', can use heavy artifice and lacks, or was not interested in, that niceness of finish we find in Flint:

Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!
A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.
If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me!
If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate, a
winged gift..... 115

To have shorn his work of Flint's Aestheticism may be a strength in one direction, but there is a sense in which Flint was attempting something more difficult - an adjustment of form to direct statement, of discourse to the 'dark embryo', so that certain objections we might bring to the extreme 'organicism' of Lawrence's poetic form are not valid in the case of Flint.

Richard Aldington was attempting, at the same time as Flint, to do avowedly similar things with free verse. Aldington's Images and Flint's

Cadences appeared simultaneously in 1915; each contains a piece entitled

'London':

Glittering leaves
Dance in a squall;
Behind them bleak immoveable clouds.

A church spire
Holds up a little brass cock
To peck at the blue wheat-fields.

Roofs, conical spires, tapering chimneys,
Livid with sunlight, lace the horizon.

A pear-tree, a broken white pyramid
In a dingy garden, troubles me
With ecstasy.

At night, the moon, a pregnant woman,
Walks cautiously over the slippery heavens.

And I am tormented,
Obsessed,
Among all this beauty,
With a vision of ruins,
Of walls crumbling into clay.¹¹⁶

London, my beautiful,
it is not the sunset
nor the pale green sky
shimmering through the curtain
of the silver birch,
nor the quietness;
it is not the hopping
of birds
upon the lawn
nor the darkness
stealing over all things
that moves me.

But as the moon creeps slowly
over the tree-tops
among the stars,
I think of her
and the glow her passing
sheds on men.

London, my beautiful,
I will climb
into the branches
to the moonlit tree-tops,
that my blood may be cooled¹¹⁷
by the wind.

Aldington, of course, was several years younger than Flint, and has himself described the poems in Images as 'adolescent'. But as a poet he never, in

my view, wrote so sensitively as Flint. Aldington is trying too hard, both in the attempt to select significant detail and in reaching after the striking phrase or image. We have the impression of him gritting his teeth in determination to make a poem; he tells us with too much emphasis that he is troubled 'with ecstasy', that he is 'tormented' and 'obsessed', but there is no gradual emergence of an inner flux of feeling, as there is in Flint's poem. His free verse, the disposition of stress and line unit, is a wooden affair beside Flint's, where each line is more emotionally organic with what has gone before. Flint's piece is a living growth, the feeling-soaked movement and cadence registering a precise moment of consciousness. A further example may underline these observations; this is Aldington's 'In the Tube':

The electric car jerks;
I stumble on the slats of the floor,
Fall into a leather seat
And look up.

A row of advertisements,
A row of windows,
Set in brown woodwork pitted with brass nails,
A row of hard faces,
Immobile,
In the swaying train,
Rush across the flickering background of fluted dingy
tunnel;

A row of eyes,
Eyes of greed, of pitiful blankness, of plethoric
complacency,

Immobile,
Gaze, stare at one point,
At my eyes.

Antagonism,
Disgust,
Immediate antipathy,
Cut my brain, as a sharp dry reed
Cuts a finger.

I surprise the same thought
In the brasslike eyes:

'What right have you to live?'¹¹⁸

Flint's 'Tube' is a little later in date, appearing in his Otherworld volume:

You look in vain for a sign,
 For a light in their eyes. No!
 Stolid they sit, lulled
 By the roar of the train in the tube,
 Content with the electric light,
 Assured, comfortable, warm.
 Despair?.....
 For a moment, yes:

This is the mass, inert,
 Unalarmed, undisturbed;
 And we, the spirit that moves,
 We leaven the mass,
 And it changes;
 We sweeten the mass,
 Or the world
 Would stink in the ether.¹¹⁹

Flint may, of course, have borrowed the idea from Aldington, whose poem he must have known, but though both pieces have an over-assertive ending, Flint's 'You look in vain for a sign', like his 'London, my beautiful', is a first line which immediately opens some kind of dialectic between outer object and inner response. We may compare the flatness of Aldington's phrases - 'pitiful blankness', 'plethoric complacency' - with the way Flint feels through the language and movement towards the nature of his unease. Flint is tentative, Aldington rather crudely categorical. There is no contempt which does not include himself in Flint's yearning for community, his looking for a light in his neighbours' eyes; 'we' are seen as part of the mass, a sense of human individuality - the power to 'sweeten' and 'leaven' - is set against mass anonymity, in a way which is barely suggested by Aldington.

The first eight poems of Cadences, including 'Fragment', form a bridge between the apprentice work of In the Net and Flint's more individual manner and themes. Some traces of adolescent mawkishness remain, but the feeling is personal rather than derivative, and a more properly Symbolist method is introduced, as distinct from the rather crude and imitative symbolisms of the first volume. The first seven are love poems which all eddy about 'what is eternal of you' and of the

relationship being celebrated, and most evoke the predominant Flintian mood of autumnal wistfulness, which becomes itself the subject of the eighth poem, 'Sadness':

Autumn has come.....
 In the soft sadness of her mists,
 you may discover
 a memory of the joys¹²⁰
 of summer past

'Chrysanthemums' is a fine poem of tense erotic expectation. Several of these poems mention music or song, and in 'April - An old Tune' imagery of song, dance and music joins the musicality of Flint's cadencing in a way which seems to trace out a sort of music of the inner life: the invocations 'Hark!' and 'Listen' seem directed towards this. Rather surprisingly, there is rhyme here, similar to what Flint called in Hueffer's verse 'rhyming points d'appui',¹²¹ and it increases the musical effect.

O my love,
 I am at your window singing; I am a bird.
 Look not on me in body; think of me
 only as the music you have heard.
 It is my heart this melody.

O my love,
 in little trills
 the song goes forth; the roots hear and they quiver;
 new buds break from the trees, and daffodils
 make gold along the river.
 It is the song that spins them, all the flowers,
 and all the golden hours,
 into the stuff of April's new year dream, -
 it is my song, and I
 am Earth and Earth is I.

Come, we will dance to it along the stream
 of days, you your side and I mine;
 we who have tasted bitterness on earth
 shall drink its mirth like wine;
 the choiring stars will hush behind the veils
 of light and hear our laughter,
 until the finity between us fails,
 this stream of days ends, and the night comes after.

Hark!
 within the murmur of its mortal leaves
 the soul of the wood sings and jubilates,
 the soul of the earth through a lonely flute
 knows its own depth and silence.

Is it my heart a-breaking there -?

Listen, my love.¹²²

Though there is again some bathos and uncertainty of taste, this is another poem which seeks to body forth 'the finity between us', of which song, laughter, flowers and earth are tangible expressions. And that 'Look not on me in body', the emphasis on a disembodied music, on 'heart', 'soul', 'depth and silence', is characteristic of the Symbolist poet seeking notation for the inexpressible and intangible. If some of this, like stars and their 'veils of light', is essentially imitative Symbolist notation drawn from Flint's reading of the French poets, it brings us to a recognition of how centrally Flint stands in the movement from Symbolism to modernism and the predicament of poets caught in it. His theorising grows directly out of the main stream of Romantic and Symbolist theory, and yet addressed itself to the problem of finding a way out of the post-Romantic impasse. The associative shift from 'bitterness on earth', through a kind of mystical illumination, to night, death, extinction - 'and the night comes after' - represents a characteristic pattern of escape from unpalatable actuality to, alternately, some other reality, or release from the burden of consciousness in death. The poem is an early version, in its wish to escape from 'bitterness on earth', of his 'Otherworld'. 'Bitterness' is a reiterated word in Flint's poems; in 'Courage' he contrasts the refreshment of night with 'the day' which 'brings back my bitterness'. In the above, both the bitterness and 'night' are negatives, but one brings release from the other. Bitterness is often associated with loneliness (as in the poem 'Loneliness'¹²³), an association suggested here in 'a lonely flute' and connected with the familiar isolation of the artist. But also intimated here, and an essential part of the Flintian feeling-complex, is the sense of quickening life - 'the roots hear and they quiver' - which is found, for example, in 'Plane-Tree':

Electrical caress,
 I felt the white sap¹²⁴
 mounting!

'new buds break' and 'I / am Earth and Earth is I' echo 'changed as the earth is changed / into the bloom of flowers' in 'Fragment'. Here is suburban man longing for contact with nature, for identification with the earth. This is indeed a poem of Verlaine-like nuance, a 'chanson grise', but again, and not dishonourably, Flint strives to give voice to fleeting currents of feeling and consciousness. Little is to be gained by trying to follow the thought of this poem; the controlled flux of emotion almost does touch sublimity, almost soars - as Verlaine prescribed - out of earthly domains. But if derived Symbolist notations have helped him to register these, Symbolism in him is at a point where it must inevitably be 'changed'. There are conflicting pulls within the feeling-complex; the specific occasion and its near-mystical paradigm, the soul and its tangible expression, life and extinction, joy and bitterness. The mysticism, however, is, we feel, only adopted; Flint does not quite know where he stands in relation to his inherited Symbolism. Whether he is in fact a poet of the visionary other world, as well as the extent to which he is a poet of the city and a poet of personal confession in a more distinctively twentieth-century manner, are questions to be taken up in the ensuing chapters.

FOOTNOTES

1. Herbert Read, The True Voice of Feeling, 1953, p. 105.
2. Vivian de Sola Pinto, Crisis in English Poetry, 1951, p. 153.
3. Richard Aldington, Life for Life's Sake, New York, 1940, p. 124.
4. See Christopher Middleton, 'Documents on Imagism from the Papers of F.S. Flint', The Review, no. xv (April 1965), 50.
5. Glenn Hughes, Imagism and the Imagists, 1931, p. 159.
6. Stanley Coffman, Imagism, Norman, 1951, pp. 112-13.
7. Flint's Otherworld volume was, in fact, dedicated to Herbert Read.
8. Cadences, 1915, p. 3.
9. Ed. William Pratt, The Imagist Poem, New York, 1963, pp. 33-5.
10. Axel's Castle, Fontana Library, 1961, p. 214.
11. 'The Banal, and the Poetry of D.H. Lawrence', Essays in Criticism, Vol. XXIII, no. iii (July 1973), 259, 260.
12. This effect in Flint's poetry is noted by Hughes, p. 158: 'its emotional force reaches its climax after rather than during its development - thus allowing the reader to participate in the act of creation by completing the analogy.'
13. 'The Hard and the Soft in French Poetry', Literary Essays, Faber paperback, 1960, p. 289.
14. Ibid., p. 287.
15. Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, Dutton paperback, New York, 1958, p. 47.
16. Oeuvres Poétiques Complètes, Paris, 1938, p. 206.

17. 'Regret', Cadences, p.20.
18. A.G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France, p. 54.
19. Otherworld, 1920, p. 4.
20. Op. Cit., p. 46.
21. Ibid., p.48.
22. 'Sadness', Cadences, p. 12.
23. 'The Swan', Ibid., p. 10.
24. 'London', Ibid., p. 22.
25. Oeuvres Poétiques Complètes, p. 83.
26. 'Preface', Otherworld, p. x.
27. Op.Cit., p. 46.
28. Ibid., p. 47, p. 49.
29. 'Presentation', The Chapbook, no. ix (March 1920), 17.
30. 'Preface', Otherworld, p. xi.
31. Literary Essays, p. 9. cf. Letters, ed.Paige, p. 91: 'Every literaryism, every book word, fritters away a scrap of the reader's patience, a scrap of his sense of your sincerity.'
32. 'Malady', Cadences, p. 13.
33. Flint's 'expressionistic' technique is discussed in Chapter 5, pp.306 - 8 ; 'Otherworld' in Chapter 6.
34. Op.Cit., p. 47.
35. In the Net of the Stars, 1909, p. 47.

36. G.S. Fraser, Ezra Pound, Writers and Critics Series, 1960, p. 51.
37. 'A Swan Song', In the Net of the Stars, 1909, p. 21.
38. 'Foreword', Ibid., p. 43.
39. 'He Likens Her to a Rose-tree, Himself to the Wind', Ibid., p. 56.
40. Ibid., p. 50.
41. Collected Poems, 1950, p. 62.
42. The Works of Oscar Wilde, ed. G.F. Maine, 1948, p. 981.
43. Cadences, p. 24.
44. Otherworld, p. 26.
45. 'Recent Verse', The New Age, Vol. IV, no. ix (24 December 1908), 185.
46. R.V. Johnson, Aestheticism, The Critical Idiom No.3, 1969, p. 20.
And see C.M. Bowra, The Heritage of Symbolism, 1943, p. 4, for
distinctions between 'English Aestheticism' and French Symbolism.
e.g. 'Neither Rossetti nor Pater developed their theories of the
Beautiful with the desperate logic of Mallarmé.'
47. 'Some French Poets of Today', The Monthly Chapbook, no. iv (October
1919), 30.
48. The Love Poems of Emile Verhaeren. Translated by F.S. Flint. 1916,
p. 3.
49. Otherworld, p. 2, p. 6.
50. Ibid., p. 65.
51. 'The Swan', Cadences, p.10.
52. Ibid., p. 11.
53. In the Net of the Stars, p. 21.

54. See Chapter 4, p. 236 - 7.
55. 'French Chronicle', Poetry and Drama, Vol. II, no. viii (December 1914), 393.
56. Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop, p. 48.
57. 'French Chronicle', Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. iv (December 1913), 479-80.
58. The Chapbook, no. ix, 17.
59. The Monthly Chapbook, no. iv, 10.
60. Ibid., p.9.
61. Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. iv, 473.
62. Op.Cit., see p. 92.
63. Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. i (March 1913), 60-1.
64. The Review, no. xv, 35.
65. Charles Norman, Ezra Pound, 1969, p. 114.
66. G. Bullough, The Trend of Modern Poetry, p. 101.
67. Op.Cit., (note 11), p. 264, p. 267.
68. Op.Cit., p.112.
69. Op.Cit., p. 152.
70. Manuscript draft of an article, see Middleton, Op.Cit., p. 36.
71. Op.Cit., p. 113.
72. The Symbolist Aesthetic in France, p. 200.

73. Middleton, Op.Cit., p. 48.
74. Op.Cit., pp. 18-19.
75. See Introduction, p.28.
76. Ed. Hayward, Selected Prose, Penguin, p. 87.
77. Loc.Cit. (note 9).
78. 'French Chronicle', Poetry and Drama, Vol. I. no. i (March 1913), 78.
79. Ibid., 82-3.
80. Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. iv, 474.
81. 'French Chronicle', Poetry and Drama, Vol. II, no. v, (March 1914), 98.
82. 'Three Questions Regarding the Necessity, the Function, and the Form of Poetry', The Chapbook, no. xxvii (July 1922), 9.
83. 'Preface', Otherworld, p. v.
84. Ibid., pp. v-vi.
85. Ibid., pp. vii-viii.
86. Ibid., pp. x-xi.
87. Op.Cit., p. 17, p. 20, p. 21.
88. Otherworld, pp. xi-xii.
89. Letter to Pound, 3 July 1915. See Middleton, Op.Cit., p. 43.
90. Op.Cit., p. viii.
91. Op.Cit., p. 45.

92. Ezra Pound, Selected Poems, ed. T.S. Eliot, 1948, p. 10.
93. As G.S. Fraser does in Ezra Pound, p. 99.
94. Op.Cit., p. 98, p. 99.
95. Lyrical Ballads 1805, ed. Derek Roper, Collins Annotated Student Texts, 1968, p. 29.
96. Robert Graves, The Crowning Privilege, 1955, p. 85.
97. Selected Prose, pp. 90-1.
98. Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. ii (June 1913), 250.
99. 'A New Poet', The Daily News and Leader, 22 July 1914, p. 7.
100. 'Robert Frost', The New Weekly, 8 August 1914, p. 249.
101. The English Review, Vol. XVIII, no. i, 142-3.
102. ed. D.D. Paige, Letters, 1941, p. 91.
103. The New Poetic, p. 177.
104. D.W. Harding, Experience into Words, 1963, p. 197.
105. See A Choice of Kipling's Verse, made by T.S. Eliot, with an essay on Rudyard Kipling, 1941.
106. The Symbolist Aesthetic in France, p. 129.
107. See p.161 . We may note that Flint also speaks in his 'Presentation' of 'that cohesion which distinguishes poetry, and by which, as has been said, the phrase or the strophe becomes a word.' p. 21.
108. Op.Cit., p. 296ff. Lehmann speaks of 'a simplifying definition of "symbol" to embrace the variety of definitions - the aesthetic unity of created art - which is indifferently unity of form and unity of content.'

109. 'Presentation', Op.Cit., pp. 19-20.
110. See Le Gant de Crin, Paris, 1968, p. 30, and Robert W. Greene, The Poetic Theory of Pierre Reverdy, University of California Publications in Modern Philology, Vol. 82, 1967. Le Gant de Crin first appeared in 1927, but the passages concerning the image were published in magazine form in 1918.
111. The Structure of Poetry, 1951, pp. 98-9. Quoted by Herbert Read in The True Voice of Feeling, p. 114.
112. 'The Poetry of H.D.', The Egoist, Vol.II, no. v, 73.
113. Cadences, p. 6.
114. 'First Morning', Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence, 1964, p. 204.
115. Complete Poems, p. 250.
116. Richard Aldington, Images, 1915, p. 30.
117. Cadences, p. 22.
118. Images, p. 22.
119. Otherworld, p. 36.
120. Cadences, p. 12.
121. The Chapbook, Vol. II, no. xii (June 1920), 23.
122. Cadences, p. 7.
123. Ibid., p. 17.
124. Ibid., p. 23.

CHAPTER 4.

CITY OR COUNTRYSIDE?

I. The Modern Poet and the Countryside.

The Romantic poets, I have said in my Introduction, turned to 'nature' as an expression of their sense of alienation in an industrial-capitalist society, and attempted to discover there a new integration of the self on the pattern of the organic growths of the natural world. Hence the moderns inherited from Romanticism a universal antipathy to urbanisation and factory production, a circumstance which presents them, since they often live in cities and take for granted the products of factories, with a severe problem of identification. As poets, in the earlier twentieth century, struggle with this and with the larger problems of consciousness of which it is an aspect, the city and the countryside take on a symbolic antithesis in their work. The conflicting claims of the city and the countryside, of a 'machine age' and the timeless rhythms of agriculture, represent one of the axes along which the crisis of modern poetry may be traced. It is to Keats that we may again turn, in the first instance, to observe a Romantic prototype of this situation; I will then consider the attitudes of a number of 'modern' poets who write frequently about the countryside.

The early sonnet 'To one who has been long in the city pent' expressed Keats's reaction to the part of London - Southwark, or 'The Borough' - in which he had to live as a medical student. 'The Borough is a beastly place in dirt, turnings and windings', he wrote to Charles Cowden Clarke, and the octave of the poem runs:

To one who has been long in city pent,
 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
 And open face of heaven, to breathe a prayer
 Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
 Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,

Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
 Of wavy grass and reads a debonair
 And gentle tale of love and languishment?¹

The implications of 'pent' - which is a word also applied more than once to the city by Coleridge, who says in 'Frost at Midnight' that he was 'reared In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim' - are much what we will find them to be in Monro and Flint, and there is a prefiguring of Monro's poetry of escape into the countryside and of the mood of Flint's 'Otherworld'. Edward Thomas's 'Early One Morning', a more mature poem than Keats's sonnet, which also seems to be about leaving the town for the countryside -

I heard a brook through the town gardens run.²
 O sweet was the mud turned to dust by the sun.

much more acutely records the same state of consciousness. The emphasis of 'heart's content', such rhythmic insistence as in 'sinks into some pleasant lair', and such alliterative indulgence as 'love and languishment', make clear the state of mind being registered by Keats. The pleasures of nature and those of art or poetry - the 'gentle tale' - are joined together as refuges from unpleasant reality in an early statement of that desire for escape which is to find such rich expression in Keats's mature poetry.

Much the same comments may apply to 'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill'. 'Linger awhile' is a metrical and euphonic indulgence which mirrors the poet's indulgence in pastoral release from the cares of reality:

Linger awhile upon some bending planks
 That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,
 And watch intently Nature's gentle doings -
 They will be found softer than ring-dove's cooings.³

It is a small step from here to the Georgian pastoralism of, typically, John Freeman:

O thou, my Muse,
Beside the Kentish River running
Through water-meads where dew's 4
Tossed flashing at thy feet.....

Again this poem reveals that for Keats, as Edward Thomas said, 'The beauty of Nature immediately suggested the beauty of poetry and the translation of one into the other':⁵

For what has made the sage or poet write
But the fair paradise of Nature's light?
In the calm grandeur of a sober line
We see the waving of the mountain pine;
And when a tale is beautifully stayed,
We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade;
When it is moving on luxurious wings,
The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings -
.....
While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles
Charms us at once away from all our troubles,⁶
So that we feel uplifted from the world.....

Announced here is the impulse towards escape from 'all our troubles', from 'the weariness, the fever, and the fret' of the Nightingale Ode; an escape as in that ode into a flight of the imagination, but also, less fortunately, into the characteristic mood of romantic pain, the indulgent relaxation:

Poor nymph, poor Pan, - how he did weep to find
Nought but a lovely sighing of the wind
Along the reedy stream, a half-heard strain 7
Full of sweet desolation, balmy pain.

We note the lovely sighing of the wind; as in the ode, the poet is 'half in love with easeful Death'. Filled with 'sweet desolation', and with his soul 'lost in pleasant sufferings', he is in fact suffering from the problem of acute consciousness described in Chapter I.

Keats's triumph was that he overcame the problem, and recognised and accepted in the Nature of 'To Autumn' a central fact of reality. We can see Keats achieving his triumph in 'The Fall of Hyperion'. In 'Lamia' the attempt to 'unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain' was seen as fatal; here, however, Moneta seems to suggest that it is only the useless

dreamer who does not 'unperplex' bliss and pain - who does not grasp joy and pain as distinct entities. The truth realised by Keats in 'Lamia', that unmitigated happiness is impossible, an idle dream, is here, I think, superseded by the grasping of a yet more important truth, that we must not make the acceptance of that reality an excuse for mere passiveness, for mere indulgence in the pleasure-pain emotional complex: we must strive, whether we are poets or men of action, to oppose suffering. We have in this poem a very clear and complete expression of the two sides of Keats's 'poetical character', an expression leading into a recognition and acceptance which is fully mature and serious. There is no hint of mere luxuriating, mere romantic emotion, mere escape. Finding this solution, Keats finds as well an authentic unstrained voice, pruned of the derivativeness and imitativeness of much of his earlier work; a style and tone created in language and rhythms at once plainer, more colloquial, and yet more complex than most of his previous work - something approaching a modern verse idiom. And in this explorative probing, represented by the dream within a dream, deep into the consciousness to reveal a poetic image of truth, there is not only one of those foreshadowings of Freud and Jung common in Romantic writing, but also a most strenuous effort to reconcile what Kermode calls the Romantic Image with reality.

The writing of 'To Autumn' immediately followed 'The Fall of Hyperion'. The richness and fullness which is held severely in check in 'The Fall' is here released; the sense of extreme effort of the former poem is replaced by a serenity as full perhaps, if not of the same kind, as that of Wordsworth in his great poems of acceptance. It is now almost a commonplace of Keats criticism that so concretely sensuous an apprehension of reality, so alert and firm, was bound eventually to make the dreamer's escape an impossible option for Keats. In 'To Autumn', nature -

the countryside - becomes an affirmation, not a refuge from reality.

F.R. Leavis has pointed the way not only to this kind of a reading of Keats, but also to a placing of Georgian poetry in relation to the treatment of nature in Keats or Wordsworth. Arnold is the guilty intermediary in the diminution of what nature meant for those two great Romantics:

Of the Victorian poets it is Arnold who is known as the Wordsworthian, and if there can be said to have been a Wordsworthian tradition, it is through him that it passes. But Wordsworth in the passage suffers a representative fate: 'Nature poetry', Victorian or Georgian, pays at the best only an equivocal tribute to his greatness.

The argument continues:

Even when Arnold is consciously discussing the relation between poetry and this 'iron time' of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears, he can attribute Wordsworth's 'healing powers' to his putting by 'the cloud of mortal destiny' and taking us back to an idealized childhood that is immune from the problems of maturity.

This begins to fit the pattern; we have already seen that there is a temptation to escape the problem of acute consciousness by a retrogression into childhood. Leavis says of Arnold:

If the poet writes about 'this iron time' and his unease in it, it is from a distance - from the 'soul' in fact, which dwells by preference with Nature, far from the daily scene and daily preoccupations.

Leavis links the retreat from 'the strange disease of modern life' with that side of Keats's poetical character which he sees as a malignant influence on the later nineteenth century - the self-indulgent, escapist Keats:

Arnold's most successful symbol for his 'soul' is the Scholar Gypsy. It is significant that the poem of that name, one of his best and most Arnoldian, should, in the stanza-form and the diction....owe a perceptible debt to Keats - the Keats whom we see as pointing forward to Tennyson....What it was that the Scholar Gypsy had that we have not, Arnold doesn't, except in the most general terms, know; he describes

it in negative terms of contrast with modern life:

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife -
Fly hence, our contact fear!

We recall again Keats's 'the weariness, the fever, and the fret Here where men sit and hear each other groan; Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs.....' But Arnold's self-delusion rests in the fact that he himself could not have been happy wandering about the countryside for 'an eternal weekend' as the Scholar was. After his relaxing country weekend he had to get back to his busy affairs, and would scarcely have been content not to. But his poetry

comes between Wordsworth and the Georgian week-enders;
for all its dilute distinction, it belongs in ethos
with them. Such pastoralists as the late John Freeman,
in fact.....show obvious marks of his influence.

I have suggested earlier that the image of 'the Georgian week-enders' probably derives from Monro's 'Weekend' sonnet sequence, and I have indicated the particular significance of the country weekend in Monro's poetry. But that the Georgians, following Arnold, in many cases retreated into the countryside as an escape from 'the problems of maturity' seems undeniable. John Freeman is justly illustrative of the extent to which this poetry of weekend is a dead-end. It need not alter the perspective into which my Introduction has attempted to put Georgian poetry to add that it often gives a curious effect of going through the motions of poetry in a vacuum, like an actor who remembers his lines but has forgotten what the play is about. A.E. Housman did not actually appear in any of the Georgian anthologies, but Monro, introducing his selection of Twentieth-Century Poetry in 1929, called Housman the 'spiritual father' of the Georgian movement. A man of such evident talent and intelligence could write lines like the following which, though often praised, epitomise

the cultural and imaginative bankruptcy lying behind this side of the Georgian movement:

Her strong enchantments failing,
Her towers of fear in wreck,
Her limbecks dried of poisons
And the knife at her neck,

The Queen of air and darkness
Begins to shrill and cry,
'O young man, O my slayer,
Tomorrow you shall die.'

O Queen of air and darkness
I think 'tis truth you say,
And I shall die tomorrow;⁹
But you will die today.

Traditional forms or archaic diction and phrasing do not damn a poet; it is entirely a question of what expressive validity the poet is able to give them, and each case must be taken on its merits. Here the Shakespearean echoes and other archaisms seem to me merely antiquarian; the morbidly romantic shiver of the spine aimed at seems an ineffectual caricature of what is achieved in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci', nor has it any of the potency De La Mare extracted from such material. Of course, Housman is trying to have things two ways - compounding the indulged romantic shiver with an added thrill derived from what at the time was considered a 'modern' cynicism and pessimism. But this sort of thing in De La Mare gives us the impression of being rooted in a live sensibility; here it is like a bad tooth which ought to ache but in which the nerve has gone dead. Nor can verse which obviously aims at eliciting these kind of responses be considered the product of 'maturity'. The Parnassian technical polish, the cameo quality, is totally self-regarding and unrelated to any pressure in the external world; in this it differs from nineteenth-century French Parnassianism or its exploitation by Pound, which were responses to external stimuli and to felt expressive needs. One is reminded, indeed, of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley's 'Medallion',

the dead-end of his art, though even the language of 'Medallion' has more vitality than that of 'Her strong enchantments failing'. I do not think that what is sometimes called Housman's 'irony' validates the antiquarianism. The poem has every mark of indulgence rather than of ironic detachment, and if Housman's 'irony' is set beside that of any notable ironist, it is quickly seen to have none of the sort of force that could criticise or reject the romantic 'enchantment'. Moreover, these comments must qualify claims that 'Housman's mood of pessimism suited the post-war atmosphere of disillusion';¹⁰ Housman's sceptical pessimism is the only content he has, and its statement is so brittle as to leave the reader untouched - there is none of the sensitively conveyed aliveness of Hardy's gloom. Indeed, if we put together Housman's fake disillusion with the self-regarding technical polish we have him placed where he really belongs, with the Nineties - against which the Georgians thought they were in rebellion.

Such poems as 'Tell me not here, it needs not saying', which has more evident rural apparatus, reveal the self-conscious nostalgia, coloured by literature, of the Professor of Latin gloomily enjoying a weekend in the country:

Tell me not here, it needs not saying,
 What tune the enchantress plays
 In aftermaths of soft September
 Or under the blanching mays,
 For she and I were long acquainted,¹¹
 And I knew all her ways.

The 'disillusioned' reference to 'witless nature' in the final stanza, the veneer of Hardy-esque realism, is an empty gesture:

For nature, heartless, witless nature,
 Will neither care nor know
 What stranger's feet may find the meadow
 And trespass there and go,
 Nor ask amid the dews of morning
 If they are mine or no.

Pound and his followers recognised that such poetry, if it represented a

vanguard of sensibility and intellect, did not suggest a culture which was in good shape — poetry was up against a blank wall.

W.H. Davies was a Georgian poet who could write quite deliberately in the Housman spirit of blankness. A poet who could contribute to the first Georgian Poetry volume his afterwards much-anthologised 'The Kingfisher', or such lines as

Oh, it was sweet
To hear that seaman tell such wondrous tales:¹²

had little hope of truly finding his way. He himself admitted that he did not know the names of birds and flowers — he certainly did not know nature in the way that Edward Thomas or even Keats did; yet Davies's response to nature, when he gives it a chance, is alive like Keats's. R.J. Stonesifer in his book W.H. Davies: A Critical Biography rightly points out that Davies 'was one of the few of the Georgians who could get from nature genuinely the sensations that were so important poetically in the fashion of the time'.¹⁴ Moreover, his 'All in June' is the kind of modestly exact record, in a personal idiom, of ordinary experience which we find in much English poetry of a more recent date, poetry which we would consider free of the Georgian taint:

A week ago I had a fire,
To warm my feet, my hands and face;
Cold winds, that never make a friend,
Crept in and out of every place.

Today, the fields are rich in grass,
And buttercups in thousands grow;
I'll show the World where I have been —
With gold-dust seen on either shoe.

Till to my garden back I come,
Where bumble-bees, for hours and hours,
Sit on their soft, fat, velvet bums;¹⁵
To wriggle out of hollow flowers.

The 'humility' of Georgian poetry, comments C.K. Stead, 'suggested a new duty for the poet',¹⁶ an important suggestion for subsequent poetry. The sense of personal authenticity which 'All in June' conveys is supported

by a letter Davies wrote to Edward Thomas on January 24th, 1907:

Surely this cottage was made for cold storage purposes.
I am writing this letter within two feet of a good red
fire and my hands are aching with the cold. When I
sit down with my eyelashes touching the fire and place
my hand at the back of my head I really think I have¹⁷
hold of the North Pole.

'Soft, fat, velvet bums' is Davies's muse breaking out of the public mould of acceptability which confines 'The Kingfisher' and serving his personal needs. Despite Stonesifer's disclaimer of the term 'realist' for Davies, a careful selection such as James Reeves's shows very well the irreverent and down-to-earth Davies, intensely conscious of the rebellious and diabolic element in his own nature:

For how to manage my damned soul¹⁸
Will puzzle many a flaming devil.

This is alive, a long way from the nursed and brittle disillusion of Housman; moreover, it is the product of an intense and varied involvement with life and the world, of a formed social attitude, which is quite other than Housman's social isolation. It was, of course, this in particular that attracted George Bernard Shaw to Davies's work. 'Certainly I could prepare a lecture,' he wrote to Thomas on 7th August 1909, having been asked to address a 'League', 'but those people want me to speak in praise of work, and you know very well that the most pitiful sight in the world is a hard working man.' This is not the obscure alienation of a Romantic artist like Thomas; Davies knew from direct experience what society was, what he was in rebellion against. The trouble, however, with Davies the Super-tramp was that he knew only too well how to butter up the public. He held out a slim volume of neat pastoral lyrics in one hand, and held out his cap for pennies in the other. Where Pound deliberately set out to shock the public, Davies set out to soothe it, to ingratiate himself. He was never properly able to sort out his pavement art from his personal art; his obsessive anxiety about how public

and critics were receiving his verse reflects this. But his treatment of the countryside was not an Arnoldian-Georgian retreat, and certainly had elements of Hardy's or Thomas's realism in it; it represented, moreover, a social critique, however mild and ambivalent.

Edmund Blunden's rural Georgianism is similarly far from being a poetry of Arnoldian self-deception, as Leavis himself declared: '...a poet who, though he wrote about the country, drew neither upon the Shropshire Lad nor upon the common stock of Georgian country sentiment.'¹⁹

Though his generation included the young modernists, it also produced such poets as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves, and with the latter two of these, Blunden consciously chose, on returning from the war, traditionalism of form and style. But there is no refusal in this choice to come to grips with present reality. Like Sassoon and Graves, the marks of the nervous disturbance, the instability, with which the war left Blunden remained with him all his life. There is a crisis of consciousness here as much with the moderns; indeed, one may see it as an aspect of the same crisis. Blunden's verse seldom gives us a sense of an easy fluency (let alone the brittle facility of Housman), there is not even that ingenuous response to nature of Davies; a certain gravity weighs down the verse and it seems to be labouring along under a burden:

Nymph of the upland song and the sparkling leafage young
 For your merciful desires with these charms to beguile
 For ever be adored: muses yield you rich reward:
 But you fail, though you smile - 20
 The other does not smile.

Nothing could more plainly show, with its poised deliberateness, that this poet is undeceived. Despite the affection for the countryside, there is finally no healing rest in Blunden's traditional pastoralism, it does not guarantee release from 'the weariness, the fever, and the fret'. The unease may not appear to have Edward Thomas's kind of modernity about it, but Blunden's 'Malefactors' - the title itself is significant - may be interestingly compared with Thomas's 'The Gallows', and then again with a much more recent expression of an unease felt in the natural scene, Ted Hughes's 'November'.²¹

All three poems deal with the gamekeeper's traditional custom of hanging up shot 'vermin' - crows, stoats, rats and so on - on trees or fences as a warning to their kind. Each poet uses the custom to reflect upon human experience in one way or another. Thomas describes the weasel which 'swings in the wind and rain' on the 'gallows' of the title, Blunden speaks of the 'clumsy gibbet' and Hughes of the 'keeper's gibbet': evidently the three poets have seen the custom in a similar imaginative light. The theme of the passing of human effort imaged by Blunden in the disused mill - 'the sluices well Dreary as a passing-bell' - also reminds us of the same imagery used by Thomas in 'The Mill-Water'. It is interesting that Hughes's language and structure, like Blunden's, though more histrionically so, is notable for its sense of strain and effort. Far apart as the two poets may seem, there is, I think, a similarity between them: we may further compare Blunden's well-known 'The Pike' with Hughes's 'Pike'. Both stress the predatoriness of nature. Blunden reveals the predatory lurking beneath the bright charm and vivacity of nature, which finally appears as 'a kindly

meant lie'. In Hughes's poem the predatoriness, though sometimes self-defeating as in the two pike which preyed upon and killed each other, is shown to strike a chord in our own darker natures. Neither poet receives easy consolation from nature; each sees nature as a mirror of his own anxieties and unease. Thus the country poetry of Blunden is guaranteed by the hard purchase upon it of reality and experience; there is no blankness, the poetry relates outside itself. Blunden may employ the eighteenth century as a stable point of reference against his own unrest, but it is too deliberate to be merely escapist; at times, moreover, there is something like the sober acceptance won through suffering that we find in Keats's 'To Autumn'.

The disturbance at a deep level of consciousness resulting from the war is manifested throughout Robert Graves's poetry. Although some of his earliest work appeared in the Georgian anthologies, his 'Return' after the war, in the poem of that title, to the 'kind land' of Georgian rural poetry reveals to him that he can no longer take it seriously. The facile versification, jingling rhythms and nursery diction in these stanzas mock and parody the Georgian simplicities:

Here, Robin on a tussock sits,
And Cuckoo with his call of hope
Cuckoos awhile, then off he flits,
While peals of dingle-dongle keep
Troop-discipline among the sheep
That graze across the slope.

A brook from fields of gentle sun,
Through the glade its water heaves,
The falling cone would well-nigh stun
That squirrel wantonly lets drop
When up he scampers to tree-top²²
And dives among the green.

The 'dingle-dongle' inanity of the Georgian pastoral scene is ironically pointed up by the Cuckoo's deceiving 'call of hope', the 'troop-discipline' of the sheep with its echo of war experience, and the absurdly 'wanton' squirrel. The 'kind land' here mocked may be contrasted with the 'wild

land' of Graves's choice in 'Rocky Acres':

This is a wild land, country of my choice,
With harsh craggy mountain, moor ample and bare.²³

It is true that Graves was seeking a healing influence from nature, but he sought it amongst 'harsh craggy mountains' rather than the restful plains and valleys, or the 'warm, green-muffled Cunner hills', of the Scholar Gypsy's pastoral world. However, the poets of his own time for whom he has recorded admiration — among others, Thomas Hardy, W.H. Davies, Robert Frost, James Reeves — are mostly rural poets and more or less traditionalist in manner. He has castigated English poets for not knowing their natural history:

Not one English poet in fifty could identify the
common trees of the Beth-Luis-Nion, and distinguish
roe-buck from fallow-deer, aconite from corn-cockle,²⁴
or wryneck from woodpecker.

He has frequently explained his own choice of a non-industrial, non-urban environment in which to live and work, and he writes scornfully of 'the confirmed townsman, who is informed of the passage of the seasons only by the fluctuations of his gas and electricity bills or by the weight of his underclothes'.²⁵ The poet's essential material, he believes, is agricultural, and the poet must be able to closely observe the recurrent seasonal cycle:

The Goddess is no townswoman....Agricultural life is
rapidly becoming industrialized and in England....
the last vestiges of the ancient pagan celebrations
of the Mother and Son are being obliterated, despite
a loving insistence on Green Belts and parks and
private gardens.²⁶

Graves's myth of the White Goddess is a kind of ad hoc solution to his own crisis of consciousness, a working hypothesis which permits him to survive as a sane member of society, and I shall relate this in due course to the concerns of this study; for the moment, the last-quoted comment is relevant to what I say in this chapter about the relationship of Hardy

and Edward Thomas to the English countryside, and about the extent to which the poetry of Monro and Flint is permeated by an irremediable suburbanism.

Davies, Blunden and Graves, it should be remembered, were Georgians, and demonstrate the potential of the Georgian poetic in the hands of real poets. They represent an enduring alternative in English poetry to, in James Reeves's words, 'the image of modern poetry presented by Eliot's "unreal City, under the brown fog of a winter dawn",'²⁷ Numerous writers of a live and engaged poetry can be seen pursuing this alternative right up to the present time; good examples would be Andrew Young and R.S. Thomas. Both these poets have been rural clergymen; the countryside is not a weekend retreat for them, though in an essay on Young, Norman Nicholson insists on his modernity and on the fact that this sets him apart from the countryside in a way that earlier poets were not:

Like most men to-day, he is a stranger to nature.
However much he may love the wild creatures he is
always odd man out, spying on their private lives²⁸
through field-glasses.

Though Young belongs in point of time and in rural subject-matter with the Georgian movement, he has, like Blunden and Graves, continued to work long after its demise, and certainly does not deal in a poetry of pastoral blankness. A firm grasp of the actual, minute exactness of observation, a knowledge of the countryside which should more than satisfy Graves's stringent requirements (he is author of two botanical studies), are all demonstrably present in Young's work, while there is a nearly Metaphysical play of paradox in a poem such as 'A Dead Mole':

Strong-shouldered mole,
That so much lived below the ground,
Dug, fought and loved, hunted and fed,
For you to raise a mound
Was as for us to make a hole;
What wonder now that being dead
Your body lies here stout and square
Buried within the blue vault of the air?²⁹

This characteristic is well illustrated by Christopher Hassall, who also argues that Young is a religious poet before he is a nature poet, his strongest affinity being with George Herbert.³⁰ The affinity with Herbert, however, only serves to strengthen our impression of a poet who writes about the countryside in a manner which is not that of Romantic nature poetry: a country poet of modern sensibility. Again nature is far from a consoling refuge; a beechwood is like 'a haunted house', Young expresses a sense that 'even in my land of birth I trespass on the earth', and his 'A Prospect of Death' -

There will be time enough
To go back to the earth I love
Some other day that week,
Perhaps to find what all my life I seek.³¹

- strongly echoes Edward Thomas's poems of search and the final rest with nature which he both fears and longs for: 'In hope to find whatever it is I seek.'³² R.S. Thomas is, of course, of a later generation. His own sympathy with his fellow-Welshman and namesake Edward Thomas is strongly implicit in the Introduction to his Faber selection of Thomas's poetry. He, too, responds to nature in a realistic and disenchanted manner, but repeatedly asserts a belief in the enduring value of country life, in verse which is sparse and taut - sometimes almost brutal - in the modern idiom. His statement of this in 'The Village' may be contrasted with a self-consciously modern poem such as Thom Gunn's 'In Praise of Cities'. Gunn praises cities for their inexhaustible variety, their capacity to absorb both failure and aspiration, and, in a striking line, for being 'Extreme, material and the work of man'. But Thomas's poem, though less richly organised and imaged, asserts an alternative human satisfaction:

Stay, then, village, for round you spins
On slow axis a world as vast
And meaningful as any posed
By great Plato's solitary mind.³³

One figure in particular inspires this line of English poetry. 'One oak of a poet stood over all these younger writers,' says G.S. Fraser. 'Graves, Sassoon, Blunden all at one time or another visited Thomas Hardy at Max Gate, and received his poetic blessing.... So we can see Hardy as a brooding, presiding spirit inspiring these Georgian poets.'³⁴ The fourth of the Georgian anthologies was dedicated to Hardy. Whether Hardy could be a potent influence in the twentieth century, and whether Graves is perhaps seriously misguided in seeking an 'agricultural' poetry, are questions we must now consider. It has been suggested, observes Donald Davie,³⁵ that modern poets needed to take technical liberties and to employ something like the ironic personae of Eliot and Pound to achieve the kind of oblique and fragmented expression of modern Angst which its nature dictates; Hardy, despite his ironies, provided no model for this. Apart from the fact that this seems only partly true, it is a position which denies that there may be more than one effective way of expressing a particular predicament in poetry; neither does it take fully into account that poets are individuals and write as they do out of the compulsions of their experience and temper, not to fit a theoretical model. The fact remains, as I have aimed to show, that country poetry in the twentieth century is not always, and does not have to be, simply the poetry of weekend refuge or of the kind of self-deception Leavis deplores.

II. The realism of Thomas Hardy and Edward Thomas.

In his New Bearings Leavis suggested a radical dissimilarity between Hardy and Edward Thomas:

Hardy is now seen to be truly a Victorian - a Victorian in his very pessimism, which implies positives and assurances that have vanished. He inhabits a solid

world, with earth firm under his feet. He knows what he wants, what he values, and what he is.

Compare his poem 'After a Journey', he says, with

one of Edward Thomas's (a representative modern sensibility), and Hardy's solidity appears archaic.³⁶

In contrast to this, Scammell can declare that 'Hardy is the poet with whom Thomas has most in common'.³⁷ Certainly, aspects of Hardy's poetry bear a Victorian hallmark, and there is little about Thomas that is Victorian. It is true, too, that Thomas's poetry often seems to lack 'positives and assurances', to lack fixed values, that he often explicitly does not know 'what he wants' or 'what he is'. I wish to discuss here, however, what is implied in the rejection by these two poets of urban life, and whether or not a larger area of shared sensibility exists between them than Leavis's remark seems to allow. My discussion rests on a series of paradoxes: that Hardy is the last of the true country poets yet that a modern sensibility can still be effectively expressed in poetry about the countryside; that Hardy, in feeling and conscious outlook, is at once archaic and modern; that in certain important respects he is a back number (and was aware of it), and yet a fruitful influence for succeeding poets; that Hardy's importance for the present century is his objectivity and disenchanted realism, and yet that the fully modern sensibility inherits also the Romantic impulse from which Hardy was immune.

Hardy was born in the year Victoria married, and there is a limit to the adjustments a man can make beyond the age of sixty, Hardy's age when she died. In important respects Hardy made no effort at adjustment:

A star looks down at me,
And says: 'Here I and you
Stand, each in our degree:
What do you mean to do, -
Mean to do?'

I say: 'For all I know,
 Wait, and let Time go by,
 Till my change come.' - 'Just so,'
 The star says: 'So mean I: -
 So mean I.' (1925)³⁸

The indifference to modern movements as they affect him is tempered, however, by a characteristically stoical and realistic acceptance of their inevitability:

And ye, red-lipped and smooth-browed; list,
 Gentlemen;
 Much is there waits you we have missed;
 Much lore we leave you worth the knowing,
 Much, much has laid outside our ken:
 Nay, rush not: time serves: we are going,
 Gentlemen. (1922)³⁹

Here the diction itself signals the unwillingness to adjust personally, yet the stanza is a recognition of 'evolutionary meliorism' outstripping the positions of the poet's own generation. At the same time, it is an admonishment to the youthful standard-bearers of change; the gentle ironies map Hardy's awareness of his own awkward situation with a foot in two epochs. His poetry frequently looks back to a Victorian past, but a large proportion of it is post-Victorian in date of composition (the dates of the quoted stanzas are indicated); De Sola Pinto sees him as 'above all, a poet of the crisis that followed the collapse of the Victorian compromise'.⁴⁰ Leavis's 'now' in his 'Hardy is now seen to be truly a Victorian' is 1932; the intellectual pendulum is at the extreme of its swing away from Victorian influence, the preoccupation is with demonstrating 'the relation of poetry to the modern world', and the poetry is that of Hopkins, Pound and Eliot. Thus, perhaps, Leavis unduly tips the balance against Hardy's status as a modern and an influence on twentieth-century poetry; Pinto, at a later date, has a clearer perspective, and Donald Davie, who more recently still in his book Thomas Hardy and British Poetry argues strongly for Hardy's central importance as a modern English poet, a yet clearer one.

Humphrey House, we may remember, has shown how much Hopkins, one of Leavis's proclaimed moderns in 1932, has in common with the Victorian age. These generalised demarcations must be warily approached.

The sense in which Leavis may well be right about Hardy is clarified later in his book:

.....what we are witnessing today is the final uprooting of the immemorial ways of life, of life rooted in the soil. The urban imagery that affiliates Mr. Eliot to Baudelaire and Laforgue has its significance; a significance that we touched on in glancing at the extreme contrast between Mr. Eliot and Hardy.....It does not seem likely that it will ever again be possible for a distinguished mind to be formed.....on the rhythms, sanctioned by⁴¹ nature and time, of rural culture.

Even this, of course, generalises: there is at times in Hardy an awareness of what Leavis calls 'the Machine Age', as well as what Davie interprets as an unconscious but profound conditioning by the outlook of a technological era. But even in the relatively short time between Hardy and Thomas - both had Victorian childhoods - that 'uprooting of the immemorial ways of life' had become an irreversible fact. I suppose we may take this as given: contemporary novelists such as Forster and Lawrence might be cited as evidence, or if any confirmation is required we may turn to Sassoon's Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man for a representative statement of what his generation observed and experienced:

Memories within memories; those red and black and brown coated riders return to me now without any beckoning, bringing along with them the wintry smelling freshness of the woods and fields. And how could I forget them, those evergreen country characters whom once I learnt to know by heart, and to whom I have long since waved my last farewell (as though at the end of a rattling good day)?⁴²

Or we may consult Helen Thomas's account in her World Without End of the life she shared with her husband at Elses Farm in Kent for several years from 1904:

.....the wood-cutting and faggot-binding by men whose fathers had done the same work and whose fathers'

fathers too.....the lovely cycle of ploughing, sowing and reaping; the slow experienced labourers, whose knowledge had come to them as the acorns come to the oaks.....⁴³

The 'immemorial ways' could still be observed, but the tone of such observations conveys the sense that change was imminent. Hardy himself, in a letter to Rider Haggard (March 1920), speaks of the 'new and strange spirit without' which, as it threatens Dorset peasant life, is such a large part of the theme of his novels; and continues:

.....I recollect the time when the places of burial even of the poor and tombless were all remembered, and the history of the parish and squire's family for 150 years back known.⁴⁴

This, he says, is no longer the case. But the uprooting has taken a strong conditioning hold on Thomas's poetry in a way that it has not on Hardy's. As Cooke says, 'though Thomas experienced the final phase of that England he was not of it, for he also inherited a modern scepticism'.⁴⁵ Yet Cooke's 'inherited' is a significant word; the 'modern scepticism' had already germinated, and both Hardy and Thomas - this is their shared experience - found themselves in a situation in which it co-existed with the final phase of an England 'rooted in the soil'. This co-existence could not, of course, be closely observed or acutely felt in cities, and the very awareness of it in these two poets, their obsession with it, forced them to continue writing about the countryside: the awareness is itself the subject of their poetry. Raymond Williams writes of the existence of a phenomenon which he calls the 'escalator': however far back one goes, one finds expressions in literature of an assumed pastoral Golden Age having just slipped beyond reach into the past.⁴⁶ It is doubtless true that this kind of nostalgia is a permanent aspect of human psychology, but there is a profound sense in which writers in the early years of the present century felt the change to be unique in their own time, and this feeling is deeply embedded in the mental

and emotional texture of their poetry. Moreover, there is some objective validity for the feeling: after all, it was not until the twentieth century that living in cities became an experience shared by a majority of people. Leonard Woolf, able in his autobiography to gain a retrospective view of the matter, more than once expresses a conviction that in the past fifty years 'the physical basis of life in the English countryside has been revolutionized.' Daily life in Sussex in 1912, he says, 'was probably nearer to that of Chaucer's than of the modern man with water from the main, electricity, gas, cars, motor buses, telephone, wireless.'⁴⁷ Thus, for the twentieth century Hardy stands as a curiously dual link back to the nineteenth; we cast back in him to a sense of roots in two paradoxical ways: to a sense of our lost rural past and indigenous peasant culture, and to that active medium of ideas in which much of our modern thought about the universe germinated. 'The scientific humanism to which Huxley and Hardy gave their allegiance,' comments Donald David, 'survives as a working ethic'.⁴⁸

Though he accords Hardy 'originality' as well as 'purity and adequacy of response', Leavis denies him the kind of value for succeeding poets I have been suggesting:

.....even if he had been a potential influence, he did not impinge until it was too late. By then the stresses incident to the sensitive and aware had shifted and altered.....there was little in his technique that could be taken up by younger poets, and developed in the solution of their own problems.⁴⁹

This is too exclusive a demarcation of the 'sensitive and aware'. It fails to foresee the declared debt of such poets as Graves, Auden or even Philip Larkin to Hardy — for them he was not 'too late' — and it also by-passes something that required no foresight at Leavis's time of writing, the rich affinities between Hardy and Thomas, whatever the distance might be between the representative modern sensibility of one and

the archaism of the other. Pinto, it seems to me, comes nearer to Hardy's importance for the present century:

The reader will look in vain in these poems for the rich, sensuous music of the great Victorian poets.... Hardy's aim was quite different; like Browning, the only Victorian poet by whom he was strongly influenced, and Donne, whose work he greatly admired, he was trying to produce a dramatic rather than a pictorial or musical effect. He differed from Browning, however in avoiding the romantic and the picturesque, and in his deliberate use of commonplace and contemporary subject matter. In one of his notes he praises a painter for infusing 'emotion into the baldest external objects'.⁵⁰

Here Pinto seems to claim for Hardy aims and characteristics very close to those claimed by Leavis for his moderns. The location of Donne and Browning behind Hardy's poetry reminds us of Browning's importance for the young Pound, and Donne's for Eliot. This concern for 'a dramatic rather than a pictorial or musical effect' is an obvious distinction between nineteenth-century and twentieth-century verse, and it is precisely in this respect that Browning is the one Victorian poet who has a formative bearing on later poetry. However, Pinto points, too, to what separates Browning the Victorian from the post-Victorians: the avoidance of the romantic and the picturesque, and the deliberate use of commonplace and contemporary subject-matter. The attempt to infuse emotion into the baldest external objects is a feature of the realistic and prosaic modes of twentieth-century poetry (K.L. Goodwin, in The Influence of Ezra Pound, places Hardy as one of the developers of what he calls the 'prosaic mode'⁵¹). These traits, then, - the dramatic method, realism of detail and subject-matter, the concern with the bald external object, to which must be added a certain manner of handling lyric forms and themes - represent points of affinity between Hardy and Thomas which are at the same time, in one poet as much as the other, breaks with Victorian convention.

Scannell speaks of the similarity with Hardy being 'sometimes a little obscured by the more colloquial idiom used by Thomas.'⁵² All his critics have necessarily remarked upon the gaucheries - the cliché and archaism - of Hardy's style, and Leavis no doubt has this in mind when he speaks of the limited value of Hardy's technique for younger poets. However, much that is considered awkward and archaic might be explained in terms of fidelity to a provincial peasant life - it is in fact colloquial and contemporary in its own setting. But what is important and original is the way in which such features of Hardy's style are manipulated and patterned, with great deftness, for expressive purposes. That is, the awkwardness itself is expressive and vigorous, often marvellously so:

Fain would I, dear, find some shut plot
Of earth's wide wold for thee, where not
One tear, one qualm,
Should break the calm.
But I am weak as thou and bare;
No man can change the common lot to rare.⁵³

The emotion here, the intense compassion, dictates by its own force the broken phrasings, the rhythmic fluctuations, the odd diction; sufficiently so to justify the claim of importance and originality. The emphatic placing of 'fain' at the opening of line and stanza exploits its archaic oddness, the word gathers up a burden of compassionate longing and carries it through the ensuing lines - the word is given, by the spontaneity with which it is used, fresh currency. The beautifully inserted 'dear' has just the right pressure of tenderness, and 'find' effects an immediate alliterative recovery of the impulse from 'fain'. 'Shut plot' with its short vowels and finality of consonants finely contrasts with the open sounds of 'wide wold', where the archaic 'wold' is made expressively valid in the same way as 'fain'. 'Thee' and 'thou' take advantage of that shade of tenderness not available to the modern 'you'; the music-

like 'One tear, one qualm' and the inversion 'weak as thou and bare' are emotionally right, as is the long sigh of the meditative comment in the final line. There is a precision of effect here which disallows any tendency to think of Hardy's awkwardness as only awkwardness, to think him stylistically naive.

'Inexact rhythms and rhymes', Hardy wrote, 'now and then are far more pleasing than correct ones.' The dialect poetry of William Barnes helped Hardy to find a prosody which would avoid the stale nineteenth-century conventions;⁵⁴ and echoes of a literary rhetoric – consider 'weak as thou and bare' – blend fruitfully with rural archaisms and the illiterate expressiveness of a countryman's speech. It is what Leavis calls 'a use created for the occasion'.⁵⁵ An analysis of the wayward language and prosody involves, Leavis shows, 'a precise account of the highly specific situation defined by the poem'. And if a play with alliterative distributions and syncopated rhythm within a very long line, with 'inexact rhythms and rhymes', the use of refrains and a musical 'beat', the use of unacademic syntax, the invention of verbal curiosities or revival of disused words, is striking and significant innovation in Hopkins, why not in Hardy? The fact is that he was original in technique as well as in 'purity and adequacy of response', and that the stylistic developments to which he points the way were not at all without value for later poets.

Thomas, despite his 'more colloquial idiom', echoes this expressive use of awkwardness, with certain provincial archaisms intact. He sometimes, it is true, emulates Hardy's arbitrariness in manhandling material into stanzaic patterns:

Away from your shadow on me
Your beauty less would be,

And if it still be treasured
An age hence, it shall be measured

By this small dark spot
Without which it were not.⁵⁶

While this is not exactly comparable to what Donald Davie describes as Hardy's 'technological' method of constructing symmetrical stanzas, and while this poem bears Thomas's individual stamp, some of his peculiar delicacy, the rhythms come too easily; and 'less would be', the conditional 'be treasured', and 'Without which it were not' appear clumsy, rather than expressive irregularities. But how does the reader respond to a freak word-order like that in the Hardy-like poem 'It Rains'?

The great diamonds
Of rain on the grassblades there is none to break,⁵⁷
Or the fallen petals further down to shake.

It looks a crude piece of rhyme-making, a Hardy-esque clumsiness, yet as the dialectic unwinds, as the personal drama emerges, the shock which these lines gave the reader – the tension of this shock with the opening statement that 'nothing stirs' and with the following statement that 'I am nearly as happy as possible' – is felt to be precisely right; this, as in Hardy, is the kind of effect which defines a highly specific situation. Indeed, there is a fine dividing line between the limp formulations and forced patternings which occasionally mar Thomas's poems, and the dialectical organisation, the explorative and dramatic method, the strategies of oblique approach to the elusive central concern, which make many such impressive performances. It was perhaps a risk he had to take; the cost of his subtle and lithe successes in rearranging prose structures and common speech-rhythms into verse. For the most part, the awkwardness, the inversions, the old verbal coin of the romantic poets, are used by Thomas in a way which has that feel of 'a use created for the occasion'.

There are uncertainties of style and feeling in Hardy's poetry; the same sometimes applies to Thomas. But in both, I think, it is more a

matter of resolute fidelity to experience, of 'purity of response', of the hard stare at the actual, the concern to 'record the thought at the moment it arose in the mind', than a lack of literary sophistication. In a very different way from Lawrence and Flint, or for that matter of Wordsworth and Coleridge, these two poets are concerned with subjective accuracy, with the true voice of feeling. That Thomas did not lack sophistication can be amply demonstrated from his self-consciously Paterian early prose writings and from his criticism. Hardy's poems may at first sight have the feel of being directly put on the page; he told Robert Graves that he took his poems through few drafts, for fear of losing their 'freshness',⁵⁸ and commented on the value of 'unadjusted impressions' in verse.⁵⁹ Leavis's response to Thomas's poetry was as 'a random jotting down of chance impressions and sensations', and Cooke in an appendix has argued from manuscript evidence that while Thomas did make revisions and corrections, his poetry came in a rush within a short space of time and often was taken through relatively few drafts to reach the form we have in the Collected Poems. Nevertheless, the 'freshness' is art not chance. Donald Davie remonstrates against the superficiality of any reading of Hardy which misses the over-deliberateness of much of his verse-structure. We have a sense of a conscious literary sensibility directing the poetry of both men; the various seemingly incongruous stylistic elements, as well as literary device and common speech, are woven together to create a mixed lyrical-discursive style which is Hardy's and Thomas's shared discovery and contribution to the development of a twentieth-century poetic technique. It is, in its expressive vigour and potency, a clear break with the Victorian dead-end of the Milton-Keats-Tennyson line of language. The richness of texture and range of effect which become available with this mixed style are what were sacrificed by the Imagists,

with their rigorous exclusion of what seemed archaic or Romantic.

If, then, Hardy's strivings for a style and language which could record his experience with fidelity and 'purity' pushed into new technical and stylistic areas which could be profitably explored by Thomas and later poets, the kind of experience and responses which he thus brought into poetry themselves forced an extension in boundaries of concern and subject-matter. Hardy, writes Pinto, 'sought to extend the boundaries of poetic sensibility by an expression of new types of beauty and significance which he found in the ugly and commonplace.'⁶⁰ This kind of 'beauty and significance' is a long way from nineteenth-century ideas of poetic beauty; Pinto speaks here, in fact, of a kind of poetic expression which has become a normal habit, as a type of realism, of twentieth-century poets. We must consider how far Thomas's poetry shares in and is strengthened by this type of realism, which may suggest in turn how far this could be a strengthening influence for poetry more generally in our century; yet paradoxically, how far Thomas's 'lack of solidity' distinguishes him from Hardy and makes him more representatively modern in sensibility.

Thomas retains a more strongly Romantic notion of 'beauty' than Hardy; and sometimes he seems to give it the run of the poem, without, as it were, asking for its credentials. When he begins 'The Clouds that are so Light' with the lines:

As the clouds that are so light,
Beautiful, swift, and bright,⁶¹
Cast shadows on field and park

he is appealing to the factotum 'idea of beauty' of the Romantics. 'Beautiful, swift, and bright,' are picked without precision out of a stock of general epithets; 'field and park' are unlocalised. But on the preceding page is a piece which begins simply:

Under a daisied bank
 There stands a rich red ruminating cow,
 And hard against her flank
 A cotton-hooded milkmaid bends her brow.

The flowery river-ooze
 Upheaves and falls; the milk purrs in the pail;
 Few pilgrims but would choose
 The peace of such a life in such a vale.

The maid breathes words - to vent,
 It seems, her sense of Nature's scenery,
 Of whose life, sentiment,
 And essence, very part itself is she.

She bends a glance of pain,
 And, at a moment, lets escape a tear;
 Is it that passing train,
 Whose alien whirr offends her country ear? -

Nay! Phyllis does not dwell
 On visual and familiar things like these;
 What moves her is the spell
 Of inner themes and inner poetries:

Could but by Sunday morn
 Her gay new gown come, meads might dry to dun.
 Trains shriek till ears were torn,
 If Fred would not prefer that Other One. ⁶⁶

It is significant that Thomas's use of the word 'vale' in the passage above from 'Beauty' has none of Hardy's ironic colouring, enforced by the repeated 'such a', in his second stanza. Nor, probably, did it even occur to him that it might have - it was a word that carried the same romantic sanctioning as 'beauty'. A review by Philip Larkin of Cooke's book on Thomas was headed 'Grub Vale', and this is neatly on the mark. Larkin suggests that Thomas indulged in 'the romance of scraping a living from the printed word' in just 'such a' self-consciously adopted quiet vale. Thomas self-consciously chose a country life, and is apt to be a little overwhelmed by the countryside; there is about him, by comparison with Hardy, just a touch of the diligent searcher-out of beauties in nature, a touch of the collector of country lore. Neither do we find in Hardy what has been called Thomas's 'nameless and indescribable emotions' in the face of nature - we feel, indeed, that Hardy can name and describe

his feelings about nature very well. His familiarity with nature and sense of significance in it require none of Thomas's indirections. It is here that the force of Leavis's discrimination makes itself felt.

A comparison of Hardy's treatment of his milkmaid with Thomas's treatment of Farmer Bob Hayward will help to chart the affinities and differences of their relationship to an indigenous rural culture:

Women he liked, did shovel-bearded Bob,
Old Farmer Hayward of the Heath, but he
Loved horses. He himself was like a cob,
And leather-coloured. Also he loved a tree.

For the life in them he loved most living things,
But a tree chiefly. All along the lane
He planted elms where now the stormcock sings
That travellers hear from the slow-climbing train.

Till then the track had never had a name
For all its thicket and the nightingales
That should have earned it. No one was to blame.
To name a thing beloved man sometimes fails.

Many years since, Bob Hayward died, and now
None passes there because the mist and the rain
Out of the elms have turned the lane to slough⁶⁷
And gloom, the name alone survives, Bob's Lane.

That he loved horses and trees, had a shovel beard, and was like a cob and leather-coloured, makes Farmer Hayward altogether more idiosyncratic than Phyllis the milkmaid. There is a trace of romantic colour in Thomas's view of his farmer; he is an admired country 'character'. Hardy can never resist the ironies of the human situation, and his irony, while it does not exclude his characteristic compassion - like Thomas, he might be saying 'no one is to blame' - forbids colourful misconceptions about country people and life. His poem is firmly rooted in his understanding of the working conditions of the countryside, its economic and social realities, and in his ultimately tragic view of the negative end-results of human aspiration. His Phyllis, with the ironic pastoral representativeness of her name, is not really an individual; the 'cotton-hooded' gives a nice generality, she is any and every milkmaid. She is a cog in nature's

blind machinery, literally and ironically 'very part' of nature's essence, behaving in accordance with ineluctable laws. These are both realistic treatments; both accurately delineate the simplicities of country people. Both approach their subject with humour and without sentimentality, and both with a sympathy which allows the accuracy. But while Hardy's subject, with characteristic technical precision, is consciously distanced, there is more actual distance between Thomas and his subject, giving to the sympathy a tinge of enthusiasm that would be out of character in Hardy. The quiet, neutral irony of Thomas's 'No one was to blame' and 'the name alone survives' does not have the cutting edge of Hardy's irony, irony which is twofold in deflating Romantic nature mystique, and divesting the milkmaid of any but the most basic, Maupassant-like motivations. His irony has a sort of humane ruthlessness, and it was not in Thomas to view either nature or human nature in this way.

Hardy's poem denies any educative or sympathetic link between peasant folk and their natural environment, and the disabused realism of this is partly what makes Hardy important. But the whole of Thomas's poem is realised in terms of a peculiar sense of a continuous give-and-take process going on between nature and human consciousness. The train's 'alien whirr' is used by Hardy as a weapon against the sentimentalisers; but though trains recur in the poetry of both, the train in 'Women He Liked', as in the perfect 'Adlestrop' or these lines from 'Ambition':

A train that roared along raised after it
And carried with it a motionless white bower
Of purest cloud, from end to end close-knit,⁶⁸
So fair it touched the roar with silence.

is an integral part of the experience in a way it usually is not in Hardy. In such details we have Thomas's characteristic savouring of experience; his mind is open, passive, receptive - exhibiting something like 'negative capability' - not analysing and forming judgements against a standard of

fixed values, of 'positives and assurances', like Hardy's mind. Thomas makes no comment upon Farmer Bob's death and the irony that 'the name alone survives'; any moral or philosophical implications are left unstated, in the way already touched on in Chapter I. His poem exhibits a continuous dramatic rhythm, his rhyming quatrain responding like elastic to the poem's inner pressure. Hardy's rhythms have a detached mockery, his ideas are placed one after another and go like bright metal into the quatrain's mould, exploiting its shape for precision and irony. His poem reflects a more preconceived view of life; he does not share in the modern sense of flux which Thomas displays. Yet this poem exactly illustrates the paradox of Hardy's co-present modernity, revealed in the scepticism, the clinically objective dissection, and the technical proficiency; and archaic solidity, reflected in the fixity of form and the sense of the permanence of human motive and human fate. He has a more monumental sense of the basic psychological drives and of the unchanging nature of human behaviour; he has a greatness which Thomas misses because he can achieve this monumental quality and this degree of detachment and generality, as well as something not adequately illustrated by this particular poem - a triumph, a repose won through suffering, something like Keats achieved but which is only hinted at or implied in Thomas's oeuvre.

'The Milkmaid', of course, does not in any case adequately illustrate Hardy. Poems such as 'After a Journey' have a dramatic complexity and an open fineness of meditation and response like Thomas's, not to mention something of the modern 'confessional' and subjective mode. How close Hardy and Thomas can come in feeling and theme may be illustrated by setting such a poem as Hardy's 'At Day-Close in November' (1914) beside 'Women He Liked':

The ten hours' light is abating
And a late bird wings across,

Where the pines, like waltzers waiting,
Give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noon-time,
Float past like specks in the eye;
I set every tree in my June time,
And now they obscure the sky.

And children who ramble through here
Conceive that there never has been
A time when no tall trees grew here,⁶⁹
That none will in time be seen.

While the stanza patterning is still more mechanical than Thomas's, the interests in the effects of light, in the qualities and mood of different times of day, are very like Thomas, as are details like the late bird and the pines 'like waltzers waiting'. In the trees obscuring the sky there is something of Thomas's 'gloom' in the final line of 'Women He Liked', and this is of course a favourite word with both poets. But it is in the retrospection and the sense of time and human endeavour interweaving and passing, that these two poems are most alike. They share in presenting physical details which are, in W.E. Williams's words, 'memories of things past as well as sad symbols of mortality'.⁷⁰ At the same time, if Cooke can say of Thomas that 'the nostalgic vibrationsare never allowed to dominate the tone',⁷¹ the same might equally apply to Hardy; both poets are too firmly anchored in the real for those nostalgic vibrations to take command, and in both the sense of transience is set against that of the archaic past in the English countryside and of the recurring rhythms - the immemorial ways - of nature.

This, of course, pervades all Hardy's work, in prose or in verse:

I edged the ancient hill and wood
Beside the Ikling Way,
Nigh where the Pagan temple stood,⁷²
In the world's earlier day.

The 'Pagan temple' and 'the world's earlier day' are equally felt by Thomas beneath the surface of the English countryside in his repeated references to barrows and graveyards, and in such lines as:

....bones of ancients who, amazed to see
 Almighty God erect the mastodon,
 Once laughed, or wept, in this same light of day.⁷³

Hardy's 'edging' of the 'ancient hill and wood' could easily come in a Thomas poem, and the insertion of the old place-name 'Ikling Way' corresponds to Thomas's almost intemperate love of old country names, which may be illustrated from 'Lob', or the sequence of poems to his wife and children, or the mention in 'Words' of the 'sweetness' that comes from the names of counties and villages.⁷⁴ This love of names relates in both Hardy and Thomas to their feeling for place - a feeling conveyed strongly in both 'Women He Liked' and 'At Day-Close' - what H. Coombes says of Hardy could apply to Thomas too:

....places are important to him, his feeling for
 them is one of his buttresses against the gloom of
 his general view of life and the universe.⁷⁵

A comparable and well-known example of Hardy's love of country names may be found in 'Friends Beyond' - 'William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough'.⁷⁶ In this connection, and taking into account such matters as Hardy's use of the ballad quatrain, and ^{the} musical counterpoint and folk-song phrasings of a poem such as 'Friends Beyond', it is worth noticing the interest of both poets in folk-song, another type of archaic survival of 'life rooted in the soil'. It is unlikely that Thomas ever had Hardy's familiarity with old dance and church music, and his poems are much less musically organised, but R. George Thomas comments: 'E.T.'s informed interest in folk-music illustrates the depth of his decision to live a country life and has almost passed unnoticed by critics of his poetry.'⁷⁷ It is the peculiar poignancy of the interaction of nature, time and human activity which fascinates the two poets (although 'poignancy' should not be taken as a term which at all adequately defines the complexity of either poet). Thomas has a special interest in names such as 'Bob's Lane', 'Walker's Hill',

'Adam's Point'; and Davie speaks of 'Hardy's concern with defining human beings by the topographical location which they occupy'.⁷⁸ At the same time, the country names, the feeling for place, and the interest in folk-music, express in both poets a kind of archaeological instinct for the ancient, the fixed, the stable, in the countryside and country life; names, places, folk-songs carry with them their own antiquity. Both seem to have needed this as a 'buttress' against the sense of transience and mortality so clearly intimated in their poetry; a buttress which, if 'ennui' cannot quite be considered the appropriate word for Hardy, is an important constituent of the amulet which enabled Thomas to survive his malaise as long as he did.

The Keatsian passive indulgence which is a constituent element of ennui is not displayed by Hardy, and he moves, in treating transience and mortality - consider, for example, 'The Trampwoman's Tragedy' - into a tragic dimension beyond Thomas's range. But the sense so repeatedly expressed by Hardy in The Dynasts and elsewhere of a cosmic unintelligence, of a blind but ineluctable universe:

He sank to raptness as of yore,
And opening New Year's Day
Wove it by rote as theretofore,
And went on working evermore,⁷⁹
In his unweeting way.

can be found also in Thomas. He sometimes touches a similar note of cosmic contemplation, with an almost identical vision of humanity oppressed by an uncomprehending and unfeeling Will:

Time swims before me, making as a day
A thousand years, while the broad ploughland oak
Roars mill-like and men strike and bear the stroke
Of war as ever, audacious or resigned,
And God still sits aloft in the array
That we have wrought him, stone-deaf and stone-blind.⁸⁰

We may relate Thomas's reference to war here with Hardy's famous 'In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"':

Yonder a maid and her wight
 Come whispering by:
 War's annals will cloud into night⁸¹
 Ere their story die.

If we look further in Thomas's poetry at his response to war, taking perhaps his interestingly similar 'As the Team's Head-Brass',⁸² we will see that Thomas is in fact much more unsettled by the contemplation of war than Hardy. The stoical acceptance is present in the poem - 'If we could see all all might seem good', says the farm labourer with whom the poet converses - as it is in 'February Afternoon', but it is not as 'fixed and assured' as in Hardy. (Though there are, as Jon Silkin insists in his Out of Battle, inconsistencies in Hardy's attitudes towards war.) Whatever the differences at specific points, the affinities between Hardy and Thomas still hold; the last stanza of Thomas's 'Home', with its rejection of the romantic solution discussed in Chapter I, reflects a Hardy-like acquiescence in fate and may be compared with the lines from 'A Star Looks Down' quoted on an earlier page. Again, despite the stoicism which is so much one of his hallmarks, Hardy asserts a positive humanity, quite clearly in the last-quoted lines; and we can find in his poetry, if more externally rendered, a strain of personal unease like Thomas's:

Enough. As yet disquiet clings⁸³
 About us. Rest shall we.

Indeed, this becomes not at all external and strongly marked in a set of poems which may be loosely grouped together as being in a 'confessional' vein and having to do with Hardy's relationship with Emma Gifford, such poems as 'The Voice' or 'My Spirit Will Not Haunt the Mound'. Hardy, too, frequently intimates isolation and loneliness, though this is bound up with an expression of the experience of old age obviously not a factor in Thomas. Indeed, what finally cannot fail to strike us about Hardy is his extreme sensitivity; again and again experience catches him on

oppositions, and in its image of the swallow as an arrow:

The swift with wings and tail as sharp and narrow⁸⁸
As if the bow had flown off with the arrow.

Such details in both are 'essential elements in the whole poem', agents for communicating the peculiar 'discovery' which the poem makes, its peculiar manifestation of consciousness. The two poets' similar modes of consciousness and feeling are given, also, similar symbols; Hardy, like Thomas, frequently introduces wandering country folk who stop off at lonely inns - 'Lone inns we loved, my man and I'.⁸⁹ This poem ('A Trampwoman's Tragedy') also illustrates Hardy's favourite theme of haunting, his method of using the ghost as a 'powerful agent of feeling', releasing a mass of tragic or nostalgic implications. This, too, is in Thomas; for example 'She Dotes', or the Hardy-like closing lines of 'Two Houses' (a good example of the 'archaeological instinct' for the past):

And the hollow past
Half yields the dead that never
More than half hidden lie:
And out they creep and back again for ever.⁹⁰

Here is all the 'Stygian mordancy' which Wing attributes to Hardy; indeed, the poem deliberately plays on suggestions of Styx and Cerberus. And if we again turn to 'After a Journey', and consider the element of haunting or hallucination in that poem ('Hereto I come to view a voiceless ghost') together with the factors to which Leavis's analysis draws attention, we can see that the manifestations of consciousness, the types of experience, which are centrally of interest to the two poets, and their ways of recording them in verse, are closely allied. The great successes of each poet in expressive verse-movement coincide very often with communication of a cast of sensibility which in certain important respects is radically similar - the similarity involves the shared obsession with the co-existence of a modern scepticism and 'the last phase' of an older England to which I have already drawn attention - and of which the

operations are such as to make a firm rejection of urban life obligatory.

Leavis's 'truly a Victorian' justly insulates Hardy from the Romantics, but unjustly from the twentieth century. However, Pinto's comment that

Hardy recreated for his own age that type of poem
in which the centre of interest is not to be found
in external objects, but in the poet's own consciousness.
This is one of his most important legacies to⁹²
twentieth-century poets.....

does not in itself insulate enough: it could be a description of a romantic poet like Wordsworth. It misses Hardy's essential non-romanticism and non-escapism; the 'escape' of Keats or Thomas or even of the Georgians, and its various manifestations in other twentieth-century poets, would never have occurred to Hardy as a desirable option. It does not sufficiently account for his sense of the realness of the external object and of the economic and social fabric of the countryside he observes, or the realism of his mode of consciousness - the lack of romantic colouring or mystery, the immunity from 'strong enchantments', the dispassionate rationality, the rueful abstention from consolatory notions. We may connect such a realistic mode of consciousness with Victorian 'solidity'; his confident technical brilliance and deliberateness, and the ethos of self-help - of the self-made man - found by Davies in his poetry, are not at all at odds with such a solidity or with the spirit of the Victorian age. Many of his attitudes are those of the Victorian social reformer, and Hardy could speak of 'a true philosophy of life' with the Victorian tinge that phrase has. However, his work is totally free of the characteristic escapism of Victorian literature and feeling. My identification of Thomas, in Chapter I, with his own comment on Keats as 'a most sublunary poet, earthly, substantial, and precise', together with, among other things, my discussion there of 'The Chalk-Pit', will help to illustrate how far it may also be said of Thomas that he has

his 'positives', that he feels the 'earth firm under his feet'. He follows Hardy in that for both the 'baldest external object' is important, solid, and real. He has poems and passages for which no other term but realism will do:

The clock ticked, and the big saucepan lid
Heaved as the cabbage bubbled, and the girl⁹³
Questioned the fire and spoke....

But if Hardy and Thomas almost identically perceive an indifferent universe and the futility of the 'array' in which men have dressed an 'unweeting' God (compare Thomas's 'the array That we have wrought him' with, for example, Hardy's 'That Which some enthrone And for whose meaning myriads grope' in 'The Blow'⁹⁴), Thomas's is a more fully modern agnosticism, vacillating and disorientated among the diverse impressions of phenomena he experiences. Despite a resolute independence, he has little of Hardy's self-reliance; as we may see from his letters as well as his poetry, he often could not help himself at all. Hardy's Victorian confidence and the concept of any 'true philosophy of life' are alien to him. And if nature's indifference to man mirrors sometimes his own inner indifference - his melancholic lassitude - he does not feel indifferent towards nature or life. Scannell puts this paradox well:

....the selection of natural detail presents an objective world which is, at the same time, indifferent to and yet a reversed image of the poet's private mood of melancholy which has, at its centre, a⁹⁵ paradoxical seed of joy.

This, of course, is the romantic artist's joy and suffering as opposite sides of the same coin; Hardy, while he, too, values consciousness and is not indifferent to nature, lacks Thomas's romantic flashes of eagerness alternating with yearning for release. Thomas's cast of sensibility is similarly realistic but contrastingly romantic. Whatever we may say about Hardy's subjectivity and sensitivity, he finally recognises, in a way the Romantic in Thomas does not, certain 'realities' which, in Davie's

words, 'are the unquestionable texts which poetry can only gloss'.⁹⁶

Modern poetry, it cannot be too strongly emphasised, owes a great debt to Hardy. He is a realist, of broadly scientific humanist outlook, who does not undervalue the significance of subjective states; this is an example modern poetry needed. Not only the reactionary political and social outlooks of such great moderns as Yeats, Pound and Eliot, but also their yearnings towards timelessness, their transcendentalism, are counteracted in an important way by the example of Hardy. To take realities as 'unquestionable texts which poetry can only gloss' may be limiting, and most modern poets, like their Romantic antecedents, have wished to go beyond this; but without some counterbalance, modernism, with its ramifications into Dadaism, Surrealism, and various streams of artistic anarchism and iconoclasm, and even its political flirtations with fascism, would have long since run off the rails and become meaningless as any sort of criticism, in Arnoldian terms, of life. It is an essential limiting influence if poetry, and perhaps our civilisation, is not to forfeit a workable sanity. Indeed, poets in the last two decades, at least in Britain, have tended to revert to a Hardy-esque poetry of liberal tenor and moderation in style.

A final observation from Pinto may complete the perspective:

He [Hardy] is also giving imaginative expression for the first time to the kind of consciousness which had been produced by the scientific discoveries of the nineteenth century.... Hardy shows us what the mind is like when it has been 'released', its sense of bewilderment and isolation when confronted by a world picture from which not only God and the angels but also the immanent divine spirit of the pantheistic romantics has been banished. ⁹⁷

Eliot's answer, in a sense, is to reinstate God and an authoritarian order. Thomas, however, has all Hardy's regard for those 'scientific discoveries', all Hardy's scepticism as well as liberalism of outlook. The realism which is an essential part of his affinity with Hardy strengthens his

poetry in crucial ways, having to do with the kind of counterbalance I have just been describing. But he also has a deeply romantic factor in his sensibility, and what he does is to run together the Romantic conflict with Hardy's type of mind 'released' from traditional confines and hence tending to 'isolation'. He brings realism and romanticism into unity and tension to create a kind of modern sensibility in poetry which includes but extends beyond the scientific scepticism of Hardy. Yet he cannot bear too much reality, and is in the Keatsian and Baudelairean mould of requiring some more efficacious amulet against the ennui than Hardy could have conceived of as being necessary.

III. Flint and Monro: the Modern Poet as Townsman.

An alternative to the flight into the countryside presents itself to twentieth-century poets in a conscious embracing of the city and the man-made, something which involves, indeed, a distinct modification of poetic sensibility. A poem such as Thom Gunn's 'In Praise of Cities', mentioned earlier in this chapter, is a very full expression of this. The indifference and disorder of Gunn's city:

the wharf of circumstance,⁹⁸
Rejected sidestreet, formal monument.....

remind us of the aimless coming-and-going of Eliot's poetry of the city; what strikes us here is that there is none of that note of fastidious distaste that attaches, for example, to Eliot's 'Streets that follow like a tedious argument'. Gunn's poem speaks of tribute to the 'wharf of circumstance'. It is true that there are other themes at the centre of this poem - Gunn's interest in the inscrutability of human motive, a modern acceptance (which has Hardy behind it) of life for what it is including its failures and incompleteness - and that at one level the

city is merely a metaphor for a statement about life in general. However, 'merely' is inappropriate, for the metaphor is itself part of the statement, and there is a clear assertion here of the view that the modern city is man's own fullest expression of himself, that it reflects or symbolises man's profoundest motives as well as conscious choices. And though Gunn extracts some mild ironic resonance from flatly contradicting traditional notions about the squalor and unpleasantness of cities, the poem offers an expression of this view which is no longer inhibited by a sense that there is anything exceptionable about the celebration of the city, a sense that one almost always observes in the city poetry of the earlier part of the century. By the sixties it has come to be accepted that the city is as much the poet's natural environment as the countryside, that as Sartre says of the city in Baudelaire's poetry, 'Tout y est poésie au sens strict du terme'.⁹⁹ This is not accepted in the urban poetry of Monro and Flint.

Monro and Flint both showed an awareness which was a little ahead of their time that the subject-matter of poetry must become properly reflective of modern life, which would include the physical features of industry and urbanism. As recorded in my Introduction, the two were among those who showed interest and enthusiasm for the writing and ideas of the futurist poet Marinetti when he visited England in 1913. Futurism was an early symptom of those unhealthy propensities in modernism which I mention a few pages earlier, and foreshadowed Italian fascism. Monro and Flint were quickly disenchanted, but the response to Marinetti's conscious modernity was a sound and inevitable one. A contributor to Monro's Poetry and Drama, Michael Sadler, commented while discussing Verhaeren's poetry:

Contemporary art has rejected the negative self-seclusion of the generation that is passing away. She has thrown herself into every modern activity, she paints factories

and chimney-stacks, she describes men not as they ought to be, nor as they like to be considered, but as they¹⁰⁰ are.

Flint quoted a passage from a translation by Jethro Bithell of Stefan

Zweig's Emile Verhaeren:

In Verhaeren's work our age is mirrored. The new landscapes are in it; the sinister silhouettes of the great cities; the seething masses of a militant democracy; the subterranean shafts of mines; the last heavy shadows of silent, dying cloisters. All the intellectual forces of our time, our time's ideology, have here become a poem; the new social ideas, the struggle of industrialism with agrarianism, the vampire force which lures the rural population from the health-giving fields to the burning quarries of the great city, the tragic fate of emigrants, financial crises, the dazzling conquests of science, the syntheses of philosophy, the triumphs of engineering,¹⁰¹ the new colours of the impressionists.

Zweig's attention is focussed here, we notice, on the same passing of a rural way of life of which Hardy and Thomas show so acute an awareness.

Again, Flint wrote in 1914 of Jouve's play Les Deux Forces:

The subject-matter of the play is modern; you are the whole time amidst an ambience created by the presence of machinery and the instruments of modern industrial¹⁰² life....

These comments record a prevalent consciousness of the time; intellectuals and artists across Europe saw their age in some such terms as these, and looked for an art that could 'mirror' such an age. However much they regretted and resisted it, Flint and Monro were aware that these trappings of modernity were essential poetic material. Indeed, more than this: they were compelled to make such an acknowledgement. Where Hardy and Thomas found their key and essential experience in the countryside, Flint and Monro found theirs just as obligatorily represented by this urban modernity.

At this point, we may recall Eliot's comment, mentioned in Chapter 2, that Monro

is obviously not a 'nature poet'. The attitude towards nature which we find again and again in his poems is

that of the town-dweller, of the man who, as much
by the bondage of temperament and habit as by that
of external necessity must pass his life among streets.¹⁰³

This may be linked with the following passage from Monro's review of Douglas Goldring's book of verse, Streets:

Many poets have been trying recently to express London, London impressions, sights, sounds, sentiments, effects - all more or less unsuccessfully, because more or less insincerely. The town being the one stirring all-commanding reality of our present existence, and London town being the most thoroughly complete type of town, the necessity for a London poetry is indeed so obvious that it is quite startling no sufficient one has sprung into existence....Henley and Mr. Binyon can neither of them satisfy us, because the city has¹⁰⁴ not forced them to write.

What should be noted is the stress behind Monro's description of the town as 'the one stirring all-commanding reality of our present existence', as well as behind his 'the city has not forced them to write'. But Eliot too, we feel, is in the same way gripped by the city and compelled to write of it; in his pronouncement on Monro he seems, as so often, to be speaking not only for his subject but for himself. The theme of urban complaint was a natural product of nineteenth-century Romanticism, and by the turn of the century was virtually another outworn convention. Flint in some of his early verses uses it in a completely automatic way along with the other paraphernalia of late Romanticism. For many of the Georgians, too, anti-urbanism represented an unconsidered assumption and the town-country opposition scarcely exists for them as a real issue. Eliot himself does not, of course, always write directly about the city, but rather uses 'urban imagery' as part of his poetic communication. The modern city, as one of the most famous passages in The Waste Land makes explicit, is in a sense 'unreal' for him. Reality belongs to the past or to a timeless continuum: to the city as a kind of historical-cultural residue of the great and permanent which ultimately becomes associated, especially in the later poetry, with the greater reality of an extra-

temporal dimension of experience. There is a certain irony - not, I think, one of Eliot's deliberate ironies - in the fact that even while parading his urban imagery Eliot is looking backward towards the fertility myths and vegetation rites of a timeless agricultural order not so very far from the sort of thing Robert Graves approves as the material of a true, non-urban poetry. Almost any reader of Eliot, however, must have been struck by a sense of Eliot's personal fascination with his urban imagery, and he is squarely in the Baudelairean tradition in that even while emphasising squalor and distastefulness, his cityscapes are used almost lovingly as evocative or symbolic motifs; there is a romantic attraction to the city as well as the repulsion from it. Urban complaint and celebration of what Sartre refers to as 'le mythe de la grande ville' occur simultaneously.

It is impossible to raise the question of urban themes in the poetry of the present century without touching upon Eliot. But my chief task at present, in considering the experience of the poet as a town-dweller - an experience which involves also particular attitudes towards the countryside - is to examine certain details in the poetry of Monro and Flint, in a way which will illustrate that persistent problems of consciousness appearing in their work are shared in common with other poets. Harold Monro, for his part, was a Georgian in his uncritical acceptance of the given urban complaint and assumption of the spiritual (the word does not seem inappropriate) superiority of the countryside. Despite his use, touched on in Chapter 2, of the Eliot-like phrase 'unreal town', the city does not, on the whole, seem unreal for him; he is aware of it as a living presence, tiresome but inextricable from modern life. Equally, the town-country opposition becomes for him a real issue, but not a simple one; rather a kind of duality, held in an unresolved and acutely troubled mental state. The mood of his 'Suburb'

is complaint; the suburb is for him unquestionably a malignant new growth.

A ballad-like manner is ironically applied:

Dull and hard the low wind creaks
Among the rustling pampas plumes.
Drearily the year consumes
Its fifty-two insipid weeks.¹⁰⁵

The detail is somewhat obvious, but accurate as well as suggestive:

Most of the grey-green meadow land
Was sold in parsimonious lots;
The dingy houses stand
Pressed by some stout contractor's hand
Tightly together in their plots.

The 'grey-green meadow land' is infected with a kind of prescient dismalness by what it is to become; the pressing together of the houses, the 'parsimonious lots', the 'stout' contractor, 'dingy', and 'tightly', all combine to reflect Monro's socialist view of profiteering and exploitation of human needs, while implying - this is the central emphasis of the poem - the restrictive and repressive nature of the only possible way of life here:

In all the better gardens you may pass,
(Product of many careful Saturdays),
Large red geraniums and tall pampas grass
Adorn the plots and mark the gravelled ways.

Monro develops a small episode which he imbues with the quality of being infinitely suggestive of the way of life which repeats itself among the 'parsimonious lots' - an example of modern courtship:

Sometimes in the background may be seen
A private summer-house in white or green.
Here on warm nights the daughter brings
Her vacillating clerk,
To talk of small exciting things
And touch his fingers through the dark.

He, in the uncomfortable breach
Between her trilling laughters,
Promises, in halting speech,
Hopeless immense Hereafters.

She trembles like the pampas plumes.
Her strained lips haggle. He assumes
The serious quest....

The expressively hesitant rhythms and near-comic clinching of the rhymes

lead into a conclusion which deflatingly juxtaposes the mundane and the sublime:

Now as the train is whistling past
He takes her in his arms at last.

It's done. She blushes at his side
Across the lawn - a bride, a bride.

The stout contractors will design,
The lazy labourers will prepare,
Another villa on the line;
In the little garden-square
Pampas grass will rustle there.

That the irony of the final stanza is predictable is its point; the poem's formal patterning images the theme of the dull suburban round, in particular the recurring 'pampas grass' motif, coming round again in the last line to convey the sense of endless reiteration and sameness. Emphasis throughout is on dreariness and parsimony: in the final 'little garden-square', squareness suggests both constriction and mechanical monotony. Flat and constricted sound-effects, an unshowy sense of the mot juste - 'the low wind creaks' - and expressive phrasings which recall Hardy - 'Hopeless immense Hereafters', combine to enforce the poem's theme. The functional rhythmic recurrence is interspersed with a discrete breaking-up of the stanzaic pattern to convey stress and crisis, or for dramatic suggestion:

He assumes

The serious quest....

The unity of effect suggests that Monro's imaginative interest is fully engaged by this subject. Despite a certain ironic objectivity, and despite the pointedly signalled distaste for his subject, this is life as Monro knows it, and the distaste itself is what 'forced' poetry out of him. He is caught up with the urban, or suburban, experience, and cannot escape it.

Yet throughout 'Suburb' there is an implied contrast with the

expansiveness and naturalness of the countryside - though setting this poem beside Hardy's 'The Milkmaid' might suggest that human motivation is the same whatever the environment. The satisfactions for Monro of the country visit emerge in 'Hearthstone', coming together with two other of his paramount themes, domesticity and the need of human relationship: the three themes are in fact aspects of one, they all interrelate to denote Monro's forlorn quest for an amulet against his personal ennui, an ennui partially defined by 'Suburb'. This piece has an effect of solidity, bound together and given a sturdy movement by rhyming couplets and a fairly regular iambic pentameter. Almost every line is end-stopped or nearly end-stopped; the overall impression is like that of a perfectly firm piece of carpentry or masonry. The stress throughout is on size and strength - 'some enormous root', 'logs.....four feet long' (note the strengthening effect of 'logs.....long'), 'wide and strong', 'your hard thought', 'The great dog', 'eyes, huge, warm and wide', 'full hearth-length'; and there is a concomitant emphasis on warmth, quietness and security - 'fireside', 'quiet flames', 'Drowsing', 'warm eyes', 'slow-breathing', and in 'The wind rattles the latch' an implied contrast of warmth and security inside the room with the wild weather outside. That the poem is addressed to a person called simply and monumentally 'Friend' adds to the sense of strength and security:

I want nothing but your fireside now.
 Friend, you are sitting there alone I know, ¹⁰⁶

The distribution of rhythmic stress against the firm grip of the pentameter helps to bring out the key words:

And the quiet flames are licking up the soot,
 Or crackling out of some enormous root:
All the logs on your hearth are four feet long.

The poet is picturing to himself his 'friend' in the familiar country house; it is a poem of imagined escape from the city, but characteristically not

following any simple Georgian formula: there is a fusion of several longings. The character of the friend and of his (or her - there is some external evidence that the person referred to was Monroe's wife) room interpenetrate:

The low quiet room and all its things are caught
And linger in the meshes of your thought.
(Some people think they know time cannot pause.)
Your eyes are closing now though not because
Of sleep. You are searching something with your brain;

This interpenetration helps to create the monolithic structure of the poem; it also hints at the mystical state induced by identification with an external object with which Monroe, under the influence of Edward Carpenter, experimented. This passage suggests some mysterious and final state of security, produced by the combination of friendship, domesticity, and the country environment - an escape from temporal flux and the frustrations of everyday life. The apparent desire in this poem as in others by Monroe to regard inert objects as some kind of warm, breathing companions again perhaps stems from Monroe's failure to find in human relationships the consolations he sought. The fire, the door, the room, the kettle take on a life of their own:

The kettle near the fire one moment hums.
Then a long peace upon the whole room comes.

The 'companionship' offered by the dog in the poem also has obvious significance. The poem verges on sentimentality, especially at the end:

So the sweet evening will draw to its bedtime end.

but is saved by its integrity of feeling and, again, a unity of effect deriving from sure technical control.

The same sureness was not present in all Monroe's work; elsewhere the voice can be imitative, the control spasmodic, and imaginative unity elusive. This is the case with 'Great City', a naive exposition of the country-city polarity. As Joy Grant puts it, the poem 'opens with a paragraph handled

with a fine sense of verbal music' but 'degenerates into forlorn nostalgia for the countryside'. Along with a technical loosening-up, even a sloppiness of style, goes an almost Keatsian or Thomas-like indulgence or inertia: the poet is not fighting his dejection here, and the tension goes out of the poem. Nevertheless, this very fact makes it interesting data of the crisis of sensibility; there is a hint of the attempted escape from the tyranny of time, of one of those quasi-mystical moments intimated in 'Hearthstone':

Time was so dead I could not understand
The meaning of midday or of midnight,
But like falling waters, falling, hissing, falling,¹⁰⁷
Silence seemed an everlasting sound.

This is the hallucinated consciousness discussed in Chapter 2. But the actual experience of transcendence is not achieved; there is only nostalgic yearning devoid of expressive force:

I imagined dew in the country,
In the hay, on the buttercups;
The rising moon,
The scent of early night,

'Trees' is a poem in which Monro records an actual attempt to transcend time and normal experience through meditation - meditation upon trees. But the men Monro describes as having achieved an easy transference back and forth between the two worlds of experience, and as themselves being like trees, strike us as considerably more unreal than the haunted urban creatures of Eliot's or his own urban experience; they are men who

Seem like trees walking, and to grow
From earth, and, native in the grass,
(So taut their muscles) move on gliding roots.
They blossom every day: their fruits
Are always new and cover the happy ground.
Wherever you may stand
You hear inevitable sound
Of birds and branches, harvest and all delights
Of pastured and wooded land.
For them it is not dangerous to go
Each side that barrier moving to and fro....¹⁰⁸

I doubt whether Monro had actually known such men; they seem as much a

fantasy fulfilment as Flint's dream other self in 'Otherworld'.

Flint's early volume In the Net of the Stars, often raises the spectres of 'annihilation' and 'futility'; there is a rather factitious sense of the negating of 'life' by the futility of the universe and the ineluctable fact of death. This is a second-hand, rarefied ennui, remote from any lived context, so that 'poetry' or 'beauty' - an even more nebulous abstraction than Thomas's 'Beauty' - themselves often become equated with the yearning for escape into 'the net of the stars', the silent reaches of the universe. This accompanies, and perhaps in the early poems takes preference over, a Georgian flight into an idealised countryside. The preference relates the young Flint, as we have seen, more with the Nineties and French Symbolism than with the Georgians. I shall return in my final chapter to the whole stratum of modern poetry of which this in Flint is only a small outcrop; a stratum running from Mallarmé's quest for an impersonal 'state' of poetic super-reality to Eliot's desiderated annihilation of personality in poetry and his probing for an escape into timelessness, through the work of numerous poets of lesser and greater importance. For the moment, we are concerned to note how the affected ennui of Flint's adolescent verses becomes, in his two later books, less purely literary, and takes on a character which answers to actual experience. With this comes an intensification of the Lawrentian feeling implicit in the 'white rose of flame' - the rose, of course, has a Symbolist derivation - which Flint used in an early poem and re-used in these lines:

Into the dark of the arch the swan floats
and into the black depth of my sorrow
it bears the white rose of flame. 109

This Symbolistic opposition of life with death or the inertia of ennui is directly carried over, we shall see in a moment, into the town and country opposition. An affinity with Lawrence already noted is a hint of anti-intellectualism, and something of Lawrence's irritation, in

Insofar as each writes of the town-country opposition, then, the situation is realised by each in a way personal to him. Yet each sets a denial of life felt in the inhabitants of the city against the vitalising processes of nature. Flint repeatedly evokes the deadening effect of urban humanity:

Is it the dirt, the squalor,
the wear of human bodies,
and the dead faces of our neighbours?¹¹⁴

O estimable man,
Keeper of the season ticket,
Walker on the pavement,
Follower of the leader writer,
Guardian of the life policy,
Insured against all harm -
Fire, burglary, servants' accidents -
Warden and ward of the church,
Wallflower of the suburbs,
Primrose of respectability,
As you go home beneath your hard felt hat
The tradesmen do you homage.
Happily, the trees do not know you.¹¹⁵

The cossetted insipidity and mechanical rhythms of suburban life, monotonously itemised, are summarily commented upon by that 'Happily, the trees', which represent naturalness. This is all, including the scorn behind it, in a Lawrentian vein. There is a nicely restrained irony (rare in Flint) in the wallflower and primrose, products of nature which are yet over-protected in suburban gardens. 'Oak' expresses the sense of needing contact with nature, with the earth, for full vitality to be achieved:

I must have space for my branches,
A field for my roots:
Or men will destroy me!¹¹⁶

There is a surge of personal emotion here which is not at all like the unreality of Monro's men like trees. Lawrence, too, finds the tree a reminder of life in the midst of the city:

Here there's an almond-tree - you have never seen
Such a one in the north - it flowers on the street,
and I stand
Every day by the fence to look up at the flowers
that expand
At rest in the blue, and wonder at what they mean.¹¹⁷

A plane-tree has a similar function for Flint,¹¹⁸ and in the suburb he is 'grateful for the lilac leaf, / the big brown plane trees and their host of green.'¹¹⁹ 'Prayer' crystallises his response to the city around him:

Give me the flame, O Gods,
To light these people with,
These pavements, this motor traffic,
These houses, this medley.

Give me the vision,¹²⁰
And they may live.

London and its suburbs, the setting in which Flint spent most of his life, is for him itself a metaphor; a metaphor of enervation and unnaturalness, and yet of life surging in the midst of deadness; a macrocosm of and a fund of symbols for his own inner tensions. The poetry he wrote is peculiarly related to the setting in which he wrote it. Flint, with his interest in and wide knowledge of the nineteenth-century French poets, was a poet tailor-made to express the ennui of modern city life. Born in Islington, the son of a commercial traveller, he left school at fourteen, and pulled himself out of working-class poverty to become a Civil Servant and permanent resident of Suburbia. He taught himself shorthand and typing, and studied languages at night school. By 1920 he was working in the Overseas Section of the Ministry of Labour, a position for which his linguistic capabilities fitted him. He remained there for the rest of his working life, eventually rising to Head of the Section, and becoming noted as an authority on overseas labour statistics. His daughter recalls the various suburban surroundings in which he and his family lived during the creative period: between 1910 and 1918 'Petherton Road, Pyrland Road, Douglas Road, Canonbury Park, N., then Highbury New Park which is lined with plane trees'.¹²¹ It is a life history which explains Flint's overbearing sense of enslavement both in literature and life; in literature this is a sense of enslavement to traditions and values with which his class background and his self-education

has given him no feeling of identity; in life, of enslavement to economic necessity and the engulfing presence of the modern metropolis.

In a translation of a poem of Charles Vildrac by Harold Monroe we can find the keynote of the preoccupation shared by the two friends in much of their poetry, with the dark consciousness of modern urban man. The poem is 'Townsmen':

This dwelling was prepared, furnished, decorated under my own care, for my use and my enjoyment. But I live in it one moment only at evening, that moment before I am swept away by sleep: thus I recover my kingdom in the very hour that I must abdicate.

Oh, how like these days are here to those waves of a waterfall that tumble in useless succession one after another.

In their hurry they fulfil nothing, but are vainly scattered among the hollows of all the rocks, or at the greedy call of every necessity, or they vanish splash by splash, soaked up by the sand and lost in it.

A torrent gulps up the river; spoils its dreams and mars its long reflections.

Things have belonged to me for years that I have not yet actually noticed. They stand there like servants, called, forgotten, but waiting.

Look at those books there, motionless, waiting for me to fulfil my intention of re-reading them.

The window rail is foreign to the arms that should lean upon it, but native to soot and to the climate.

I shall have left without having lingered ever in the neighbouring square. It lay there unappreciated; I had guessed its charming soul: I had planned to breathe its air every evening.

As for those friends to whom I had said: 'Now that we are neighbours we shall often see each other' - how many times have I so much as met them?

I had promised myself the joy of narrowly observing my child as he grew up. He is half grown-up - and I have seen nothing.

If I am granted an hour of peace, for what can it be used but to listen in agony to the clatter of time disappearing into emptiness?

Life in such a place is consumed in unfulfilment, and in this temporary dwelling at last one dies. 122

Flint and Monroe each felt that it was urban life, the 'Machine Age', and the forms of economic dependence associated with these, which distinguished their new century from earlier ones; each felt inconsolable in his fate as immutably a townsman. The two shared an early idealism which was undermined by the actualities of everyday existence in this environment;

being an inhabitant of the modern metropolis with one's life-habits compulsively determined by its machine rhythms, was for each the central given fact of existence, from which the whole sense of the malaise of that existence flowed. Vildrac's poem charts precisely the 'conditions of modern life' as felt by them, with its sense of 'the greedy call of every necessity' and of 'life....consumed in unfulfilment'; its closeness in feeling to Flint's 'Otherworld' will be seen when I examine that poem in detail in Chapter 6. It is this whole area of psychological crisis - it is obvious enough that there is a certain maladjustment to reality in Vildrac's poem - which links these two poets with Edward Thomas, the townsman who painstakingly converted himself into a countryman in a vain search for release from the malaise. His poetry, too, is burdened, as we have seen, with this ache of unfulfilment, the stress of which is felt in Vildrac's waves of a waterfall which 'in their hurry....fulfil nothing', or in the books which wait 'for me to fulfil my intention of re-reading them'. And the whole shared crisis ramifies in that sense of incapacity to find a home, to put down roots, of passing life in a 'temporary dwelling', coupled to a feeling of 'time disappearing into emptiness'.

Glenn Hughes, in his Imagism and the Imagists, called Flint 'an interpreter of London'. The experience of London in Flint's first volume:

My heart is bitter with this barren desolation -
Dead trees, grey skies, gaunt streets, smoke, grime¹²³
and squalor of London.

is, despite the flat lists of epithets, and the immature treatment of the themes of urban complaint and escape into an idealised countryside, Flint's authentic experience. It is in Cadences that the sense of being lost, of isolation, of loss of identity, finds more effective expression, in fragmented free verse:

Now I stand awake, unseeing,
 in the dark,
 and I move towards her cot....
 I shall not reach her....There is no direction....¹²⁴
 I shall walk on....

This poem, 'Hallucination', and its companion piece, 'Malady', seem to issue from a sense of consciousness as an accident, which we can closely correlate with what we have seen in both Monro and Thomas. These poems are flickering emanations from a state of half-waking or semi-delirium; 'Hallucination' seems to move towards complete disintegration, while the indefinitions of 'Malady' suddenly harden into an Imagistic final line - 'A parrot screeches' - which concentrates the jarring impingement of exterior reality on the individual. It seems impossible not to relate these with 'the modern disintegration, the sense of directionlessness' which Leavis diagnoses in Thomas's 'Old Man'. 'Loneliness' deals explicitly with isolation, interposing a wistful reversion to the earlier futility and annihilation:

I live among men,
 walking beside them, sitting beside them,
 talking with them, or aloof from them,
 listening to their footsteps, how they beat
 below on the pavements, how they will beat
 until....

until the last wind has gathered the last leaf,¹²⁵
 and silence has gathered the wind,

This hollowness at the centre of the urban experience, at the centre of a meaningless coming-and-going, may not represent in Flint the same kind of spiritual vacancy it increasingly became for Eliot - it is something much nearer to a Marxist apprehension of a social and economic ambience inimical to human relations - yet in feeling there is a close kinship. Charles Norman in his Ezra Pound has remarked upon the similarity of passages by Flint such as these with passages by Eliot.¹²⁶ 'Courage' is again woven around this hollowness, but is a shade more positive in its response; there is some attempt at adjustment to reality, a summoning-

up of the will to bear the lot of suburban man, a seeking of antidotes to the 'yearning poison' of unfulfilment:

I meet the same men, too,
and they are not the same:
the night renews them,
as it renews my joy,
and as the day
brings back my bitterness.

Each day I hope for courage to bear
and not to whine;
to take my lot as bravely as the bees
and as unbroodingly.

Each day I creep a little nearer,
let me hope;
soon may the morning leaves
remain as green about my heart all day,
and I no longer taking myself to heart
may laugh and love and dream and think of death ¹²⁷
without this yearning poison.

Perhaps Flint is merely asking to be a machine, or an insect, like all the others, but the poem is characteristic in its vacillation between escape and acceptance. 'Easter'¹²⁸ involves the epitome of suburban recreational habits, a walk in Richmond Park, which ends in disappointment, while 'Accident' records desire in a railway carriage, a flare of life amidst deadness, but essentially a vision 'consumed in unfulfilment', cut off by the routine exigencies of modern life - 'This is my station....'¹²⁹

The poems in Otherworld come down in more basic terms to the economic trap in which the modern individual is caught.

We are the respectable; and behind us, though we do
not see him,
Driving us with his goad, is hunger - the first law
of our land.
He enmeshes us, he regiments us, he drills us to obey
his time.
For him we hurry through the dust or the mud, through
the cold or heat,
To the slave-pens. ¹³⁰

Monro showed himself acutely aware in his prose 'morality', One Day Awake, of the same predicament:

He [Traffic] and Hunger are in league. I know their idea. Every day the same panic is raised. 'There will be no bread on your table this evening unless you go out and win it.' Cashier presents his bill, and men 131 bolt from their houses.

Again in Flint's poem there is the sense of the poisoning of human relationships by the economic scramble of the city - 'One word of love and understanding would turn my poison into wine' - as well as of the destruction of the individual personality - 'crushing me further still into myself'.¹³²

'Houses', however, is representative of a somewhat different urban mood found in a number of poems, where the life-negating effects of city life are less fretfully felt. Certainly, the poem is concerned to emphasise a certain negativeness in the complacent solidness of this world, but there is acceptance, and even a quiver of pleasure, felt in the delicate word-painting and sense-evocations, in tasting the peculiar mood of the city's evening:

Evening and quiet:
A bird trills in the poplar-trees
Behind the house with the dark-green door
Across the road.

Into the sky,
The red earthenware and the galvanised-iron chimneys
Thrust their cowl.
The hoot of the steamers on the Thames is plain.

No wind;
The trees merge, green with green;
A car whirs by;
Footsteps and voices take their pitch
In the key of dusk,
Far off and near, subdued.

Solid and square to the world
The houses stand,
Their windows blocked with venetian blinds.

Nothing will move them.¹³³

One might have hoped for more of this kind of very personal and individual appreciation of the city had Flint continued writing. An earlier poem, actually titled 'London', is a Symbolistic celebration of the city:

London, my beautiful,
 I will climb
 into the branches
 to the moonlit tree-tops
 that my blood may be cooled¹³⁴
 by the wind.

We notice that in both these poems the mood is an evening one, the moment of rest and quiet, when the tensions and hurry of city life are temporarily relaxed. Like Thomas and Monro, Flint repeatedly seeks a condition of quietness or rest, and it may be said that such poems merely represent moments of escape from the city. However, there is certainly another side to the coin for a poet who can exclaim 'London, my beautiful', and this merely confirms what I have already said about the invariable interpenetration of urban complaint with celebration of 'le mythe de la grande ville'. Flint not only sought escape; he looked around him at the beauty of London and its suburbs, and they were not without consolations.

A final handling by Flint of the city theme occurs in a short series of poems towards the end of Otherworld which set the 'disquiet' and unfulfilment of modern city life in the context of war:

But to the right the road will lead me
 To greater and greater disquiet;
 Into the swift and rattling noise of the motor-'buses
 And the dust, the tattered paper -
 The detritus of a city -
 That swirls in the air behind them.¹³⁵

There seems a necessary connection between 'the heat of Europe's fever' and the 'disquiet' of London; the colloquial movement combines with a simple firmness of imagery which has developed convincingly away from the 'moony symbolisms' (Christopher Middleton's phrase) of the early verses. It is difficult, indeed, to find an English poet writing in the earlier part of the century who is, whatever his achievement, more aesthetically radical and more overtly modern in feeling than Flint. He writes with utter directness and frankness about the malaise of modern

life, firmly situating his personal confession in the experiential medium created by the urban and machine age and its socio-economic processes. In this - in the realism towards which he moved through his three small volumes - he stands in the line of modernism from Hardy as much as that from English Romanticism, the confessional poetry of Baudelaire with its urban imagery, and French Symbolism. It may be that he overstresses the urban malaise as a unique product of the twentieth century, but this is perhaps an inevitable condition of the immediacy. Flint feels entirely alienated from the sources of inspiration of his friends H.D. and Richard Aldington:

the things
That are given to my friends:
Myths of old Greece and Egypt

or from those of the Georgians and Edward Thomas:

If even the orchards of England....
Were mine;
But they are not.¹³⁶

His is an incorrigibly suburban view of the countryside, scarcely extending beyond the domestic orderliness of an orchard, but he really knows about life - unlike many poets - year in, year out, in an office and on a commuter train. If this sometimes imposes a limiting range on his poetry, he never, after his first book, attempts to write outside his experience, to manufacture emotion, or to inflict on his reader the boredom of those never-never lands of 'poetic' exoticism such as Flecker's 'Golden Journey to Samarkand,' which are scattered in liberal quantities through the pages of Georgian Poetry.

A yearning for escape, from the mundane experience of ordinary life in the city or suburb and ultimately from a time-bound level of consciousness, and a sense of a hollowness at the centre of the urban experience by which they are nevertheless compulsively gripped, are factors we may correlate in the poetry of Eliot, Flint and Monro. Eliot is hyper-

FOOTNOTES

1. Ed. Miriam Allcott, The Poems of John Keats, 1970, p. 45.
2. Collected Poems, 1949, p. 48.
3. The Poems of John Keats, p. 88, ll. 61-5.
4. Georgian Poetry 1918-1919, p. 59.
5. Keats, 1916, p. 38.
6. Op.Cit., p. 91, ll. 125-139.
7. Ibid., p. 93, ll. 159-163.
8. Revaluation, Penguin Books, 1964, pp. 154-9.
9. A.E. Housman, Collected Poems, 1937, p. 100.
10. James Reeves, Introduction, Georgian Poetry, Penguin, 1962, p. xvi.
11. Collected Poems, p. 148.
12. Georgian Poetry 1911-1912, p. 59.
13. W.H. Davies, Collected Poems, 1942, p. 144.
14. R.J. Stonesifer, W.H. Davies: A Critical Biography, 1963, p. 102.
15. Collected Poems, p. 502.
16. The New Poetic, p. 94.
17. Unpublished letter in the collection of King's School, Canterbury. I do not mean to suggest that the poem, which was written many years later, necessarily records the same occasion as the letter. 'All in June' appeared in The Loneliest Mountain, 1939. The letter of 7th August, 1909 quoted below is from the same source.

18. 'I am the Poet Davies, William', Collected Poems, p. 268.
19. New Bearings in English Poetry, Penguin, p. 59.
20. 'The Sunlit Vale', Poems of Many Years, 1957, p. 177.
21. For the poems discussed in the following paragraph see: Edward Thomas, Collected Poems, p. 82, p. 111; Edmund Blunden, Poems of Many Years, p. 52, p. 33; Ted Hughes, Lupercal, 1960, p. 49, p. 56.
22. Robert Graves, Collected Poems, 1965, p. 54.
23. Ibid., p. 7.
24. Robert Graves, The White Goddess, 1961, pp. 458-9.
25. Ibid., p. 481.
26. Ibid., pp. 481-2.
27. Introduction, Georgian Poetry, p. xi.
28. Untitled essay., in Andrew Young, Prospect of a Poet, 1957, p. 67.
29. Andrew Young, Complete Poems, 1974, p. 145.
30. Untitled essay in Andrew Young, Prospect of a Poet, pp. 51-60.
31. Complete Poems, p. 150.
32. 'The Glory', Collected Poems, p. 64.
33. R.S. Thomas, Song at the Year's Turning, 1955, p. 98.
34. G.S. Fraser, The Modern Writer and his World, Penguin, 1964, p. 256.
35. See Thomas Hardy and British Poetry, 1973, p. 130 ff.
36. Op.Cit., p. 52.

37. Vernon Scannell, Edward Thomas, p. 30.
38. 'Waiting Both', Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy, 1960, p. 665.
39. 'An Ancients to Ancients', Ibid., p. 659.
40. Vivian de Sola Pinto, Crisis in English Poetry, p. 40.
41. Op.Cit., pp. 78-9.
42. Siegfried Sassoon, Memoirs of a Fox-hunting Man, Faber paperback, 1960, p. 172.
43. Helen Thomas, World Without End, 1931, p. 107.
44. Quoted by De Sola Pinto, Op.Cit., p. 36, p. 39.
45. William Cooke, Edward Thomas: A Critical Biography, p. 125.
46. See The Country and the City, Chapter 2.
47. Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, 1972, p. 60.
48. Op.Cit., p. 5.
49. Op.Cit., pp. 52-3.
50. Op.Cit., p. 40.
51. K.L. Goodwin, The Influence of Ezra Pound, 1966, p. 211.
52. Op.Cit., p. 30.
53. 'To an Unborn Pauper Child', Collected Poems, p. 117.
54. Barnes's example for Hardy is perhaps the most notable, but not the only one, in this respect. See e.g. Davie's footnote on other prosodic experiments made by Hardy, Op.Cit., p. 57 FN.

55. F.R. Leavis, 'Reality and Sincerity: Notes in the Analysis of Poetry', Scrutiny, Vol. XIX, no. ii (1952-3), 93.
56. 'The Clouds that are so Light', Collected Poems, p. 60.
57. Collected Poems, p. 59.
58. See Robert Graves, Goodbye to All That, Penguin, 1960, p. 249.
59. In the Preface to Poems of the Past and Present (1902). See Collected Poems, p. 75.
60. Op.Cit., p. 40.
61. Collected Poems, p. 60.
62. Ibid., p. 59.
63. This is well analysed by Cooke, pp. 107-8.
64. Collected Poems, p. 170.
65. Collected Poems, p. 521.
66. Ibid., p. 143.
67. 'Women He Liked', Collected Poems, p. 47.
68. Collected Poems, p. 161.
69. Collected Poems, p. 314.
70. Introduction to Penguin Poets Thomas Hardy, 1960, p. 18.
71. Op.Cit., p. 141.
72. 'The Well-Beloved', Collected Poems, p. 121.
73. 'Digging', Collected Poems, p. 109.

74. Collected Poems, p. 55, pp. 36-9, p. 94.
75. H. Coombes, 'Hardy, de la Mare, and Edward Thomas', The Modern Age, Penguin, 1961, p. 145.
76. Collected Poems, p. 52.
77. Letters to Gordan Bottomley, p. 127. For evidence of this interest in the poetry see 'Early One Morning', Collected Poems, p. 48; 'An Old Song', p. 89; a second poem of the same title, p. 158; 'The Gypsy', p. 179.
78. Op.Cit., p. 113.
79. 'New Year's Eve', Collected Poems, p. 261.
80. 'February Afternoon', Collected Poems, p. 108.
81. Collected Poems, p. 511.
82. The two poems have often been compared. See Philip Hobsbaum, 'The Road not Taken', The Listener, 23 Nov. 1961, 860-3; Cooke, Op.Cit., pp. 240-1: Jon Silkin, Out of Battle, p. 53, p. 101.
83. 'The Imprecipient', Collected Poems, p. 60.
84. See Op.Cit., p. 35.
85. Op.Cit., p. 51.
86. The Modern Age (see note 75), p. 146.
87. Collected Poems, p. 454.
88. Collected Poems, p. 71.
89. Collected Poems, p. 182.
90. Collected Poems, p. 110.
91. George Wing, Thomas Hardy, Writers and Critics Series, 1963, p. 96.

92. Op.Cit., p. 51.
93. 'Up in the Wind', Collected Poems, p. 98.
94. Collected Poems, p. 449.
95. Op.Cit., p. 15.
96. Op.Cit., p. 78. Jon Silkin, however, thinks that there are lapses in Hardy's realism. 'In most of the Poems of War and Patriotism there is little of that "exploration of reality" of which Hardy speaks in the Apology prefacing his Late Lyrics and Earlier (1922)'. See Out of Battle, p. 54.
97. Op.Cit., p. 43.
98. Thom Gunn, The Sense of Movement, 1957, p. 33.
99. Jean-Paul Sartre, Baudelaire, Paris, 1963, p. 53. At the time of writing this chapter, I did not have access to the translation by Martin Turnell (1953).
100. 'Emile Verhaeren: An Appreciation', Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. ii. (June 1913) 178-9.
101. 'French Chronicle', Poetry and Drama, Vol. II, no. viii (Dec. 1914), 393.
102. 'French Chronicle', Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. iv (Dec. 1913), 478.
103. 'Critical Note', Collected Poems of Harold Monroe, 1933, p. xv.
104. Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. i (March 1913), 64.
105. Collected Poems, p. 159.
106. Ibid., p. 158.
107. Ibid., p. 156.
108. Ibid., p. 140.

109. 'The Swan', Cadences, p. 10.
110. Cadences, p. 20. cf. Chapter 3, p. 136.
111. 'Letter from Town: On a Grey Morning in March', Complete Poems, p. 57.
112. 'Immortality', Cadences, p. 16.
113. 'Loneliness', Ibid., p. 17.
114. 'Accident', Ibid., p. 27.
115. 'Hats', Otherworld, pp. 57-8.
116. Otherworld, p. 40.
117. 'Letter from Town: The Almond-Tree', Complete Poems, p. 58.
118. 'Plane-Tree', Cadences, p. 23.
119. 'Courage', Ibid., p. 18.
120. Otherworld, p. 28.
121. See Christopher Middleton, 'F.S. Flint: Two Unpublished Poems', Stand, Vol. VI, no. iv.
122. Translated from Lumière, December 1921. The Chapbook, no. xxxi (Nov. 1922) 17-18.
123. 'Sunday in London', In the Net of the Stars, p. 13.
124. Cadences, p. 15.
125. Ibid., p. 17.
126. Charles Norman, Ezra Pound, 1969, pp. 113-4.
127. Cadences, pp. 18-19.

128. Ibid., p. 24.
129. Ibid., p. 27.
130. Otherworld, pp. 6-7.
131. The Chapbook, no. xxxii (December 1922), 11.
132. Otherworld, p. 8.
133. Ibid., p. 45.
134. Cadences, p. 22.
135. Otherworld, p. 51.
136. 'Prayer', Ibid., p. 28.

CHAPTER 5

ENNUI AND CONFESSION.

In the foregoing chapters I have tried to show how the poetry of Flint, Monro and Edward Thomas typifies a malaise having to do not only with the objective conditions of life in the twentieth century, with the upheaval of the war and the break-up of the Victorian order, but with deep-rooted modes of feeling and psychological states widely shared among English poets working in the earlier part of the present century. Twentieth-century conditions only exacerbate an inherited romantic pathology, though at the same time this is partly countered by the awareness of a need to bring poetry back into closer contact with 'life', with reality. Such a situation was early recognised by such a critic as F.R. Leavis, or Edmund Wilson when he spoke in his Axel's Castle of a need and an attempt in modern writing to bring 'Naturalism' and 'Symbolism' into rapprochement. I use the terms 'malaise' and 'pathology' advisedly, and I wish now to consolidate my use of another term, 'ennui', broadly defined, to characterise the particular poison - we will see the persistence of imagery of poison - which corrodes the romantic sensibility and which, together with the anguished quest for an antidote - an 'amulet' - lies at the core of the inherited romantic pathology. Not surprisingly, I will look to Keats and Baudelaire for potent original statements of such a pathology.

A recent article on The Waste Land 'as a Buddhist poem' opened in this way:

After five decades of Waste Land scholarship and criticism, there remains only one overwhelming question. What does it mean? In a general way, of course, the consensus of opinion is that the poem is about 'the boredom, and the horror and the glory'. More precisely, the waste land is an image of spiritual aridity. More precisely still, the last line of The Burial of the Dead, a quotation from

Baudelaire's 'Au Lecteur', identifies this aridity as the peculiarly French nineteenth-century phenomenon - ennui.

C'est l'Ennui! - l'oeil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,
Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka.
Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,
- Hypocrite lecteur, - mon semblable - mon frère!

The last refinement of this taedium vitae is an apathetic longing for death: 'Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka.' All this is quite familiar.

Familiar as this may be, and though the identification of ennui behind The Waste Land exactly suits my case, such a summary does not suggest the sort of psychological and emotional complex which I see this world-weariness this taedium vitae, as embracing; while to denote it 'the peculiarly French nineteenth-century phenomenon' seems to me too limiting. Indeed, Craig Raine proceeds to pin down ennui to the following specialised significance:

Ennui stems from a feeling, expressed tellingly in Ecclesiastes, that 'The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun' (1.9). There is no new thing under the sun because man is constantly being reincarnated. History is repetition, a cyclic process. And this is the new thing to be said about The Waste Land. It is a poem about ennui because it is a Buddhist poem about reincarnation.²

Now it is certainly true that Baudelaire repeatedly expressed this feeling that there is no new thing under the sun:

O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons l'ancre!
Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort! Appareillons!
Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme l'encre,
Nos coeurs que tu connais sont remplis de rayons!

Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous réconforte!
Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!

I shall return in a moment to the reference to poison; it will be noticed that it does not matter for Baudelaire whether one chooses heaven or hell: like all opposites for him, even heaven and hell (it is an extreme statement of the case) are the same. But nobody so far as I know has suggested that

the intolerable sameness of things as Baudelaire saw them was a product of a Buddhist belief in reincarnation; that Death is sought as a possible source of the new seems to indicate that he does not envisage it as leading to reincarnation, a repetition. Indeed, it is perfectly clear that a Christian teleology lies behind Baudelaire's poetry, and that he took its assumptions without question. Sartre analyses this state of mind⁴ without recourse to explanations such as reincarnation: everything appeared the same to Baudelaire, he says, because his massive egotism merely projected himself into everything he observed, or to put it another way, whatever he found outside himself he also found inside himself, he was both 'victim and executioner' at the same time. This would seem to be the real significance of 'Hypocrite lecteur, - mon semblable - mon frère!' Hence, of course, he never could find anything 'du nouveau'. Since this orientating of the universe around the self is one of the dominating Romantic traits, it is not surprising that so many Romantics and post-Romantics share in a sense of ennui as a result of it.

In Baudelaire, the poète maudit, the 'cloche fêlée', virtually all the elements of sensibility and psychology discussed in this study can be seen drawn together and concentrated. The celebrated (or notorious) satanism need not distract us; we may look behind its showiness at what is more centrally of interest. It is implicated in his ennui as an aspect of the extremism which was a necessary projection of his egotism: even while feeling that everything was the same, he had to try to prove that he was different from others, and one way of doing this was by carrying perverse postures to extremes. But no other poet within the ambit of this study has such unbounded egotism and therefore Baudelaire's need of such a degree of extremism. We might trace a somewhat similar psychological process in the way Robert Graves's eccentricity leads him to

advocate paganism, but it is not a perversity of the same order; no other poet here considered is as abnormal, as eccentric in the full sense of the term, as Baudelaire. It is not that he fails to deal with states which are universal human experience; he is abnormal in giving these states their rein, in consciously refusing to resist or suppress them. Paradoxically, part of the moral value of a reading of Baudelaire is that it represents an exploration of some of the darkest pits and byways of our human natures, by means of which - it is a familiar apologia but a just one - we may vicariously commit crimes and obscenities and hence purge ourselves. As with a reading of Swift, misanthropy breeds humanity. A somewhat similar process is at work, I think, in the sublimated barbarity of Robert Graves's explicitly anti-humanitarian gospel of the White Goddess. But if poets such as Flint, Monro and Edward Thomas would undoubtedly have found the satanism distasteful, we come at the central interest when we see them as nevertheless all poètes maudits, all cloches fêlées, in the sense that they seem to suffer from certain psychological or emotional wounds out of which their poetry is written, and as all confessing their pain in their poetry after Baudelaire's fashion.

To trace the pattern of romantic pathology as it exists prototypically in Baudelaire, we may start with the reference to 'poison' already noted in the culminating poem of Les Fleurs du Mal, 'Le Voyage'. Here it is the poison of death that is welcomed, and the imagery of poison is used generally by Baudelaire to denote an insidious desire, like that bred by alcohol or opium or even by evil itself, which destroys in being embraced. The breath of the loved-one (in 'Le Balcon') is itself poison: 'Et je buvais ton souffle, ô douceur! ô poison!' ⁵ The self-inflicted nature of his sufferings is explicitly admitted in 'L'Héautontimorouménos', where he exclaims: 'C'est tout mon sang, ce poison noir!'; ⁶ he chooses to suffer - Sartre's existentialist analysis seems appropriate - and the

self-pity which this allows, again like opium, is desperately indulged. There are some grounds, of course, for Mario Praz's view of this in terms of sado-masochism - 'Ennui is only the most generic aspect of the mal de siècle; its specific aspect is - sadism.'⁷ That Baudelaire explores sado-masochistic territory is obvious, and the constant equivalence of crime or evil with 'volupté' is so loudly shouted at the reader that he cannot miss it. But it is the loudness of the shouting rather than the specific sado-masochistic paraphernalia that demands interpretation in terms of pathology; the real stress of the anxiety, of the insecurity, at the root of Baudelaire's sickness is felt precisely here. Of course, self-inflicted suffering which brings with it a perverse gratification, whether we observe it in Keats, Baudelaire, Edward Thomas, or elsewhere, may be partially masochistic in character. But this does not seem to me to take us to the root of the psychopathology, and indeed we will not get to the root if we look merely at the specific in Praz's sense here. It throws only a partial light, and shows us symptoms rather than root causes (Praz's Romantic Agony is first and foremost an historical account of romantic imagery - the symptoms of obsession as they present themselves). If we want a larger illumination we must, in fact, look at the 'generic' ennui and its meanings and implications. This same poem also demonstrates, containing as it does the phrase 'victim and executioner', how Baudelaire's sense of the sameness of things is connected with the way in which he sees himself as both the sufferer and the inflicter of suffering; he himself is a mirror image of whatever is outside himself:

Je suis le sinistre miroir
Où le mégère se regarde!

The self-destructiveness is emphasised in 'La Destruction', where 'le Démon' - we know how addicts frequently see their addiction as a seducing demon - leads the poet on to 'Des plaines de l'Ennui, profondes et

désertes'.⁸ The resulting ennui is not only 'un monstre délicat', but also 'l'obscur ennemi' which, like a disease of which the source cannot be discovered, saps away the poet's life:

O douleur! ô douleur! Le Temps mange la vie,
Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le cœur
Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie!⁹

The romantic sickness is, of course, often 'obscure', as we see very clearly in the case of Edward Thomas, in the sense that the poet is unable to rationalise his sufferings, unable to assign them to a definite source. Baudelaire is plagued, too, with the same endemic dissatisfaction as Edward Thomas; if fulfilment is not found in one situation, and yet everywhere there is sameness, no fulfilment can be found anywhere. As Sartre points out, the theory of Correspondences is itself, in one light, a device to make everything seem an echo of himself,¹⁰ and if everything echoes everything else of course the result is a desolating sense of sameness.

One way in which poets in the Baudelairean line try to explain their ennui is in terms of the oppressive monotony of modern city life, which typically, however, has a fascination for them, a hold over them. Baudelaire, 'vrai Parisien' as he called himself, born in the heart of Paris and leaving it only when doing so was unavoidable, created the image of the monotonous foggy city upon which Eliot capitalised, the unreal city in which the inhabitants pursue a death-in-life existence:

Pluviôse, irrité contre la ville entière,
De son urne à grands flots verse un froid ténébreux
Aux pâles habitants du voisin cimetière
Et la mortalité sur les faubourgs brumeux.¹¹

Here we find also something of the autumnal mood which is repeated in Verlaine's 'autumn of the heart' and the crepuscular, non-Parnassian line of poetry taking its key from Baudelaire, but which reflects the larger romantic melancholy associated with self-pity and the apathetic welcoming

of decline and death. This is confirmed in Baudelaire's case in 'Chant d'Automne': 'Adieu, vive clarté de nos étés trop courts,'¹² In this instance, death is feared, while in another autumnal poem, 'La servante au grand coeur', with its overpoweringly onomatopoeic line

Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,¹³

suffering is seen as perpetuated even after death. But a necessary alternative aspect of the autumnal mood, appearing in the passage quoted above from 'Le Voyage', is the death-wish, the longing for rest, for release from the burdens of consciousness, which we have observed in earlier chapters.

We have also seen that an autumnal melancholy, a dwelling upon death, are nostalgic in character, and Baudelaire's poetry is replete with nostalgia. The preponderance in it of perfumes has nostalgic implications, since scents (it is common experience) are so often evocative of memories which in their turn are so often tinged with regret. Edward Thomas's passage in which the poet sniffs the sprig from a bush and is unable to remember its significance is highly representative. The famous 'Correspondences', though over-interpreted as a statement of Baudelaire's aesthetic principles, not only reminds us of Keats's medleys of sense-impressions, but broaches the association of these sense-impressions, scents prominent among them, with another more mysterious kind of memory:

L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles,¹⁴
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

The pattern of connections may be taken further when we place this and the Thomas passage beside Eliot's theory of imagery as intuitions emerging from the 'dark depths' of consciousness:

.....such memories may have a symbolic value, but of
what we cannot tell, for they come to represent the
depths of feeling into which we cannot peer.¹⁵

A mixture of regret and desire is as sensuously cherished in Baudelaire's

poetry as in Keats's or Thomas's; in the prose-poem 'La Chambre Double' Baudelaire dreams of a room where 'L'âme y prend un bain de paresse aromatisé par le regret et le désir.'¹⁶ This mingling of emotions within the suspended state of a dream, this 'bath of idleness', represents the sort of lingering, the recalcitrance towards action, which we recognise as Keatsian, and which is more generally an aspect of the romantic artist's isolation. 'Il devient flottant,' says Sartre of Baudelaire, 'il se laisse balloter par ses vague monotones', and one cannot object to his verdict that 'Personne n'est plus éloigné de l'action que Baudelaire.'¹⁷ His poem 'Le Cygne', or these well-known lines from 'L'Albatros' in which the poet is

Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.¹⁸

not only illustrate the insistent self-pity, but are a classic statement of the notion of the poet as exile, a special being who does not fit the society of ordinary men.

The otherness which Baudelaire's extremism is an attempt at establishing, is a bid to escape ennui, the ennui of being the same as everybody else. The quest for escape, so repeatedly imaged in this theme of 'le voyage', in his 'poésie des départs', and itself a variant of nostalgia, is clearly stated in lines such as these:

Derrière les ennuis et les vastes chagrins
Qui chargent de leur poids l'existence brumeuse,
Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse
S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins.¹⁹

We may correlate this with Keats's attempted escape in flights of the imagination; while 'L'Invitation au Voyage' is like Flint's 'Otherworld' in its fantasy of some other realm of existence where all is superior to the reality we know:

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre²⁰ et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

It is in this poem that Baudelaire speaks of 'ces vaisseaux Dont l'humeur

est vagabonde'; just as in 'Le Voyage' he asserts that 'les vrais voyageurs sont ceux-là seuls qui partent Pour partir', and addresses the 'Frères qui trouvez beau tout ce qui vient de loin', voicing the endemic rootlessness, the unfathomable dissatisfaction – the travellers do not know why they depart – with the here and now, in association with nostalgia, of which 'poésie des départs' is an expression. Critics have always noted that this poet who wrote persistently of voyages and distant places never himself made a journey if he could avoid it, a fact which decisively illustrates the unreality, the deliberate fantasy, of the whole affair. The notorious and extreme literary example of this mentality is, of course, Huysmans's *Des Esseintes*. How explicitly artificial the much-observed artificial paradises are can be seen in such poems as the appropriately titled 'Moesta et Errabunda':

Comme vous êtes loin, paradis parfumé,
Où sous un clair azur tout n'est qu'amour et joie,
Où tout ce que l'on aime est digne d'être aimé,
Où dans la volupté pure le cœur se noie!²¹
Comme vous êtes loin, paradis parfumé!

A required yearning effect is contrived in the repeated line and the triple 'où'; the fourth line gives us again the Keatsian drowning in voluptuous sensations; while Flint's *Otherworld* is similarly a place where it is easy to love and where the sky appears to be always blue. The fantasy paradise evoked in 'A Une Malabaraise' reminds us that Baudelaire, when in fact bound for India, cut short his journey and returned to Paris:

Tout le jour, où tu veux, tu mènes tes pieds nus,²²
Et fredonnes tout bas de vieux airs inconnus;

To have allowed himself a glimpse of the reality of India would surely have disallowed such high-Romantic illusions of the noble savage pursuing an idyllic existence untouched by civilisation. That other favoured form of artificially-induced release from reality, the drugged or dream-like state of being, is no less prominent in Baudelaire. Cats are described as like

'Des grands sphinx.....Qui semblent s'endormir dans un rêve sans fin'.²³

This poetry often seems gravitating towards 'un rêve sans fin', and the intoxication which for Baudelaire was all-important, though it may be induced by any available means, was usually sought in the imagination, alcohol, or drugs. In 'La Chambre Double' he speaks of 'ce parfum d'un autre monde, dont je m'enivrais avec une sensibilité perfectionnée' (un autre monde - Flint's phrase exactly), and in another prose-poem, 'Enivrez-vous', he asserts:

Il faut être toujours ivre. Tout est là: c'est l'unique question. Pour ne pas sentir l'horrible fardeau du Temps qui brise vos épaules et vous penche vers la terre, il faut vous enivrer sans trêve. Mais de quoi? De vin, de poésie ou de vertu, à votre²⁴ guise. Mais enivrez-vous.

Keats, Baudelaire and Thomas all took laudamum; Baudelaire wrote:

Dans ce monde étroit, mais si plein de dégoût, un seul objet connu me sourrit: la fiole de laudamum; une²⁵ vieille et terrible amie.....

It is characteristic that he should embrace a terrible friend. One of the famous passages on Poe praises him for moving his characters against violet and greenish backgrounds, and compares these to the effects created by opium - Baudelaire's celebration of such effects is a further aspect of his love of the artificial:

L'espace est approfondi par l'opium; l'opium y donne un sens magique à toutes les teintes, et fait vibrer tous les bruits avec une plus significative sonorité. Quelquefois, des échappées magnifiques, forgées de lumière et de couleur, s'ouvrent soudainement dans ses paysages, et l'on voit apparaître au fond de leurs horizons des villes orientales et des architectures, vaporisées par²⁶ la distance, où le soleil jette des pluies d'or.

Such heightened dream-like effects in Baudelaire's own poetry may be nightmarish in two ways: they may function to create the lurid atmosphere of vice, or to communicate the hallucinatory state of consciousness -

'J'ai toujours le vertige', wrote Baudelaire - attendant upon the psycho-

logical phenomenon of mixing the real and the unreal, Keats's 'Do I wake or sleep?'

From this it will be obvious that the affinities between Keats and Baudelaire are legion. The kinds of escape I have just been describing may be further seen in both poets under the aspect of that universal Romantic deity, 'Beauty'. Beauty for Baudelaire was 'another "artificial paradise" through which man can cheat his destiny', and the attitude that 'poetic creation can defeat both Time and Tedium, man's two vast enemies',²⁷ places him very close to the kind of escape by means of that beauty apprehended in the poetic imagination which Keats sought as one sort of 'amulet against the ennui'. The specifically amoral attitude of 'Hymne à la Beauté',

De Satan ou de Dieu, qu'importe? Ange ou Sirène,
Qu'importe, si tu rends, - fée aux yeux de velours,
Rythme, parfum, lueur, - ô mon unique reine! -
L'univers moins hideux et les instants moins lourds?²⁸

if more extreme in its statement, is not so far from that of Keats in, say, 'Lamia', where beauty in the form of the serpent-woman - attraction to the femme fatale is an element of romantic pathology which Keats kept largely insulated in his imagination, but to which Baudelaire submitted in real life - is cherished as a self-sufficient good. When moral good in the form of Apollonius appears, the serpent-beauty vanishes. It is only a small extension from Lamia to 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty', which, if it is 'all ye need to know' on earth, is a formulation which betrays and usurps the moral faculty. It is, of course, to Keats's credit that he finally rejected such an attitude, something which his nineteenth-century successors, who, as Leavis has put it, made 'creedal or liturgical use' of the Grecian Urn's maxim in order to justify 'art for art's sake', failed to grasp.²⁹ Baudelaire was psychologically incapable, as I shall indicate in more detail, of making such a rejection;

statements which seem to attack 'l'art pour l'art' for excluding morality do not mean what they might appear to mean. Firstly, we have to allow for a deliberate contradictoriness in Baudelaire's pronouncements which is part of his perversity; secondly, he is not saying at all that he wants art to be on the side of moral good. It doesn't matter whether art is inspired by Satan or God. It is beauty that is 'mon unique reine', and in the Journeaux Intimes, Baudelaire makes clear what sort of queen he considers her to be, as well as defining her masculine counterpart:

J'ai trouvé la définition du Beau, - de mon Beau.
C'est quelque chose d'ardent et de triste, quelque
chose d'un peu vague....Le mystère, le regret sont aussi
des caractères du Beau....et enfin (pour que j'aie le
courage d'avouer jusqu'à quel point je me sens moderne
en esthétique), le malheur...le plus parfait type de
Beauté virile est Satan....

The feminine, passive, crepuscular type of beauty fully reflects the autumnal syndrome, while the positive, virile type is only complete if it is satanist in character. Neither of these has anything to do with moral good, and despite the stress on passion, the 'ardent', it is all too plain how this can slip over into the decadence of the fin de siècle. Like Keats's maxim this sort of statement was misused, in the sense that it was made to mean something other than it means in Baudelaire's own poetry, by Baudelaire's followers; after all, what other doctrine than art for art's sake might a lover of the artificial be expected to adhere to? And yet commentators dissociate Baudelaire's work from movements brandishing that doctrine, and they are right to do so.

Baudelaire was just too large and complex an artist to be confined by such a watery doctrine; it is his large impersonality which sets 'L'Hymne à la Beauté' and his poetry as a whole above any simplistic aesthetic position of this kind. Dandyism is by its nature a pose, to compound it with satanism and sadism makes it a more striking one, and if the literary-critical concept of the mask is to have uses at all, it

must be applied to Baudelaire. In Sartre's words, 'Baudelaire a une vie morale intense',³¹ and he is only too fully conscious - every anxious rhetorical cadence and every exaggerated posture betrays this - of the moral enormity of what he is saying. His choice of evil was an affirmation of good, as T.S. Eliot has suggested. The whole point about Baudelaire's poetry is that we know, and at his profoundest level he intends us to know, that he does not mean what he says. Perhaps this appears a naive comment in view of the famous declaration near the end of his life that 'dans ce livre atroce j'ai mis tout mon coeur' and that the defences used against the censorship of Les Fleurs du Mal, that it was purely entertainment or art for art's sake, were insincere. But this posture is perfectly compatible with what I mean; of course Les Fleurs du Mal is not simply art for art's sake and of course he put all his heart into it: the only way he was able to express his heart was through the medium of a mask of such extreme perversity. Much in Yeats (who has his own kinds of perversity) has an affinity with, and perhaps its origins in, that concern with masks and artifice which, sanctioned earlier by Baudelaire, was very evident in the so-called 'decadents' of the Nineties; but this does not entitle us to consider Yeats an exponent of 'art for art's sake'. Baudelaire is a cloche fêlée, an emotional and psychological cripple, and the only way he can express his essential humanity, which from time to time betrays itself in all too human ways, is through these hugely impersonal gestures of perversity. It is the grandeur of his impersonality, reflected in the formal control and the rich precision of language, which makes Baudelaire a great poet, and allows him to range over the dark obscenities of human animality in a way that a greater moral normality would render psychologically impossible. It is this which Mario Praz insufficiently emphasises: the curious thing is Baudelaire's detachment, his objectivity - he does not talk about his sado-masochism like a man

blindly obsessed. This is what Sartre calls his 'lucidité';³² even so, Sartre's extremely stimulating and penetrating psychoanalysis of Baudelaire omits to appreciate, or perhaps for polemical reasons sets aside, the extent to which the total effect of Baudelaire's work is a moral one. Not the least of what raises his writings above the level of those of 'the divine Marquis' is that everything is so anxiously deliberate, including the elaborate construction of the apparatus of obsession itself. This is not to say that Baudelaire did not feel it in his blood; to do so, as Praz himself maintains, is not in itself abnormal; but this is not the real poison that rankles there, and what, as I have already suggested, is abnormal about Baudelaire is his systematic enlargement through act and artifice of such impulses. This is a strategy of perversity designed to gratify his ego, revenge himself on society, and yet at the same time to allow him to confess himself and be absolved, by a similar principle as in religious psychology makes greater the ecstatic sense of the all-merciful love of God the greater the sin to be forgiven, in an extremity of re-found innocence and truly Victorian moral rectitude. 'Il ne doute pas de la rédemption finale', says Sartre,³³ and depicts him as voluntarily giving in to his judges and censors. He cites the extraordinary episode of Baudelaire's attempt to get himself elected to the Académie française; here surely he was asking to be forgiven, to be welcomed back into the protecting womb of society. His praise of the Victorian uniform of black frockcoat as expressing the 'heroism of modern life', while presented as a refinement of dandyism, is surely indicative of an underlying desire - other telling examples can be adduced - for a rigidly imposed moral discipline:

N'est il pas l'habit nécessaire de notre époque,

souffrante et portant jusque sur ses épaules noires
et maigres le symbole d'un deuil perpétuel?³⁴

What Baudelaire seeks is to be accepted back into a state of total dependence, where society, a surrogate parent, will take full moral responsibility in the form of a sternly imposed rectitude; this desire - I choose the metaphor of a protecting womb deliberately - is merely a peculiar variant of the insistent nostalgia. His egocentric immaturity, his inability to responsibly shape and direct his experience towards meaningful ends, blocked him off from finding the satisfactions which might offset ennui. The 'real poison that rankles' is that of a desperate maladjustment to reality, a pathological insecurity, and the perversity is the only mask by means of which such intensely painful states can become mentally recognised by the sufferer, can be objectified and communicated.

All this being so, it is possible to suggest similar sources of the kind of psychological malady we can diagnose in Keats and more extremely in Baudelaire. Leon Waldoff has claimed that a good deal in Keats's poetry should be interpreted in the light of 'abandonment' - the sense Keats experienced in early life of having been abandoned when his father died and his mother immediately remarried,³⁵ a consequence of which, among other things, was his almost excessive craving for affection. Baudelaire, as we know, experienced something similar when a child: the affectionate life shared for eighteen months with his mother after the death of his father and always afterwards remembered with profound nostalgia, to be followed by the shattering sense of rejection when his mother remarried and he was sent to boarding schools. It does not require elaborate psychoanalysis to see what this does to an innately sensitive and affectionate nature. His sense of himself as the centre of the universe had been nurtured and allowed to blossom, only to be cut down with drastic suddenness before it could be grown out of in the natural process of maturing.

The masochistic desire to be punished, and the wish to be forgiven and welcomed back, are clearly a tortured expression of a craving for affection like Keats's, compounded with the sense of guilt which is always induced by rejection in childhood. There repeatedly breaks through everything a capacity for devotion, whether to his mother, his women-friends, or certain of his male friends, which again reminds us of Keats. It suggests qualities of character, against which the odds were too great. His poverty and persecutions in later life, if brought upon his own head, were real, and even in the elaborate strategy of perversity I have described, he was building the best defences he could. That there was such a conscious effort to build defences may be seen from the architecture of Les Fleurs du Mal. Each structural division may be interpreted as an attempt to counter or escape ennui by a particular device: by the ideals of the imagination - poetic beauty or the love of women - in 'Spleen et Idéal', by the celebration of the city including its depravity ('Tableaux Parisiens'), intoxication ('Le Vin'), vice ('Fleurs du Mal'), revolt against God ('Révolte'), or finally death ('La Mort'). The end at which it was all directed was not ignoble: the end was the defeat of ennui, the successful management of experience. This is no different from Keats; neither could resist the inroads of physical illness, even if there is a sense in which Baudelaire's illness could be regarded as self-inflicted, but the various forms of escape which each contrived must be seen, in such ultra-sensitive men, as essential to make life tolerable. And just as Keats idealised women and to some extent his male friends (it is worth noting that at the other pole of things Hardy never idealised people), Baudelaire had to carry his emotional responses to extremes; he had to either worship or feel disgust for people. Or rather, he had to do both simultaneously; his relationships with his mother, Jeanne Duval, his other women-friends, and his step-father, are saturated

with this duality. That he was incapable of a normal mature relationship may be easily explained by the emotional crippling I have described; in 'Chant d'Automne' he asks Marie Daubrun to be mother, mistress or sister, and he could never quite sort out one of these kinds of feminine love from another. He may not technically have been 'a virgin' despite Nadar's contention - his syphilis is cited as evidence against this - but there can be no doubt that he found normal sexuality unbearable and preserved a symbolic virginity as part of the spiritually intact state his perverse egotism prescribed, something akin, as we shall see shortly, to the schizoid's fear of giving himself away.

The veering between worship and disgust, like that between rebellion and submission, or between the states of victim and executioner, and indeed the co-existence of the two states, will by this point in my study easily fall into place in the pattern. The 'bath of idleness', the indisposition towards action, and a vacillation between opposites, never choosing one or the other or a sensible middle course, will be seen as typical. 'Avec ses défauts réels, la paresse et la "procrastination"', says Sartre,³⁶ 'il ne plaisante pas du tout' - his real defects, that is, as against his artificial ones, the flowers of evil cultivated in his algolagniac hothouse. Passages in letters by Keats, Coleridge or by Edward Thomas to which I have already referred exactly correspond with this from Baudelaire's much-quoted letter to his mother written on 9 July 1857:

Quant à mon silence, n'en cherchez pas la raison ailleurs que dans une de ces langueurs qui, à mon grand déshonneur, s'emparent quelquefois de moi et m'empêchent non seulement de me livrer à aucun travail, mais même³⁷ de remplir les plus simples des devoirs.

Such confessions emerge from a characteristic state of tension between indulged self-pity, and self-censure genuinely directed towards reform or at least the sought-after forgiveness and re-acceptance. Yet they

are the genuine cry of the abouliac who cannot by any means shake himself free of his paralysed isolation. I have amply noted in my subjects indecision, vacillation, procrastination as a result of a chronic and paralysing introspection. It may not be an exaggeration to say that at bottom we are dealing with schizoid personalities, though in most cases the hold upon reality is sufficient to constitute sanity for all ordinary purposes - indeed, it may be the very capacity to imaginatively project the schizoid feelings into art that acts as a safety valve, that saves the man. Heaven and hell, I noted above, are in a sense the same for Baudelaire, and the co-presence for him of contraries is recorded in such statements as this in Mon Coeur Mis à Nu:

Tout enfant, j'ai senti dans mon coeur deux sentiments
contradictaires: l'horreur de la vie et l'extase de
la vie. 38

Again this could be Keats; it is this simultaneous awareness of contradictory feelings and impulses that produces the paralysis in such a psychological make-up. True, it may also lead to 'negative capability', and it might, indeed, be argued that Baudelaire too, in that large impersonality of his, presents a case of negative capability.

I do not wish to blur the real differences between Keats and Baudelaire; suggestions in my previous chapter set them, in one sense, at opposite poles: Keats the lover of nature, Baudelaire the devotee of the city and the artificial. There is something different about the drowning in sensuousness and the dream-like evocations in each poet. Baudelaire, like his disciple T.S. Eliot, lacks spontaneity (it is part of the case for his poetry as mask); he aims at these states more calculatedly, more consciously contrives them by art and artifice, than Keats. Keats did not pose - it was not in his ingenuous nature to do so. Behind his work there is a naturalness, a vital mental health despite the opposite tendencies, a normality in the response to experience,

which is lacking behind that of Baudelaire or Eliot. He did not shy away from life, as it can be said that they did; there is a sense in which each of those was patently ascetic in temper, which Keats was far from being. The slightly prurient feverishness of his treatment of the various lovers in his poetry adds support to the theory that he was a virgin, but we cannot believe he would have remained one had he recovered from his illness and been able to grow out of adolescence in a normal way; whereas the repulsiveness of sex is a persistent theme in the poetry of Baudelaire and Eliot. Yet, if the differences are important, they exist within a larger unity. For one thing, I hardly need point out that Keats was as highly conscious as Baudelaire of the problematical dichotomy of art and nature. And though there are bound to be differences of emphasis between any two poets however strong the affinities - after all, Keats and Baudelaire are each great original talents - the states of mind and feeling I have described are as fully there in Baudelaire's poetry as they are in Keats's, while they exist in Keats's poetry as responses to a sense of the ennui of existence just as they do in Baudelaire's.

A problem which troubled Keats throughout his brief creative life was how to reconcile the pursuit of poetic 'beauty' with humanitarian concern for others. This preoccupation is early announced in the figure of Glaucus as well as elsewhere in Endymion, and is asserted by Keats in his 'I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world';³⁹ it comes to a head in The Fall of Hyperion:

'The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
The one pours out a balm upon the World,⁴⁰
The other vexes it.'

The problem does not present itself to Baudelaire in terms such as these. Indeed, his concept of beauty as independent of moral good is an attempt

to bypass the problem altogether; Baudelaire would have us believe that since the active and the useful are outside the poet's province, and since only creation matters, the creation of flowers of evil is just as valid as that of flowers of good. The poet may intoxicate himself with virtue if he wishes, but this is dandyism, divorcing virtue from any usefulness, any practical application, and turning it into an elaborate artifice. In 1848 Baudelaire tried to express social concern of a 'normal' kind by engaging in revolutionary activities, but then turned more and more towards the kind of reactionary, anti-liberal-humanist attitudes which have so conspicuously marked some of his modernist successors. He was a reactionary because he could not bear to face the reality of a time-bound and changing present; a timeless past became sacrosanct for him as it has done for some of these successors. T.E. Hulme in particular was responsible for the philosophical mediation of these attitudes to English poetry, but Baudelaire already existed as a precedent. I think we can say that Keats's - or Hardy's - liberalism has by now established itself as by far the more necessary inheritance, but Baudelaire was psychologically unable to express himself in any such way as Keats. Like so much else, of course, this was a pose: he did not mean what he said. Sartre's words are very pertinent: 'Et Baudelaire, qui hait l'homme et la "tyrannie de la face humaine", se retrouve humaniste par son culte de l'oeuvre humaine.'⁴¹ I have already talked about the strategy of impersonal perversity which is a cover, a mask, for his essential humanity; it was part of this that the difference, the apartness of the poet from other members of society had to be vastly exaggerated. In fact, Keats and Baudelaire were occupied with the same problem - the poet's role, or fate, in society, and they saw it in a similar way. One of Baudelaire's clearest statements of this is his 'Bénédiction', where the poet, persecuted in the world, turns his eyes towards heaven and

procures a mystic vision which contains all the seeds of that superior spiritual state sought by the English Aesthetes and the French Symbolists:

Vers le Ciel, où son oeil voit un trône splendide,
Le Poète serein lève ses bras pieux,
Et les vastes éclairs de son esprit lucide⁴²
Lui dérobent l'aspect des peuples furieux:

The poem might provide an exact text for Kermode's remarks about the romantic artist's sense that he is made different by his suffering and uniquely compensated: 'Je sais que la douleur est la noblesse unique'; the poet is depicted as gaining through suffering a 'mystic crown' of which the beauties of the ordinary human and physical worlds are mere shadows - itself to become a standard Symbolist notion. This idea that certain select individuals can attain through suffering a mystic vision of truth and felicity is closely paralleled by the mystic vision of Keats's Fall of Hyperion:

'Holy Power,'
Cried I, approaching near the horned shrine,
'What am I that should so be saved from death?'⁴³

The sense of the cost of the vision in terms of the poet's suffering is the same in both, though Keats directly relates his own suffering to that of suffering humanity, and expresses a sense of unworthiness which would be out of character for Baudelaire. But what in The Fall of Hyperion is represented as 'the giant agony of the world',⁴⁴ the expression of the spectacle of suffering humanity of which Stanza III of the Nightingale Ode provides a touchstone, is what at its profoundest level Baudelaire's poetry also is really about. The suffering in it is real; the mystic crown is a fantasy, it exists in an artificial paradise, even if it may be read as a metaphor for the joy of imaginative creation, and it is simply an attempt to avoid the recognition that the poet shares in the common lot of humanity. Of course, there is a sense in which this is obvious: any poem in which the poet utters his pain is something with which other

people are likely to be able to identify in one way or another. But Baudelaire is, in addition, a large enough poet to be able to express in compelling forms and language pain which is highly representative - representative, moreover, of a new kind of sensibility coming into being at the historical juncture at which he wrote, a modern sensibility. He may feel different, he appears to himself to suffer exceptionally, because he is afflicted by the problem of acute consciousness, made worse in Baudelaire's case by his extreme egotism. But the sort of thing that so seminally broaches the pain of modern man and the compulsive themes of the modern writer amid his technologies and bureaucracies and autocracies is intimated in one of his favourite words, 'gouffre' - the abyss. A full discussion of this would lead us into a separate study, but one only need turn to the poem 'Le Gouffre' or to Baudelaire's entry in the Journaux which is a kind of gloss upon the poem, where he says 'j'ai toujours le vertige',⁴⁵ to see the sort of bearing it has. It proclaims the tortured modern consciousness, Kafkaesque, Eliotish, or what you will: vertiginous because it can gain no firm hold. And the intimation of madness, tacit in the poem and direct in the journal note, is that of a minor Lear who cannot bear so much suffering.

However, there is something further to be said about The Fall of Hyperion. I have earlier suggested, indeed, that the new induction which Keats added in revising his older poem records the process of his triumph over the circumstances of his life and the debilitating tendencies of his own character. It may be read, that is, as an account of the struggle to overcome ennui:

I heard, I lock'd: two senses both at once,
So fine, so subtle, felt the tyranny
Of that fierce threat and the hard task proposed.
Prodigious seem'd the toil....

I shriek'd, and the sharp anguish of my shriek
Stung my own ears - I strove hard to escape
The numbness; strove to gain the lowest step.⁴⁶

Though represented specifically as the trial the poet has to undergo before he may set eyes upon the holy Moneta, there is ample justification, I think, for reading this as the toil - the agony, indeed - which must be undertaken in order to defeat the paralysing and drugging effect of ennui, that numbness of the will so frequently recorded by Keats and Baudelaire. It is the process by which Keats, one of those

Who love their fellows even to the death,⁴⁷
Who feel the giant agony of the world,

overcomes mere self-pity, transcends it to a vision of compassion for the whole of humanity. Now, although there is a sense in which Baudelaire's knowledge of evil and suffering is more comprehensive than Keats's, in that there are dark corners of the human psyche which he explored with greater thoroughness, he never achieved this transcendence of ennui and self-pity. It may be claimed that Baudelaire did triumph through the architectural power of his imagination - he controlled and organised the chaos of his experience through art and gave it the meaning of form. The trouble with this sort of argument is that it ultimately lands us back with art for art's sake. Form is a medium as well as an end: there has to be a further dimension, a lived moral triumph embodied in the medium of form. Baudelaire built his defences, certainly, but the psychological damage seems to have been more thoroughly incapacitating than it was for Keats. It may be that Baudelaire 'obstinately believed that the world had an inherent meaning or meanings',⁴⁸ or that in Eliot's words he travelled 'in the direction of beatitude', but he did not arrive either at meaning or beatitude. He was too severely crippled to be able to climb those terrible steps which Keats battled up in The Fall.

As much as anything else, Baudelaire's confessional statement of personal pain and weakness is what he bequeathes to modern poetry. Keats is less exclusively and openly a poet of confession, but certainly his

work might bear the inscription, 'Mon coeur mis à nu': he was not, if I may augment my point with a statement of the obvious, a poet of classical restraint. His Hellenizing (like that of the German Romantics and in keeping with a general Romantic situation) is itself a reflection of his conflict with the world around him, and has nothing to do with a classical outlook. The Fall, indeed, may be seen in a further aspect as a kind of confession and absolution before the all-knowing and all-seeing 'Shade of Memory'; while many of his letters are openly in a confessional vein. It is no accident, of course, that Rousseau wrote in the form of 'Confessions'; as I suggest in my Introduction, confession, the attempt to tell the utter truth about the self, is a Romantic mode; classical poets do not confess themselves, they lash or mock the follies of the world. Baudelaire lashes and mocks himself - mocks in the sense of rubbing his own face in the irony, as he calls it, of his existence; in a manner that was to become thoroughly congenial to the modern sensibility:

J'ai souvent évoqué cette lune enchantée,
Ce silence et cette langueur,
Et cette confidence horrible chuchotée⁴⁹
Au confessional du coeur.

Though this depicts the poet's mistress confessing to him, it is perfectly clear that the 'confidence horrible chuchotée Au confessional du coeur' is what stands directly at the centre of Baudelaire's poetry, and the accompanying atmosphere of moonlit languor connotes exactly that debilitation of the will which makes action an unavailable option, and hence confession the only alternative. How far must this be associated with the lapsed and re-sought Catholicism which commentaries often make much of? We have seen how strong is the submerged current in his writings towards forgiveness. However, it is too easy to slip from here to the notion of salvation in the Christian sense; there is no evidence that in any

mature or authentic spiritual sense it entered into Baudelaire's scheme of things. He remains the pettish child seeking to be absolved of responsibility for some misdeed, seeking a re-endorsement of a sublime state of egotism. Critics have remarked upon the total lack of reference to Christ in his work, and this leads us to a crucial point: there was to be no room for a divine intermediary, nobody was going to steal the show from him, taking the venom out of his sins - it was to be forgiveness which recognised his 'otherness', solely and uniquely for him, for the unique enormity of his sins, or none at all. Salvation, by definition, requires a relinquishing of pride; Baudelaire would as soon go to the devil, and if heaven could not recognise his merit, the devil would certainly be honoured to receive him. This brings us to another necessary qualification: if Baudelaire is an initiator of confessional poetry, it can nevertheless wear a face other than that of pride and egotism painted by him; it may, like Christian salvation, be democratic in its implications, chastening and levelling. This face of the confessional mode has found favour amongst poets as the present century has progressed. All this being so, it remains to be said that no doubt some desire for absolution, whether Christian or not, lies behind all confessional poetry: there is little point in confessing unless it brings some relief, exorcising or setting aside in some way the pain and guilt which has haunted one. As Rousseau explained: 'The most that I could do was to confess that I had a terrible deed on my conscience, but I have never said in what it consisted. The burden, therefore, has rested till this day on my conscience without any relief; and I can affirm that the desire to some extent to rid myself of it has greatly contributed to my resolution of writing these Confessions.'⁵⁰ This allows the possibility that confessions may be of some effect in combating ennui. Indeed, the confession often has to be made because the monster Ennui saps the very will to resist,

so that the only way to slip from its clutches is by mystic absolution - by faith, by the right form of words, rather than by works of which the victim is incapable.

Donald Davie has made connections between some poems of Thomas Hardy's and the kind of confessional poetry which has received a certain fashionable attention in recent years. Of these poems he says:

They are of a sort that is nowadays called 'confessional', and often esteemed very highly. Indeed, we sometimes hear it said that such poetry, which seems to have been written immediately out of the jangle of agonized nerves, is the only poetry that nowadays we can afford to attend to. There are those of us who cannot agree, for whom such confessional poetry is a valid and valuable kind but not the highest. In Hardy's generation Patmore, a headstrong and too fervent critic, nevertheless makes the case for us in his essay, 'Emotional Art', (Essay V of Principle in Art), when he insists, traditionally enough, on the importance for high art of repose - something that confessional poetry by its nature cannot attain to. Thus, to call these poems 'painful' is to⁵¹ recognize their achievement but also to limit it.

The importance of such 'repose', and that Keats attained it in 'To Autumn', is something I have already argued. Turning to Hardy's 'My Spirit Will Not Haunt the Mound', Davie expands his point:

The completeness of loss, the irremediable finality of it, is insisted on no less in this poem than in others more painful; the fact of its being irremediable, which is the source of the pain, is also, paradoxically, the reason for repose. The poem recognises this paradox,⁵² as the more painful poems do not....

'Poetry....which seems to have been written immediately out of the jangle of agonized nerves' is, however, exactly what we recognise in the poetry emerging from the sensibility afflicted by ennui. Later in his book Davie comments on Kenneth Rexroth's Introduction to his Selected Poems of D.H. Lawrence:

....Lawrence is sincere by virtue of the fact that the 'I' in his poems is always directly and immediately himself....Confessional poetry, of its nature and necessarily, is superior to dramatic or histrionic poetry; a poem in which the 'I' stands immediately and unequivocally for the author is....superior to a poem

in which the 'I' stands not for the author but for a
 persona of the author's - this is what Rexroth asks us
 to believe. ⁵³

Davie argues that Rexroth is misleading us; I think so too, not least because what is clear to me, and I hope emerges in this study, is that we can have confessional poetry which is at the same time impersonal, which is dramatic or histrionic and in which the author adopts a persona. Baudelaire, indeed, fits such a category exactly. I have already argued that he persistently adopts a mask in his poetry (as well as in his life), and that it is his impersonality, precisely as with Eliot, that combines with his ear and his tremendous sense of language to make him a great poet; while 'histrionic' seems to me as apt a word as any we could find to apply to his poetry. His asserted belief in dandyism and artificiality amply confirms this. I do not mean, of course, that his suffering, or his sense of human corruption, are not real and personal; I mean that the attitudes he adopts in order to communicate these are detached and calculated, even if generated, as I have contended, by psychological necessity. Yet he deals with the same material as Lawrence, in a way expressly approved by Lawrence in 1911:

With Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Verhaeren, poetry seems to have broken out afresh, like a new crater. These men take life welling out hot and primitive, ³⁴ molten fire, or mud, or smoke, or strange vapours.

His hothouse flowers of evil may be painstakingly cultivated, but the seedlings spring from the molten fire of the human animal instincts, germinate amid the strange vapours which are only variant, or 'deviant', emissions from the primitive energies of life: how else do we explain, when all has been said about their artificial and fantastic forms, the compelling power of Baudelaire's images, except to say that we recognise somewhere at their source, the real?

We know that T.S. Eliot took Baudelaire as one of his models. With few speaking voices in a poem can one more obviously demonstrate to students

what is meant by the term 'dramatic persona' than with J. Alfred Prufrock - the 'I' of the poem is emphatically not T.S. Eliot. And yet Eliot is a confessional poet. He turns the self-mockery and self-confession of the dramatic persona, Prufrock, against himself, so that he is both classically impersonal and ironic, and personally confessional at the same time. The kind of richness which this can give a poem was a new adventure in the poetic, and was a mark of Eliot's originality. However, where Baudelaire's confession is a mask for something other than what he actually confesses, for something he wants to say but cannot bear to face directly, Eliot masks the fact that he is confessing at all, and went so far as to construct an elaborate aesthetic, a theory of impersonality in poetry, to support this. Without question he does achieve in his poetry, through the use of various devices of generalisation and distancing, an impersonal dimension, a generality of statement about the predicament of modern man - for at least two or three decades of the present century readers felt that he spoke more directly to their condition than almost any other poet. But objectively interesting and valuable as his theory of impersonality is, it has always been possible, and even obligatory, to read Eliot's oeuvre as not only expressing very personal predilections and even prejudices, but also as forming a 'spiritual autobiography' of a very personal nature. Impersonality for Eliot 'is a direction inward, not outward', says C.K. Stead.⁵⁵ Valerie Eliot's edition of the drafts of The Waste Land has started, just when it seemed that everything had been said about Eliot, something of a new departure in Eliot commentary, well represented by an article such as George Whiteside's 'T.S. Eliot: The Psychobiographical Approach'.⁵⁶ This approach only serves to confirm the impression that Eliot's poetry is deeply rooted in his personal problems - not least his sexual ones - and is moreover the record of a somewhat abnormal response to experience. 'Readers now

began to see the poem,' writes Whiteside, 'as what it plainly is: an outburst of anguish (about his life, wife, sexual urges, schizoid feelings) from a man in the midst of a nervous breakdown, an emotional "aboulie",' and he goes on to diagnose a 'relatively stabilized schizoid personality'.⁵⁷ An earlier 'psychobiographical' interpretation, by John Peter, saw The Waste Land as a sort of modern In Memoriam; Peter thought the poem was about a young man, with whom the speaker had been in love, who soon afterwards met his death by drowning.⁵⁸ Whiteside prefers to speak in terms of 'Eliot's sexual fear and his schizoid feeling', and has the advantage over Peter of being able to draw for support on the published drafts. In any case, Eliot, we now know, was, like Keats and Baudelaire, victim of a psychological wounding. How otherwise are we to account for the recurrent emphasis on the horror in his work? The protagonists in his poems (insofar as we can locate protagonists) seem to experience some unimaginable psychic horror for which nothing concretely realised in the poetry gives an adequate warrant; it is much like the situation Eliot describes in his own essay on Hamlet, where he speaks of emotions in excess of any conceivable object of them. The impersonal mask, Whiteside makes clear, can be explained in some such terms as these:

The reason for his evasiveness is already implied by him here [in a passage from a broadcast given by Eliot]: as a poet he felt impelled to express his private experience honestly; but as a man of extreme reserve he was compelled to express 'without giving himself away.' The phrasing is significant: he had the schizoid's feeling that he literally would be giving away his self if he should exercise complete openness.⁵⁹

Although Eliot tries, with a baffling array of devices aimed at impersonality, not to give himself away, The Waste Land is 'written immediately out of the jangle of agonized nerves', and his subsequent poetry is the record of his 'toil' to find repose - to discover an effective amulet against the ennui, a workable sanity through which life may be lived in

the face of despair. In other words, like that of Keats and Baudelaire, his poetry confesses his pain and weakness and details his attempt to build the best defences he can. While The Waste Land is certainly the dominating poem of its period, and in its intellectual power, the potency of its images, and its sheer verbal dexterity, a remarkable work, I have never been convinced either of its 'success' as the coherent imaginative structure its commentators have tried to prove it, or of its coherence in another sense, as a statement about something - whether about the spiritual aridity of modern civilisation or whatever it is about. It remains, I think, an assemblage of brilliant fragments, which as fragments often convey essential moods of present-day man, essential insights into his anguish. To say this after all the volumes and articles is not to put us back to square one; it can only be said at the end of a process and not at the beginning. On the other hand, we have really got nowhere by claiming that the poem's fragmentariness is its aesthetic justification because it is a statement of fragmentariness. Again, the spiritual quest culminating in Four Quartets, though the later poems display a more strongly marked-out unity and organisation, never convinces me that a properly satisfying spiritual vision or mystical insight has been achieved; it seems to me a radical inadequacy that we are not offered any convincing compensation - there is no more than occasional hints of 'beatitude' - for the spiritual discipline, the renunciation of the sensuous and phenomenal world, we are asked to make. Indeed, this renunciation only really makes sense if we read it as a personal solution to a personal problem, forced upon Eliot by particular psychological compulsions. Taking The Waste Land together with Eliot's subsequent oeuvre, the real achievement is that of a man persisting in his struggle with, and never capitulating in the face of, the adverse circumstances of his life and his own psychological disposition; it is in this sense

that his poetry is confessional, as well as comparable with that of Keats or Baudelaire:

....his theory of the impersonal nature of art....is obviously the aesthetic of a suffering man. Eliot has a positive terror of personality, including his own, and the overpowering discipline of a literary tradition is his refuge from it. 60

Discipline is what he, like the other poets considered in this study, had to have if he was to remain a normal or useful member of society. He sought this discipline in tradition and orthodoxy, and achieved, at least in moments, something of the repose we have seen as desirable. Reading his poetry in this way, his own comment on Matthew Arnold becomes most significant:

It is not to say that Arnold's work was vain if we say that it is to be done again; for we must know in advance, if we are prepared for that conflict, that the combat may have truces but never a peace. If we take the widest and wisest view of a Cause, there is no such thing as a Gained Cause. We fight for lost causes because we know that our defeat and dismay may be the preface to our successors' victory, though that victory itself will be temporary; we fight rather to keep something alive than in the expectation that anything will triumph. 61

This comment, set beside The Four Quartets:

There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under
conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor
loss.
For us, there is only the trying.⁶² The rest is not our
business.

can be seen to possess an essential unity of conviction and preoccupation with that work; and to have noted this kind of battle in the poetry of Eliot, no less than in that of Keats and Baudelaire, brings me to a point where I may attempt to survey and elucidate, in the remaining part of this chapter, the significant connections between confession, the struggle against ennui, and the problem of acute consciousness.

In my previous chapter I indicated some affinities as poets between

F.S. Flint and D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence can be taken as a poet who is 'sincere by virtue of the fact that the "I" in his poems is always directly and immediately himself'. Flint, I have recorded, thought sincerity the first requirement of poetry, and when Lawrence in 1916 stated an ideal of directness of statement in poetry he accorded not only with Flint's own views but with a widespread current tendency:

The essence of poetry with us in this age of stark and unlovely actualities is a stark directness, without a shadow of a life, or a shadow of deflection anywhere. Everything can go, but this stark, bare, rocky directness of statement, this alone makes poetry, to-day.⁶³

That this is the basis of the confessional mode, and that it is a response to the ennui of 'this age of stark and unlovely actualities', is obvious enough, but equally so is that as an aesthetic, it is limited. The Imagists in the Preface to Some Imagist Poets 1915 announced 'that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities', and wished 'To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.' Pound's A Few Don'ts by an Imagist included 'Direct treatment of the "thing", and his Vorticist doctrine demanded a poetry 'austere, direct, free from emotional slither.' Flint admired 'the natural tone which is much the most agreeable thing in poetry',⁶⁴ and (in H.D.'s poetry) a form which 'is a natural one, moulded only to the original bent and curve of the writer's mind.'⁶⁵ Reviewing A Boy's Will, he said of Robert Frost's poems:

It is the simplicity which is the great charm of this book, and it is a simplicity that proceeds from a candid heart.....I have tried to find in these poems what is most characteristic of Mr. Frost's poetry, and I think it is this: direct observation of the object and immediate correlation with the emotion - spontaneity, subtlety in the evocation of moods, humour, an ear for silences. But behind all this is the heart and life of a man.....⁶⁶

Writing at a later date Flint would no doubt have seen the elements of detachment and mask in Frost's poetry - he can already note 'subtlety' and 'humour'. What these comments on Frost in fact imply is that poetry

of a confessional naturalness and candour (though I doubt whether Frost may be considered a 'confessional poet' in any real sense of the term) can be achieved without going so far as the limiting 'stark, bare, rocky directness of statement' of Lawrence's aesthetic; or for that matter, without confining oneself to the limitations of strict Imagism.

In Flint's poem 'Loneliness' the feeling is stated with prose directness and plainness; though there is a tenuous musicality, the mode mineur:

I live among men,
walking beside them, sitting beside them,
talking with them, or aloof from them,
listening to their footsteps, how they beat
below on the pavements, how they will beat
until....

until the last wind has gathered the last leaf,
and silence has gathered the wind, -
no eyes to see, no ears to hear,
the world dead.

I have known this man and that,
and each has taken something from me,
robbed me of my beliefs and trusts, -
nobility, honour, truth.
I held them simply,
thought each man's heart their pyx,
and what has come of it?
Not bitterness....I am not bitter.
Not disillusion, for I must have always known.
Not anger....How can I be angry?
Nor contempt....Contempt?
But loneliness; I am lonely,
having no fellow.
I am the last leaf
the last wind has not gathered,
in the world I see, the world I hear,⁶⁷
and silence has not come.

There is always in Flint, even in his sense of apartness, a contrary feeling of identification with the common lot, which is quite unBaudelairean. Flint's attitude towards society is not the aggressive opposition to society which has often characterised the modern artist:

The artist, it cannot be too clearly understood, has
no more part in society than a monk in domestic life....
It is the poet against society, society against the
poet....⁶⁸

In this respect Flint is not so close to the Imagists as to Harold Monro and the Georgians, who, in C.K. Stead's words, 'never adopted the attitude which Pound and the Imagists found to be essential if they were to remain free of hampering influences - the attitude which insisted "the public can go to the devil".'⁶⁹ 'Not bitterness....Not disillusion....Not anger....Nor contempt' separates Flint from the artistic élitism and the anti-democratic attitudes of some modernists, and from the easy 'contempt', noted in Chapter 3, of his friend Richard Aldington. In the transition from these assertions, through the self-scrutinising 'Contempt?', to 'I am lonely', and the change of pitch which accompanies it, the poet seems precariously poised above a void; yet even in the painfulness of this, there is a hint of tenderness for those 'men' from whom he is set apart. 'I hold them simply', he says, and this is the 'simplicity which proceeds from a candid heart'; for Flint, his heart really was his pyx. Here is a man talking directly at you without any intervening presumptions or pomposities, and who acknowledges his common humanity in a way Baudelaire and Eliot are unable to do, yet, at the same time, beneath the simplicity and directness of statement there is a painful introspection and self-consciousness which place Flint centrally in relation to the kind of confessional poetry we are discussing.

Flint brings us back to the horns of Keats's dilemma, humanitarian concern and poetic beauty, and in him we witness this taking on its twentieth-century form - the alienated artist, jealous of his artistic integrity, who yet feels an acute need for social commitment. 'Loneliness', indeed, exhibits the characteristics of this: the poet, a town-dweller, confesses his sense of ennui and isolation, each exacerbating the other. In this poem as in much of Flint's work it is clear enough that the ennui is a sense of futility at the core of existence vitiating all

positive activity: life is boring not so much because 'there is no new thing under the sun', but because nothing one does appears to bring one closer to other human beings - 'what has come of it?...I am lonely, / having no fellow', or to bring satisfactions or fulfilments consonant with the effort. Hence Baudelaire's picture of himself as 'La Cloche Fêlée' -

Au bord d'un lac de sang, sous un grand tas de morts,⁷⁰
Et qui meurt, sans bouger, dans d'immenses efforts.

- an ultimate expression of isolation and futility. What ennui really is, as we saw in Chapter 4, is Vildrac's 'life consumed in unfulfilment'. It is as a consequence of his sense of this that the artist, in his acute consciousness, suffers paralysis, and is incapacitated from committing himself to the utilitarian vision of social good; he is cut off, as Kermode puts it, from 'the normal human orientation towards action':

Paralysed force, gesture without motion

Eliot's hollow men may well be taken as emblematic in this way, since Eliot so centrally mediates this sensibility-complex to our own century, as well as himself suffering, at least at one point in his creative life, from 'an emotional "aboulie"'. His acknowledgement of a large debt to Laforgue, whom he called Baudelaire's 'minor successor', is well known, and his hollow men are heirs of Laforgue's helpless, paralysed, alienated Pierrots, which themselves inherit Baudelaire's dandyism, and inhabit a world of moonlit torpor:

Encore un de mes pierrots mort;
Mort d'un chronique orphelinisme;
C'était un cœur plein de dandysme,⁷¹
Lunaire, en un drôle de corps;

There is something of Laforgue's Pierrots, the indulged wistfulness, the self-scrutiny, the attenuated plaintive voice, the mixture of naivety and knowing world-weariness, in Flint's own version of himself as presented

in his poems; even a touch of 'dandysme lunaire', a trace of the 'drôle de corps':

Pardon me, maidens,
all you whose bosoms
my arms might have encircled,

.....

I have only bawdy thoughts,
and the wind of March,
and no leaves on the trees.....
for company, my fitful shadow⁷²
cast by the arc-lamps.

There is a kinship, too - as there is in the 'vacillating clerk' of
Monro's 'Suburb' - with Prufrock; 'Regret' and 'Loneliness' are good
examples of poems in which we can see Romantic-Symbolist feeling
developing through Laforguean fin-de-siècle weariness -

I am the last leaf
the last wind has not gathered,

- to modernity of feeling. Indeed, we may take the correlations with
Eliot a step further by tracing germs of 'The Hollow Men' in Flint's
Cadences; consider the first two strophes of 'Loneliness', or this
from 'Immortality':

Tired faces,
eyes that have never seen the world,
bodies that have never lived in air,⁷³
lips that have never minted speech,

Eliot's 'Leaning together', 'We grope together', are suggested; Eliot
catches, even, a certain likeness of phrasing and cadence:

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass.....

The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here.....

In this last of meeting places

We grope together
And avoid speech.... 74

Eliot's avoidance of Flint's directly personal manner, his more monumental phrasing, and distancingly casual allusions to Conrad and Dante, need not obscure the likenesses.

Another strain in this development of feeling takes us back to Flint's affinities with Verlaine:

C'est bien la pire peine
De ne savoir pourquoi,
Sans amour et sans haine, 75
Mon coeur a tant de peine.

However much there may be an element of pose in this, as indeed there is in Laforgue and Baudelaire, the element of 'ne savoir pourquoi', as we have already seen in Baudelaire's travellers who do not know why they depart, is central. The feeling of an ineradicable sadness which pervades Flint's verse is coupled, exactly as with the 'melancholy' of Edward Thomas, to an incapacity ever to exactly determine its source. As Praz points out, 'states of mind which cannot be described'⁷⁶ are in any case at the very core of Romantic sensibility; an intensifying sense of, and attraction to, what Rousseau called the 'je ne sais quoi' was the really new element in that general modification of sensibility which took place in the second half of the eighteenth century. Naturally this is associated with the passive and introspective temper, since the active extrovert is more likely to occupy himself with the concrete and tangible. Baudelaire defined beauty as, in effect, that which is undefined - 'quelque chose d'un peu vague'; when Thomas finds 'passivity' linked to 'morbidly of temperament' at the centre of Keats's poetry - a formulation which might equally apply to Baudelaire - he is locating the exact nature of the undefined unease which the moderns take over from Romanticism and its Symbolist offshoots, involving an inherent reluctance to rationalise the poet's predicament, or to exert the will

in the face of it. It is the paralysis of ennui. Symons, of course, translates it into a virtue, an aesthetic ideal:

The ideal of lyric poetry, certainly, is to be this passive, flawless medium for the deeper consciousness of things, the mysterious voice of that mystery which lies about us, out of which we have come, and into⁷⁷ which we shall return.

But the idea of poetry as a 'passive.....medium for the deeper consciousness of things', even of Keats's 'negative capability', or his 'passive receptivity of mind' as Thomas called it, can only too easily provide a cloak for that 'monstre délicat':

C'est l'Ennui! - l'oeil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,
Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka.

The tear is involuntary, it hardly needs pointing out, because it has no objective cause; it is a case of 'de ne savoir pourquoi'.

The element in this malady of passive self-pity, which Thomas recognises in himself in a notably 'confessional' poem:

Since I could not boast of strength
Great as I wished, weakness was all my boast.
I sought yet hated pity till at length,⁷⁸
I earned it.

is no less recognisable in, for example, Monro's 'Strange Companion', or in Flint:

I sat there in the dark
Of the room and of my mind
Thinking of men's treasons and bad faith,⁷⁹
Sinking into the pit of my own weakness.....

Though the candour of 'Loneliness' is undeniable, the plangency of such a statement as 'I am lonely,/having no fellow', combined with the mental atmosphere of the analogy that follows - 'I am the last leaf' - is self-scrutinising and self-dramatising. At the same time, the poem resolves itself into a measure of resignation, similar to that in the final lines of Thomas's 'Home' - the echoing of 'and silence has not come' in 'Until blindness come' helps to suggest the connection.⁸⁰

The struggle between a self-dramatising indulgence in the feelings associated with ennui, and the attempt to build defences against it, is clear in Flint's 'Courage':

Each day I hope for courage to bear
and not to whine;
to take my lot as bravely as the bees
and as unbroodingly.

Each day I creep a little nearer,
let me hope;
soon may the morning leaves
remain as green about my heart all day,
and I no longer taking myself to heart
may laugh and love and dream and think of death 81
without this yearning poison.

We may now add to my comment in the previous chapter that this poem 'is characteristic in its vacillation between escape and acceptance', the observation of how 'unbroodingly' reflects a desire to be free of the brooding introspection which allows the poison of ennui to operate. Many of Edward Thomas's poems, for example 'October', express a similar sense of sadness or 'melancholy' (as Thomas calls it), related to isolation and a feeling of 'life consumed in unfulfilment', expressed in terms of an autumnal mood, as Flint's 'Sadness':

Spirit in me,
why are you so sad?.....

Autumn has come.....
In the soft sadness of her mists,
you may discover
a memory of the joys
of summer past,
and there forget 82
what men are.....

The 'morbidness of temperament' linked to a 'groundwork of regret' which Thomas found in Keats, the misty autumnal nostalgia, the indefiniteness, are all here. In his book on Keats, Thomas noted a particular significance in these lines from The Fall of Hyperion:

Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
 Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.

The connecting force of the Baudelairean imagery of poison is now fully apparent; the 'dream' and 'its poison' in Thomas's 'Sedge-Warblers' is clearly Keatsian on the one hand and related to Flint's 'yearning poison' on the other. Thomas seeks, as does Flint in 'Courage', release from that dreaming that 'venoms all his days'; Flint's hope of 'no longer taking myself to heart' is aimed at the self-consciousness and self-pity which help the poison to flow.

When Flint's expressive methods most fully engage his authentic inner drama, this complex of feelings and psychological states is expressed in a personal confessional voice which is estranged, yearning, deeply sad. In 'Roses', the inner anguish is appropriated to that sense of man's littleness beside the universe which runs, derived from the Nineties, through his In the Net of the Stars:

.....I gaze
 at the thronging stars
 in the night.

They fall...they fall...
 I am overwhelmed, 83
 and afraid.

If an obviously derivative poem, this points to a modern sense of a lack of solidities, a lack of sustaining convictions or beliefs, to be made explicit in a later poem, 'In the Cathedral', where the poet presents himself as strangely cut off from any religious belief or feeling. Take away convictions and beliefs and you take away part of a person's sense of who he is and where he belongs; the problem of identity, I have suggested, lies at the heart of the poetry of consciousness. We have seen how passages from Monroe's 'Morality', One Day Awake, confirm the sense of a loss of identity as part of the general haunted state of mind his poetry conveys. Eliot, too, had difficulty in identifying

himself as anything in particular; as Whiteside points out, beneath the sophisticated fooling of 'Mélange Adultère de Tout', there is a real and serious problem of identity; and the evasiveness which I shall later note in his work (both his poetry and criticism) is closely related to this problem. In the disorientation of his 'Malady' and its companion piece 'Hallucination' Flint becomes a prototype of the unattached modern anti-hero. These poems, I have said earlier, 'seem to issue from a sense of the accident of consciousness':

I move;
perhaps I have wakened;
this is a bed;
this is a room;
and there is light....

Darkness!

Have I performed
the dozen acts or so
that make me the man
men see?

The door opens,
and on the landing -
quiet!

I can see nothing: the pain, the weariness!⁸⁴

Again we are in the world of the hollow men; there is a sense of existence, and the poet's consciousness of it, as some weary accident which serves only to make him aware of pain and weariness, often to the exclusion of all else - certainly to the exclusion of compensating fulfilments. No wonder these poets seek escape from the infinitely troubling burden of consciousness; we may compare Baudelaire's 'Pour ne pas sentir l'horrible fardeau du Temps qui brise vos épaules et vous penche vers la terre, il faut vous enivrer sans trêve.' The loss of identity is clear in 'Malady':

Me?

I extend all ways:
I fit into the walls and they pull me.

The ending suggests a reality which is vaguely reached out for, unsurely

grasped -- the essential ambiguity of reality as felt by such sensibilities:

and oh the sunlight!

A parrot screeches.

Reality is welcomed and jars at the same time. The companion-piece gives at once a sense of the malaise of modern life, and of the 'hallucinated state of consciousness' which we have seen in Monro and elsewhere (the titles of the two poems suggest this dual significance):

I know this room,
and there are corridors:
the pictures, I have seen before:
the statues and those gems in cases,
I have wandered by before, --
stood there silent and lonely
in a dream of years ago.

I know the dark of night is all around me;
my eyes are closed, and I am half asleep.
My wife breathes gently at my side.

But once again this old dream is within me,
and I am on a threshold waiting,
wondering, pleased, and fearful.
Where do all those doors lead,
what rooms lie beyond them?
I venture.....

But baby moves and tosses,
from side to side,
and her need calls me to her.⁸⁵

That vertiginous sense of 'the gulf' which Baudelaire said he always felt is not far away here; there is something of the phantasmagoric effect of a Kafka novel or of a piece of cinema such as Resnais's 'L'Année dernière à Marienbad'. The somewhat expressionist technique of the two poems makes this connection not entirely inappropriate. The poems restrict themselves to what is happening inside the poet's mind, avoiding, by and large, interpretative comment, and using realistic external phenomena, but in a way which is distorted to signal the poet's predicament. It cannot be said that Flint takes an expressionist technique very far; extreme technical procedures tend to alienate the reader, and Flint did

not take the attitude of 'the public must go to the devil'. But he approximates to an expressionist technique where it serves his purpose, and most of his poetry is concerned with the kind of objectification of psychological states which expressionist works aim at. The 'departures from standard principles of sequence and construction' in The Waste Land and The Hollow Men may themselves, if we take the view of M.H. Abrams,⁸⁶ be regarded as expressionistic in technique. But if this element of self-projection - 'expression' - is important in Flint's work, and if he approximates the expressionist attempt to adapt form to internal significance, it does not go so far as to represent a revolt against realism: Flint, as I shall discuss further in my final chapter, shares in common with other poets of this period a tempering of Romanticism with realism. However, though no explicit comment is made, this technique in 'Malady' and 'Hallucination' directs us to read the poems as more than just a record of an occasion. Flint nudges us insistently beyond the specific situation:

Where do all those doors lead,
What rooms lie beyond them?

The startling and enigmatic parrot which screeches at the end of 'Malady' positively demands interpretation. The various fragments of which the poems are built up - in 'Hallucination' the physical details, the wife and baby, the dream, the moments of fragmentary thought ('There is no direction.....') - play upon each other to suggest such reference beyond the specific, as well as a painful flux of consciousness, difficult to manage or even tolerate (the problem of acute consciousness). Perhaps we are too easily directed, indeed, and isn't 'wondering, pleased, and fearful' one of Flint's inert and over-explicit lists - should we need to be told this? But the poems are not flat and artless, not simple outbursts of emotion. The three 'dream' strophes (as Flint called his

verse-divisions) of 'Hallucination' are interjected by the two short strophes keying the experience to reality. This gives something of a musical organisation and movement, and enforces the effect and meaning of the poem - a vacillation between dream and reality, the hallucinatory effect of consciousness on reality. The free verse is used expressively at the end of the third and sixth strophes to convey the sense of disintegration, the 'blurring' of the mind:

and I move towards her cot.....
I shall not reach her.....There is no direction.....
I shall walk on.....

There is sufficient feeling of musical relationships, and the verse, though 'free', is kept on a tight enough rein, to convince us that a shaping and defining process is taking place. True, this is only mild innovation, there is no great or original tour-de-force of technique, but at the end we are left in no doubt that for this poet 'There is no direction'. And when there is no direction in life, what we are left with is ennui.

Whatever Baudelaire may have said about the heroism of modern life (in any case that was Victorian life), confessional poetry and the modern maladies and bafflement it exposes are anti-heroic in character. The anti-heroic sensibility in Flint is reflected in the modest dimensions and the revelatory and intimate domestic situation of these poems. A bringing of metaphysical or psychological suggestions into particular records of ordinary domestic life - to particularise in this way is anti-heroic in effect - has been to a large extent a new departure which twentieth-century poetry has made, and Flint's work stands directly at its head (though a precedent exists, perhaps, in Coleridge). Further, although the corridors, pictures, gems, doors, statues are perhaps real ones grasped in an hallucinatory way and mingled with the illusion of dream or sickness, they may also be read as Flint's imagery for those regions

of the mind which Thomas images in his unknown land beyond the hills, or in the 'avenue, dark, nameless, without end', and which Monro represents in his imagery of country weekends and paradise gardens, and in his records of hallucinated states of consciousness and attempts at mystical transcendence. The actual event in 'Malady', it will be noticed, appears to be a man in a state of fever rising from his sickbed; this brings to mind poems by Monro such as 'Elm Angel' and 'Bitter Sanctuary' which we know he wrote when he was physically ill - the last in a hospital bed, as well as Thomas's 'Melancholy':

On me the Summer storm, and fever, and melancholy
Wrought magic, so that if I feared the solitude
Far more I feared all company: too sharp, too rude,⁸⁷
Had been the wisest or the dearest human voice.

The ambivalence of the poet's attitude towards other men, as well as the entire feeling-complex in question, can be drawn together and set in comparison here. We must also remember the pattern of connections suggested early in this chapter between Baudelaire's

forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers,

Eliot's theory of imagery, and Thomas's passage in 'Old Man' concerning the dark avenue. We are dealing, of course, with Symbolist strategies, which aim to reach back to some submerged past experience (note Flint's 'in a dream of years ago'), or down to the 'deeper consciousness of things', or outwards towards some greater reality beyond the here and now. It has always been a characteristic of Romanticism to seek or explore unknown or 'dark' regions of the mind, and this preoccupation moves easily in the earlier twentieth century into an interest in the Freudian and Jungian re-formulations of the nature of experience other than that at a 'normal' conscious level. This is reflected in Monro's comment, albeit a somewhat vague one, on Flint's 'curiously profound understanding of race-memory.'⁸⁸

'The period of the Imagists,' as Peter Jones puts it, 'was also the period

of the Subconscious-Seekers - whether of myth or mind: Frazer, Jessie Weston, Freud, Jung, Croce, Whitehead';⁸⁹ the wider effects of this both on subject-matter and innovatory techniques in the poetry of the period have been often enough observed. Moreover, that such other levels of consciousness can with some semblance of scientific veracity be shown to exist immediately suggests to poets afflicted by ennui and an over-acute sense of the burden of normal consciousness, a possible escape-route. It is to this that I turn in my next chapter.

FOOTNOTES

1. Craig Raine, 'Met him pikehoses: "The Waste Land" as a Buddhist Poem', Times Literary Supplement, 4 May 1973, p. 503.
2. Ibid., p. 503.
3. 'Le Voyage', Baudelaire: Oeuvres Complètes, Paris, 1961, p. 127.
4. In Baudelaire, Paris, 1963.
5. Oeuvres Complètes, p. 35.
6. Ibid., p. 74.
7. Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony, Oxford Paperbacks, 1970, p. 146.
8. Oeuvres Complètes, p. 105.
9. 'L'Ennemi', Ibid., p. 16.
10. Baudelaire, pp. 226-8.
11. 'Spleen', Oeuvres Complètes, p. 68.
12. Ibid., p. 74.
13. Ibid., p. 95.
14. Ibid., p. 11. This, of course, is also Proustian territory; this kind of associations of sense-impressions and memory have probably nowhere been more fully explored than in La Recherche du Temps Perdu.
15. Ed. Hayward, Selected Prose, Penguin, 1953, p. 96.
16. Oeuvres Complètes, p. 233.
17. Op. Cit., p. 37, p. 52.
18. Oeuvres Complètes, p. 10.

19. 'Elévation', Ibid., p. 10.
20. Ibid., p. 51.
21. Ibid., p. 61.
22. Ibid., p. 156.
23. 'Les Chats', Ibid., p. 64.
24. Ibid., p. 286.
25. Ibid., p. 235.
26. Edgar Poe: Sa Vie, Ses Oeuvres. Preface to Baudelaire's translation of Histoires Extraordinaires, Paris, Editions Garnier, p. 24.
27. The quoted phrases are Francis Scarfe's. See Introduction, Baudelaire, Penguin Poets, pp. 1vii-1viii.
28. Oeuvres Complètes, p. 24.
29. See Revaluation, Penguin, 1964, p. 21.
30. Oeuvres Complètes, p. 1255.
31. Op.Cit., p. 54.
32. Ibid., p. 104.
33. Ibid., p. 91.
34. 'De l'Héroïsme de la Vie Moderne', Oeuvres Complètes, p. 950.
35. Leon Waldoff, 'From Abandonment to Scepticism in Keats', Essays in Criticism, Vol. xxi (April 1971), 152-8.
36. Op.Cit., p. 97.

37. Ed. Jacques Cr  pet, Charles Baudelaire, Lettres In  dites    sa M  re, Paris, 1918, p. 142.
38. Oeuvres Compl  tes, p. 1296.
39. Letters, ed. Rollins, Vol. i, 271.
40. Canto I, ll. 199-202.
41. Op.Cit., p. 53.
42. Oeuvres Compl  tes, p. 8.
43. Canto I, ll. 136-8.
44. Canto I, l. 157.
45. 'Hygi  ne. Projets', Oeuvres Compl  tes, p. 1265.
46. Canto I, ll. 118-128.
47. Canto I, ll. 156-7.
48. Francis Scarfe, Op.Cit., p.xi.
49. 'Confession', Oeuvres Compl  tes, p. 44.
50. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Confessions, trans. J.M. Cohen, Penguin, 1953, p. 88.
51. Thomas Hardy and British Poetry, p. 54.
52. Ibid., p. 55.
53. Ibid., p. 135.
54. The English Review, November 1911, p. 721.
55. The New Poetic, p. 143.

56. George Whiteside, 'T.S. Eliot: The Psychobiographical Approach', The Southern Review, Vol. VI, no. i (1973), 3-26.
57. Ibid., p. 3, p. 18.
58. See 'A New Interpretation of The Waste Land' (1952), and 'Postscript (1969)', Essays in Criticism, Vol. xix, no. 2 (April 1969), 140-175. Eliot was highly offended by Peter's suggestion.
59. Op.Cit., p. 5.
60. S.E. Hyman, The Armed Vision, Vintage paperback, New York, 1955, p. 64.
61. The passage is quoted by F.O. Matthiessen in The Achievement of T.S. Eliot, p. 6,. No reference is given, and I have failed to trace the exact source.
62. 'East Coker', ll. 186-9.
63. D.H. Lawrence, Selected Literary Criticism, Heinemann paperback, 1967, p. 83.
64. 'Some French Poets of To-Day', The Monthly Chapbook, no. iv (October 1919), 5.
65. 'Presentation', The Chapbook, no. ix (March 1920), 23.
66. Poetry and Drama, Vol. I, no. ii (June 1913), 250.
67. Cadences, p. 17.
68. Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, Dutton paperback, New York, 1958, p. 44.
69. The New Poetic, p. 57.
70. Oeuvres Complètes, p. 68.
71. 'Locutions des Pierrots', Jules Laforgue: Poésies Complètes, Le Livre de Poche, Paris, 1970, p. 158.
72. 'Regret', Cadences, p. 21.

73. Cadences, p. 16.
74. Collected Poems and Plays, 1969, p. 83, p.84, p.85.
75. 'Il pleure dans mon coeur', Oeuvres Poétiques Complètes, Paris, 1938, p. 122.
76. Op.Cit., p. 14.
77. Op.Cit., p. 48.
78. 'There Was a Time', Collected Poems, p. 160.
79. 'Gloom', Otherworld, p. 19.
80. See Chapter 1, p. 64 and note 80.
81. Cadences, p. 18.
82. Ibid., p. 12.
83. Ibid., p. 11.
84. 'Malady', Ibid., p. 13.
85. 'Hallucination', Ibid., p. 15.
86. See M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, New York, 1957, p. 34.
87. Collected Poems, p. 65.
88. Harold Monro, Some Contemporary Poets, 1920, p. 93.
89. Introduction, Imagist Poetry, The Penguin Poets, 1972, p. 40.

CHAPTER 6

THE TWO WORLDS

I. Distinctions and Confusions

At the outset of his Romantic Image, as I discuss in my first chapter in connection with Edward Thomas, Frank Kermode proposes that 'These two beliefs - in the Image as a radiant truth out of space and time, and in the necessary isolation or estrangement of men who can perceive it - are inextricably associated'.¹ We might expect this situation to strike writers committed to certain ideological positions as having undesirable consequences. Raymond Williams, for example, fixes attention on the way in which the various problems of consciousness I have been describing lead to a creation by poets of 'myths'. These myths, to which Freud and Jung give a measure of objective sanction, seek to establish some kind of psychological or metaphysical sense of 'collective' or 'community', but do so at the expense of endeavours to strengthen social or communal consciousness in its 'actual' forms.

Given the facts of isolation, of an apparently impassable subjectivity, a 'collective consciousness' reappears, but in an altered form. This is the 'collective consciousness' of the myth, the archetype; the 'collective unconscious' of Jung. In and through the intense subjectivities a metaphysical or psychological 'community' is assumed, and characteristically, if only in abstract structures, it is universal; the middle terms of actual societies are excluded as ephemeral, superficial, or at best contingent or secondary. Thus a loss of social recognition and consciousness is in a way made a virtue: as a condition of understanding and insight. A direct connection is then forged between intense subjectivity and a timeless reality: one is a means to the other and alternative terms are no more than distractions. The historically variable problem of 'the individual and society' acquires a sharp and particular definition, in that 'society' becomes an abstraction, and the collective flows only through the most inward channels. Not only the ordinary experiences of apparent isolation, but a whole range of techniques of self-isolation, are then gathered to sustain the paradoxical experience of an ultimate collectivity which is beyond and above community. Social variants of community are seen as variants of the 'myth' - the encoded meaning - which is one or other of its forms is the only accessible collective consciousness. There is a language of the mind - often, more strictly, of the body - and there is this assumed universal language. Between them, as things, as signs, as material, as agents, are cities, towns, villages: actual human societies. 2

My final chapter is, to a large extent, an exemplification of the ways in which, in certain significant poetic oeuvres of the century, "a direct connection is forged between intense subjectivity and a timeless reality"; of the ways in which, however strongly these poets may be drawn back continuously towards "cities, towns, villages: actual human societies", the intractability of the despair their experience of such societies in the modern world has induced in them, has forced a defensive retreat into poetic myths which universalise and distance, which render manageable, particular and individual dilemmas.

What Williams seems to require of poets is that they should be concerning themselves with possible forms of social action, a requirement which suggests a definite view of the function of art:

In the twentieth century there has been a deep and confused and unfinished conflict between the reappearance of the collective, in its metaphysical and psychological forms, and that other response, also within the cities, which in new institutions and in new social ideas and movements offered to create what Hardy and others had seen as lacking: a collective consciousness which could see not only individuals but also their altered and altering relationships, and in seeing the relationships and their social causes find social means of change. 3

I find it appropriate that the name of Hardy should be invoked, for I have earlier seen a Hardyesque realism and liberal humanism (to use convenient shorthand terms) as a necessary corrective to what has happened, in its modernist forms, to the poetic inheritance from Symbolism and Romanticism. I am not sure that Williams gives full credit to the extent to which the need for such a corrective has been felt by the poets I have examined, how strongly they have been pulled back towards 'actual human societies'. But certainly, with the exception of Hardy himself, they have been 'confused' about it, and it seems a fact that the important poetic achievements of our century have been subject to limitations imposed by an unfortunate cult of social and cultural isolation. What Williams is saying needs to be

said; unfortunately, in his way of putting the case, we have to penetrate a screen of language derived from the social sciences which does not always seem to illuminate the kind of experiences offered by literary works, and Williams appears to undervalue, or even ignore, what the Modern movements, from the Symbolists on, have taught us about what kind of activity art is. Isolation and subjectivity have tended to be the authentic experience and hence the compulsive material of poets in our century; their achievement, moreover, has often been to perfect poetic structures which embody the permanent human endeavour to command and shape experience without which no "community" can meaningfully exist. And any "social means of change" which do not take account of the voyages of mind and sensibility which these poets have undertaken can henceforward, one would think, only be crude and perfunctory.

It will be noticed that Williams's view of the "collective" in what he calls the "modernist version of symbolism" taking "metaphysical and psychological forms" reflects a distinction I have already made between a transcendental or mystical "escape" from the burden of normal consciousness, and a psychological one. An article on Symbolism by the Russian poet Vyacheslav Ivanov in Enciclopedia Italiana, provides an interesting example of an attempt to distinguish between a subjective psychological symbolism and one reflective of a higher reality "out there". The problem is complicated, it must be added, by conflicting views as to whether the other reality exists and can be believed in, or is merely a delusion, a "disconsolate chimera"; and if my own division, at the end of the previous chapter, of Symbolist strategies in terms of three kinds of "aim" is superimposed on the twofold distinction, the effect is partly to confirm it, partly to blur it. What I call "submerged past experience" is related to the Jungian collective unconscious and is a psychological phenomenon, conforming to Ivanov's "subjective symbolism", unless (a further

complication) we see it as involving contact with some transcendental reality which has now been lost. The "greater reality beyond the here and now" obviously conforms to Ivanov's "realistic symbolism". The "deeper consciousness of things", however, could involve either type: it might be reaching down and inward to some deep spiritual reality and communion, or a reaching inward to hidden subjective truths about the self. That my last term appears perhaps to fuse, or even more to confuse, the two types of symbolism partly bears out Ivanov's complaint, which I examine in a moment, that Symbolism has historically suffered from an important contradiction; but at the same time may be used to argue that there is a necessary confusion of the two.

Ivanov sees Baudelaire's "Correspondences" as embodying both types: the higher reality or "realistic symbolism" in the octave of the sonnet, and the psychological, or "subjective symbolism", in the sestet. Thus the founding text of Symbolism already carries within it the subsequent dissipation of its impulse through the incompatibility of the two types, and indeed the gradual dominance of the second type over the first. Subjective symbolism led, in Ivanov's view, only to the decadence of the later part of the nineteenth century and hence to the foundering of the Symbolist promise. Yet it is clear that those twentieth-century poets considered in this study both divide off in important ways from the decadent developments of the fin de siècle and still inherit the Symbolist impetus, carrying it forward, indeed, - while, in Williams's words, attempting to connect "intense subjectivity and a timeless reality" - in a vital art significantly related to the conditions of the modern world. Ivanov seems too eager to relegate his "subjective symbolism" to a poetry of mere decadent sensualism, foreshadowed in Baudelaire's becoming, in the sestet of his sonnet, "an observer of his own psychic complexes and individual 'synaesthesias'", in order that he may correspondingly elevate

Symbolism of a higher reality to the status of the only adequate solution to the problems of modern literature, in which he hopes to see "the advent of a purer manifestation of 'eternal symbolism'".⁴ Where Williams wants to bring us back from mythology and psychology to "social means of change", Ivanov wants to take us expressly in the opposite direction, dropping off "psychology" en route.

The question that needs to be brought into focus is whether, from the point of view of the success and relevance of a poet's art - relevance in the Arnoldian sense of a criticism of life in the modern world - it need be a weakening contradiction for both kinds of symbolism to be present in his work, and indeed to be co-present with an engaged interest in "actual societies". If, following Coleridge and numerous more recent theoreticians, we see poetry as a fruitful tension or reconciliation of opposites, might this not, in fact, be a desirable state of affairs? Let us examine the terms in which Ivanov distinguishes a "realistic symbolism (in the philosophical sense of the word) and a subjective symbolism":

The former means by symbol any reality considered under the aspect of its correlation with a higher reality, that is more real on the ladder of reality. It discovers this second reality, in a unique act of intuition either beyond the first reality which reflects it, or immanent in the first reality which envelops it. It seeks thus in things the sign of their value and their ontological nexus, realia in rebus. With such a representation of the world it wants to lead those whom it addresses a realibus ad relioria and, in a way, it makes its own the anagogic principle of medieval aesthetics. It adheres thus to the norms of "eternal symbolism" which Charles Maurras opposes to "decorative symbolism" (we call it subjective) of the moderns and it can also be defined as "divination of the spiritual in the tangible, expressed by means of the tangible".....

This last definition is much like that applied to Symbolism by Arthur Symons,⁵ yet Symons is one of those who, it is true, seemed to confuse this symbolism, this expression of spirituality by means of the tangible, with, in Ivanov's words, "an enriched and refined experience of the senses", which, taken for its own sake, was artistically disastrous. T.S. Eliot,

however, understood all this perfectly well; at times, indeed, the use of the symbol by Eliot tends to return us to just that "anagogic principle of medieval aesthetics". It might even be an objection to Ivanov that he is trying to put the clock back. Eliot may in no way be accused of willing overinvestment in the life of the senses, though perhaps the specifically Christian character of his "second reality" disqualifies it from Ivanov's apparently theosophic "ontological nexus". Yet it is implicit in what I have said and have still to say about Eliot, that a view of Eliot's symbolism as being also of the subjective type seems to give us a perfectly tenable reading of his poetry, a reading which has the advantage of rendering Eliot's work accessible and acceptable to the modern agnostic liberal-humanist whom he disdained. With the other two poets whose work I consider in the conclusion of this chapter, Yeats and Graves, we are on less clear-cut ground. Yeats at least might be thought enough of a Platonist and theosophist to satisfy anybody's inclinations in those directions; yet both of these poets remain ambiguous in their attitudes towards the mythology, the symbolism, they themselves create.⁶ More openly than Eliot, they seem at times to invite interpretation in terms of Ivanov's other type of symbolism, of which he says:

It [the symbol] is no longer the object of intuition, but rather a means of expression: no longer a message which comes from outside, but the messenger of a content prevalently psychological. It is no longer a truth to be discovered, but an image to be moulded.... Practically this type of symbolism which also wanted to be truthful in its fashion - that is, as a picture of "introspective landscapes" - was bent on perfecting the system of signalization between separate minds, which felt themselves more isolated, the more their interior life appeared complicated, because of the relaxing of the old ties of common faith and national solidarity, so much so that the impossibility of mutual comprehension became one of the favourite motifs of the lyric outpourings and of the dramatic or romantic collisions of the time. Theoretically this symbolism affirmed the free creativity of the spirit and made its own, within the limits of art, the idealistic attitude.

Here again is the attempt described by Williams to achieve "an ultimate collectivity" since community in the here and now seems impossible - more impossible the more the poet's "interior life appeared complicated".

There is another distinction and another confusion, however, in that Ivanov seems to confine this to his subjective symbolism, where Williams associates it with metaphysical or psychological manifestations. But in any case, how could the symbol in modern poetry not be subjective when there no longer exists any widely-accepted system of orthodoxy from which symbols might be drawn? Can one very easily see how the symbol in modern poetry could have become other than this? - a means of expression, an image to be moulded, a picture of "introspective landscapes" ("otherworlds"), and an affirmation of the free creativity of the spirit. Does Ivanov mean to deplore this "free creativity of the spirit"? And how far does the modern mind really find congenial an exclusive preoccupation with the transcendental? What modern poetry needed was a finer instrument for recording consciousness: may it not be the case that Ivanov's two type of symbolism were a necessary confusion, neither one of which we could exclude from the empirical map of the modern consciousness? It is such a map that Symbolist strategies, together with revised means of achieving subtlety of verse-movement and other stylistic innovations and reinvigorations, have enabled poets to draw. And again and again the acutest and most sensitive poetic talents show themselves unable to find exclusive satisfaction in any "second reality" and to draw back towards the here and now - not only towards an inner psychological reality rather than a metaphysical one, but also towards a social reality, one which in the here and now engages with Keats's "giant agony of the world". The two friends Flint and Harold Monro may have been substantially confused about this, but they stand centrally in relation to such a movement. Edward Thomas follows a course which we can see adumbrated in various ways by first Keats and then Hardy; if it is possible to follow

this course further, to plot a community of the here and how which yet takes full account of the perilous map of consciousness, with all its semi-illuminations, its half-caught intuitions, which Symbolism has drawn for us, if it is possible to discipline the "free creativity of the spirit" to this purpose while yet not distorting or suppressing the full complexity of the subjective consciousness in the way that "committed" or "social realist" art has a tendency to do, is this not a task to which poetry in this century can worthily address itself? The otherworlds of my present chapter would, from this point of view, appear to be a necessary expression of the necessary confusion in following such a course from the only possible point of departure, the situation of English poetry at the turn of the century.

II. F.S. Flint's "Otherworld": a Pattern in Modern Poetry

"Otherworld", the poem of about 500 lines from which Flint's third and final volume takes its title, is described by Joy Grant as "a heart-breaking comparison between Flint's real life.... and his dream life as a leisured writer in a country home".⁷ This points immediately to the kind of dichotomy or conflict which is at the heart of Flint's experience and which permits us to see in his work a pattern of the sort of consciousness with which we are concerned. Though the poem leaves too many unresolved questions of form, technique and feeling to be considered a fully achieved work, nowhere else is the "heartbreaking" nature of his conflicts and obsessions more fully and candidly explored.

Ivanov, we have seen, quite logically links Symbolism and its derivatives with the attempt to express in art "the idealistic attitude". Flint's poem opens with a picture of the poet's idealised self in an idealised setting:

He is sitting beneath a cherry-tree in bloom,
 And the thought of the ripe cherries is in his mouth,
 And his eyes love the tall daisies in the grass
 And his children playing in the meadow.

The light strikes truly through the lenses of his eyes,
 And a fair image falls upon the retina;
 The wind brings him many odours -
 Earth, grasses, trees, flowers,
 And the oakwood burning in the fireplaces.
 His ears catch the rustle and song of many things,
 And the taste of the cherries is subtle in his mouth.
 He knows by their touch the things that frame his life. 8

We may wish to reserve the term synaesthesia for the interpretation of one sense-impression in terms of another, but there is here something like the creation of "individual synaesthesias", the attempt to "transcend the limitations of the self through an enriched and refined experience of the senses", about which Ivanov talks. We may note how the poet thinks the taste of the cherries, and loves the visual impression of the daisies: this, surely, is something closely related to the synaesthetic process. We may note, too, how all varieties of sense-impression are evoked to render the particular feeling-complex, and to create a sense of assured knowing through the sensuous impressions - "He knows by their touch the things that frame his life". He knows his ideal world by the senses, by the language of the body and the affective mind, not intellectually, by the language of the conceptual mind. A peculiar operation of consciousness is here taking place, close to that by means of which Thomas discovers his "new country" or Monro his Paradise Garden or idealised weekend retreats.

Flint's idealisation involves the life of intense sensation we associate with the French Symbolists and the English Aesthetes, a life of meditation rather than action, of art rather than practical employment, of "burning always with a hard, gemlike flame". Symbolism was in any case a directly anti-positivist and anti-intellectualist aesthetic; as A.G. Lehmann shows, its idealism and mysticism arose from a general sense of the nineteenth century as a materialist age, and in reaction against positivist aesthetics

more important sense they are "charlatans". This slightly pettish line may strike us as too easily dismissive, but the movement of these lines taken together, the shifts of focus and tempo which are woven into the deceptively easy surface of the verse, make good the attack on the merely physical view of the universe and its possibilities. A few lines further on the poet says,

Whatever I imagine, or you imagine, exists.

Flint needs to convince himself and his reader that the longings of his inner life have an existential projection; and that thoughts and feelings, given substance by the imagination, are as "real" as scientific reality. He is preaching the omnipotence of the human imagination, of the poetic vision; the Symbolist transcendence of the actual. The pressure behind this is that Flint must be able to believe in the possibility of escape in order to make the reality of his actual life tolerable. He must be able to overcome the scientific fact that his idealisation is

so far away that I am sure
No light from the star that lights and warms him can
reach me

Yet it is a sort of casuistical or fantasy extension of physical science itself that gives him his assurance:

I must be happy somewhere.

There is room in space for every combination: he is
there....

The ideal life involves freedom from material demands; there is no "invisible, gnawing bondage". His "life....flows freely"; in this other-world, life is not "consumed in unfulfilment". The release from want allows the fulfilment of the whole man:

He knows that tomorrow will be like today and
yesterday,
Full of work that is a pain, a pleasure, and an
enlargement,
With the brain and heart working together with the
hands. 10

There is in these passages an undertow of animus against others more privileged than himself, actually able to pursue such a leisured existence. It is here that we encounter in Flint a confusion between something approaching a social-realist critique - Flint held firm socialist views - and the longing for an 'ultimate collectivity': he wants to overcome the alienation of labour in an industrial society but wishes to replace it with a way of life which, it might be argued, can only be pursued by a cultured and leisured class dependent for its existence on capital and the exploitation of labour. This confusion is confirmed when we examine exactly what it is he yearns for. We note elsewhere in Flint's poetry that he tends to talk in the generalised way of the townsman about orchards, trees, blossoms, hills and so on. The peculiar conditioning of his sensibility is revealed here in the description of the countryside and the poet's garden:

I can see the lilac in great bushes about my house,
And the laburnums with their rain of gold,
The chestnuts and the hawthorns in bloom of red and
white:

These are trees and blossoms that must be there. 11

It all sounds so domestic, essentially a bourgeois world of suburban gardens. The last of the lines quoted, moreover, betrays the unreality of Flint's aspirations. He is not thinking of any real, particularised stretch of landscape such as Edward Thomas gives us even in his metaphors of escape; Flint has only an idealised and remote impression of what 'must be there' in the countryside. In 'rain of gold' and 'bloom of red and white' there is a touch of that artificiality with which the suburban aesthete might view such things, and which we noticed in the early verse. Flint goes on to speak of

.... the sky that must be blue, for me to care for it,
With a scud of white clouds over it.....

There is no lived knowledge of country weathers; these are the overworked

townsman's unreal images, banal in their ordinariness were it not for the ingenuousness of the emotion they carry, of leisured country life. The fall of the cadence and yearning stress of the phrasing - "that must be blue, for me to care for it", "that must be there" - define the poet's situation. It is a doleful reaching out for the unattainable, and this is the other side of the picture: he has to prove it exists even while knowing it is unattainable.

Already implied in the poem's title is the notion of relativity. In his book on Walter Pater, Edward Thomas quotes approvingly the following passage from Pater's essay on Coleridge in Appreciations:

Modern thought is distinguished from ancient by its cultivation of the "relative" spirit in place of the "absolute".... the relative spirit has invaded moral philosophy from the ground of the inductive sciences. There has started a new analysis of the relations of body and mind, good and evil, freedom and necessity. Hard and abstract moralities are yielding to a more exact estimate of the subtlety and complexity of our life. 12

It is a passage which may make Pater appear more central than perhaps he really is; as suggested in my Introduction, it is one way of looking at the difference between Keats, the incipient modern, and Coleridge, the representative nineteenth-century mind; it alludes to that "subtlety and complexity of our life" which Symbolism is an attempt to meet, and one sees its relevance to the kind of tentative, non-absolutist sensibilities which Thomas, Flint and Monro all exhibit. Only by taking it in the context of Pater's work as a whole can we see that in such a statement, by elevating the unique intensity of each experience and knocking away absolutes by which to value it, Pater is seeking to disentangle art from life and moving towards just that decadent sensualism which Ivanov deplores. But Graham Hough selects the same passage for comment:

We find here a quite contented recognition of the relative spirit of modern thought, and an obvious approval of the disintegration of accepted moral codes that has been its result. 13

who has designed and carved a particular chair for the poet. He is at once maker and dreamer, practical man and visionary. He has a garden "full of roses", and sometimes he talks to the poet of the stars; sometimes the poet reads his poems to him, while the carpenter has

....his eyes on the roses he has brought me,
That stand near the lamp on my table.

The dream-world is envisaged as on a far distant star, and from that star poet and carpenter are themselves observing the constellations - another variation of the relativity idea. With stars and roses we are back with stock Symbolist emblems of beauty and the transcendental, but they are appropriate as images of the kind of escape from utilitarian reality which is Flint's dream. They also give us the carpenter's wholeness, his appreciation, as a man who works with his hands, of beauty and non-material values; in him the strands of the idea of harmony and integration are drawn together, and he forms a confirmatory analogue to the wholeness which the poet, in the best Romantic tradition, sees in the idealised figure of himself. There is a hint in passages such as this of News from Nowhere; that same sort of stasis is suggested, the various alienations of modern man have disappeared. The ethos of William Morris in interior design was still current when Flint was writing, and there are reflections of this in the kind of furniture he describes, and in the figure of the carpenter. Labour, meditation, leisure, poetry, domestic life, and, significantly, the community of individuals, are all one in this dream otherworld, all resolved into harmony.

What may be considered the first section of the poem, mainly concerned with the nature of the ideal "otherworld", is now brought to a close in lines which show this harmony as a precondition of spontaneous and uncomplicated creativity:

the whole poem is an effort to escape, becomes more and more insistent. But first comes another long dream section, rhapsodic and lyrical. It deals with the morning awakening in that ideal otherworld:

How, in the morning, as the sunshine enters my bedroom,
Dream after dream falls from me,
And I awake to the greater dream of this full life. 19

This passage recalls the earlier 'Courage', with its opening line:

I wake each morning from forgotten dreams. 20

"Otherworld" takes the "hope" of that poem a stage further, translating it into a dream actuality, a dream in which the morning "joy" does "remain as green about my heart all day". The line "Dream after dream falls from me" also recalls "Malady":

Green, oh green, dazzling lightning!
And joy! this is my room;

The ambivalent attitude towards reality there recorded now becomes a complete dissociation of dream and reality. However, we become aware of a certain sentimentality. It is part of the point, of course, that this is unreal, and Flint maintains throughout a consciousness of the distinction between the dream and actuality - 'And I awake to the greater dream of this full life.' There remains, though, a feeling that Flint is indulging himself here, that all that side of his sensibility which might be expressed in the word "softness", the Verlaine-like indefiniteness, a certain emotional vulnerability and slackness of will, are for a time allowed to run loose. The opening appeal to the reader is a shade too self-regarding; there are lines which succumb to bathos - 'The rustling and stirring of my mate'; and the picture given of the poet's ideal relationship with his wife and children is suffused with an artificiality which results from a damaging self-indulgence:

She knows the meaning of my silence,
And she will not jar the full cup of my morning
treasures..... 21

The image of the full cup and the word "treasures" are too facile and

uncritical, both in a technical sense and in the attitude they reveal in the poet towards his own feelings. This is continued when the poet goes outside for a breath of morning air; the imagery of 'tall grasses' and 'buttercups and clover' suggests a never-never land. The poet's children, he says, "have learned to love my strange ways" and they will not disturb him until the poem in his "heart and brain" has formed itself. But writing poetry, one feels, would always be, however ideal the conditions, a more demanding and troublesome activity than it is here depicted. Ending the passage on this note - 'And the words come to my pencil unsought' - confirms our impression of a hopelessly idealised vision, and one slanted towards the poet's own egotistical satisfactions, to which his idealised wife and children are merely adjuncts - what real wife and children would behave so admirably?

There is now an abrupt break in the reverie, and the real world floods back in a parallel "awakening" section - the kind of awakening the poet experiences in his actual life:

To-morrow I shall wake up tired and heavy-minded,
With a bitter mouth and bleared eyes. 22

As discussed in Chapter 4, the misery of the real world is seen by Flint to have its roots in the laws of economic necessity; in the alienation of the individual from his labour, and of one man from another. There are even suggestions of the revolutionary potential of labour - albeit bourgeois labour:

All I meet are shabby, all go one way,
Drawn on by the same magnet, urged by the same demon.
We are the respectable; and behind us, though we do
not see him,
Driving us with his goad, is hunger - the first law of
our land.
He enmeshes us, he regiments us, he drills us to obey
his time.
For him we hurry through the dust or the mud, through
the cold or heat,
To the slave-pens. For him we shove at each other
at the tramcars,
Crowd elbow to elbow in the tubes, through which we
are hurled,

Packed and swaying. For him we sell our soul's freedom,
Obey men we do not respect, do trivial things that
mean nothing to us,
And only have meaning as part of the whole machine
that we serve.
O irony, irony, that we should be gaoler and gaoled
In a prison of our own making that we might destroy
tomorrow!
It is not labour that kills, but the lack of faith
in the labourer. 23

These lines have the rhythm of the modern city as Flint the wage-slave felt it, mechanical, unrelenting, unescapable. Overlaid on this there is still a hint of self-pity; but the particular immediacy and involvement may be appreciated in a comparison once again with those lines from The Waste Land based on experience of the same city:

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. 24

At first sight, the Flint is more generalised; a specificity in the Eliot - "London Bridge", "King William Street", "Saint Mary Woolnoth" - gives the reader a momentary sense of something concretely realised, something emerging from a lived and felt relationship to this environment. But almost immediately the deliberately contrived nexus of historical association begins to intrude, and to weave itself in with the resonances of the Dante allusion. The flow of the verse, the flow of the crowd, is pulled up on "King William Street" and "Saint Mary Woolnoth" in a way which disconcerts and detaches the reader. Eliot, he becomes aware, is not here ultimately concerned with the plight of urban man. The Dante allusion heightens the unreality and detachment. What for Flint is so heartbreakingly real, is for Eliot "unreal". The Flint passage is raw and direct, the Eliot is oblique and filtered through layers of literary artifice and allusion; where Eliot moves into a

A blackbird scuttles from a spinney;
 And I sit in a dream
 And drink my coffee
 And smoke my cigarette.
 But the gate of the garden in front of the house
 Swings open and crashes back;
 A well-known footstep comes up the path,
 A well-known voice calls my name:
 "Franky, come out you stodge!"
 "Is that you, Dicky? Sit down, will you?
 Take a cigarette, and try to live as you were meant to.
 Don't be vigorous after lunch!"
 "Cinoede, Franky!"
 "Fatue bos, Dicky!"
 "Sale turc!"
 "Etalon impuissant que nargue la jument!"
 "Coglione!"
 "O poetaccio!"
 We laugh at each other.
 "Come round by Vale Water to the cliff-walk
 Round by Westhaven and back by the riverside". 29

The friend is Richard Aldington (the poem is dedicated to "R.A."), and
 Flint may in part be remembering a visit he made to H.D. and Aldington
 when they lived in Devon:

Into the valley by the side of the river,
 That roars like the sea over its stones. 30

H.D.'s correspondence with Flint shows that the visit took place at Easter
 1916,³¹ and a very similar walk and landscape are recorded in another
 poem by Flint, "Devonshire".³² The friendship with Aldington is idealised
 following the pattern by now established in "Otherworld", a pattern in
 which a promise of fulfilment contained in the frustrated actuality is
 projected into a realm of perfection:

Oh, the strides and the breaths we take,
 The jests we make, and our laughter!
 Our silence is even a greater joy than these,
 And our thoughts then wear the mask
 That our eyes put on them..... 33

Such an idealisation is the opposite side of the psychological coin of
 "Loneliness". But - this is the important thing about the unreality, the
 impulse to escape, even the sentimentality, of this poem - the utopian
 vision cannot be sustained, and that "heartbreaking" note again intrudes:

rhapsodic movement, to contain the expansions of yearning and speculation, but, as Leavis said of The Waste Land, 'the poem ends where it began',⁴⁰ being a record of a state of mind rather than a narrative.

It is the product of a typically self-distrustful and disorientated sensibility. But Flint, unlike Pound and Eliot, does not cast about amongst past cultures for a sense of roots, of wholeness, of identity: the resolute refusal in his 'Prayer'⁴¹ of "all that incandescence, All that grace" vouchsafed to his friends H.D. and Richard Aldington is a considerable act of independence. "Prayer" implies, indeed, that "the things That are given to my friends" are not really relevant now - "these are nothing". Flint seemed unable to make any meaningful identification either with poetic modes of the past, or with, in Leavis's words, "the rhythms, sanctioned by nature and time, of rural culture." His avoidance of so much that is normally associated with poetic structures and textures - of "levels of meaning", of simultaneity in the operations of language - his insistence on making his verse rely on a controlled flux of cadenced phrase, utilising many of the ordinary verbal values of prose discourse, is a measure of his liberation - or isolation - from the past. But a certain limiting moral vulnerability - sometimes we can hear this in the fall of the cadences - seemed to sap the energy necessary for a full development. A brief consideration of certain poems in the Otherworld volume will underline this point, as well as the nature of the issues which are unresolved in the poem "Otherworld" itself.

Inherent in the Symbolist aesthetic is that you either give up art or give up ordinary life - "as for living, our servants will do that for us." But Flint had no servants, and his art is inextricable from that "living" which he had to do, and the urban environment in which he had to do it. It was art on which he eventually lost his grip. In "Dusk" we see him struggling with precisely this problem. The poet is in conversation with

a friend (Richard Aldington probably):

You spoke of your art and life,
Of men you had known who betrayed you,
Men who fell short of friendship
And women who fell short of love;
But, abiding beyond them, your art
Held you to life, transformed it, became it,
And so you were free.

And I told you of all my weakness, -
My growing strength to resist
The appeal to my heart and eyes
Of sorrowful, beautiful things;
And the strength of this outer husk
I had permitted to grow and protect me
Was its pitiful measure. 42

In that "sorrowful, beautiful things" as well as in general phrasing and movement, there is a touch of early Yeats, and the mood is the Verlaine-like "autumn of the heart" - the poem is set in an autumn dusk. The debate about art and life is thus placed in a suggestive context. The poet's companion has achieved, perhaps, something of the impersonality sought by Symbolist artists from Baudelaire to Eliot; but he has not so much reconciled art and life - which is tacitly acknowledged as the ideal - as adapted his life to his art. For him art "became" life. The poet replies that he cannot do this; his strength as a man who "lives" is his "weakness" as artist. The companion assures him, however, that this protective husk of realism which he has built around himself is not naturally his:

your heart breaks through it, and soon
It will fall away from you.

After a silence, in which symbolic evocations of beauty accompany "the broken mesh of our thoughts", the poet speaks again:

I said: I have wife and children,
A girl and a boy: I love them;
The gold of their hair is all the gold
Of my thoughts; the blue of their eyes
Is all the purity of my vision;
The rhythm of their life is more to be watched
Than the cadences of my poems.

And you asked me:
 Have you taken refuge behind them?
 Do you not fear to lose your life
 In saving it for them?
 Be brave! The water is deep,
 The waves run high; but you are a swimmer:
 Strike out!

The way "art" and "life", "strength" and "weakness", readily seem to exchange values, reflects the indecisiveness that seems to lie behind the poem. The poet wonders whether he has deserved the "beauty" of the night, since he has tried to shut out beauty with his "husk" of real life. The question-mark is all-important. There is the characteristic irresolution and touch of self-pity:

The cold wind blew the brown leaves
 Deeper and deeper into the dusk;
 The peacocks had hushed their cries;
 The moon had turned her gold into silver,
 And between the black lace of two trees
 One star shone clearly.

O night!
 Have I deserved your beauty?

The vulnerability of which I have spoken is evident enough in this poem; it emerges from deep within Flint's consciousness.

The poem which follows this, "Gloom", deals again with that vulnerability - the gloom of the title. However, in the question of the adjustment of life and art to each other, it points in a somewhat different direction. It describes the working of the inner poison, and the poet's battle against it:

I sat there in the dark
 Of the room and of my mind
 Thinking of men's treasons and bad faith,
 Sinking into the pit of my own weakness
 Before their strength of cunning.
 Out over the gardens came the sound of someone
 Playing five-finger exercises on the piano.

Then
 I gathered up within me all my powers
 Until outside of me was nothing:
 I was all -
 All stubborn, fighting sadness and revulsion. 43

His wife comes to him, but he sends her angrily away. She seems an intruder on his inner struggle. (another Lawrentian touch here):

Something in me became angry;
Withstood like a wall,
And would allow no entrance;
I hated her.

But when she is gone, he remembers (echoing the earlier "Fragment") their child, and "the fields we had walked over, the roads we had followed, The flowers we had watched together", and his mood changes:

And I came away,
Full of the sweet and bitter juices of life;
And I lit the lamp in my room,
And made this poem.

In the conjunction of "the sweet and bitter juices of life" with the making of the poem, art and life seem to have come together. The poem has been made out of the very conflict between them, and in the process the inner poison has in some measure been purged.

"Ogre" is a short poem which may be used to illustrate the gradual shift in Flint's work from, or rather through, Symbolism to a particular and individual mode of Realism, which yet remains to some degree a hovering between the two. The poplars "shaking in the wind" pull the poem back towards Verlaine's half-tones and imprecisions; the rose - "Centre of a sphere of odour" - is resonant with Symbolist associations. But this is set in dialogue with a touch of the concentration and the hard look at the external object - the sparrow, town-dweller (as in the Vildrac poem) amongst birds - learned in the Imagist school:

Through the open window can be seen
The poplars at the end of the garden
Shaking in the wind,
A wall of green leaves so high
That the sky is shut off.

On the white table cloth
A rose in a vase -
Centre of a sphere of odour -
Contemplates the crumbs and crusts
Left from a meal:
Cups, saucers, plates lie
Here and there.

And a sparrow flies by the open window,
 Stops for a moment,
 Flutters his wings rapidly,
 And climbs an aerial ladder
 With his claws
 That work close in
 To his soft, brown-grey belly.

But behind the table is the face of a man.

The bird flies off. 44

A nuance of tenderness in the way the poem shades from trees to the rose to the remains of a meal, and in the small drama of a man and sparrow, makes the poem something distinctive: something akin to the delicate handling of the moment's experience we find in Edward Thomas, and a celebration of it, for its own sake, with no fretful reaching after some other reality; a celebration, moreover, of a moment of consciousness with a distinctively suburban colouring. The poem seems to stand self-effacingly at some poised intersection of art and life; a commonplace experience is made peculiar and intense.

Flint wrote few poems of the strictly Imagist kind. The most accomplished of them - perhaps, indeed, the only poem of Flint's which obeys all the Imagist precepts - is his last poem to appear in published form.⁴⁵

"Coastline" was Flint's contribution to the first issue of Monroe's Monthly Chapbook in July 1919:

Here the wind
 winnows the sand
 as it sifts
 through the grass-wrack,
 and the grains beat,
 needlepoints,
 against the skin.

Here the sea
 knaws the long coast,
 churning the shingle,
 over the beach,
 and the waves,
 wind-driven,
 whiten and topple
 over our bodies.

Wind and sea
 and the print of naked foot. 46

The patterns of assonance and alliteration, the splintering of phrase into staccato rhythms generating the energy to fuse the evocations into an imagist complex, are much more deliberate than is usual with Flint.

The resemblances to H.D. are striking:

Stunted, with small leaf,
you are flung on the sands,
you are lifted
in the crisp sand
that drives in the wind. 47

The hardness, the sense of something strenuous and inimical, which permeate the imagery and sound-patterns of much of H.D.'s verse, are imitated in "Coastline" almost to the point of pastiche. Possessing as the poem does a certain fined-down perfection, Flint is nevertheless writing in what was by this time a slightly derivative manner. It shows what he could do if he chose, but is a diversion from the kind of authentic personal tones developing in Otherworld; Flint's intimate personal voice, awkward, estranged and sad, is his greatest asset. His fineness here becomes a slightly mechanical precision, so that we miss the shifts and inwardness of his most interesting verse, with its deliberately relaxed textures.

Towards the end of Otherworld comes a series of six poems on the subject of "the pity of war" ("Lament", "War-Time", "Soldiers", "Zeppelins", "Searchlight", "Hats".) - war seen from the "home front".⁴⁸ "Zeppelins" deals, as the title suggests, with an air-raid, and may be taken as representative of the mood of these poems, and of the near-rapprochement of Symbolism and Realism which Flint now achieves. There is an element of the eye-witness account here, of war-documentary given a personal focus. The poet's intimate involvement in human ordinariness - the huddling on of clothes and thrusting of bare feet into slippers - gives immediacy, a sharpened impression of the moment. After describing himself falling asleep, the poet is suddenly disturbed:

How long have I slept?
 A voice calls, a bell rings;
 The clamour and the ringing lengthen;
 I turn; it continues;
 Not mine the name I hear,
 And yet

There is alarm in it that concerns me.

Am I awake?
 Over my nightdress
 I huddle my clothes;
 Thrust my bare feet into slippers;
 And run down the stairs. 49

We are reminded again of "Malady" and "Hallucination": the state of consciousness between waking and dream, the hallucinatory distrust of the phenomenal world and of the poet's own sense of self, of identity; the voice which calls a name that is "not mine", but which has "alarm in it that concerns me". There continues to be a certain unreality, even, about the supremely "real" experience of an air-raid:

From a blur of female faces
 Distraught eyes stand out,
 And a woman's voice cries:
 "The Zeppelins - they are attacking us;
 Kingsland Road is alight,
 Stoke Newington is burning.
 Did you not hear the guns?
 Oh, what shall we do!"

We make jokes to reassure them.
 I shiver: chill? excitement? fear?
 Am I awake?
 My mind has been washed by sleep and left limp.

Flint has now reduced his language almost to an extreme of prose plainness, which yet still has a suggestion of literary formality about it. The woman's speech, for example, is completely unpoetic, and yet its rhythms are not quite natural (indeed, it again calls to mind some of Eliot's snatches of neurotic dialogue). The effect remains a disconcerting one. The immediacy and actuality of the moment are achieved, but there is still a peculiarly personal colouring thrown by the language and cadences over the subject, and a sense of deeper levels of unease - of "alarm", "excitement",

"fear", even of a sort of mental or emotional "limpness" (that last line quoted actually does go limp). "Everywhere is stillness", continues the poem, a stillness which intensifies the sense of unreality. This slight sense of unreality in a moment of crisis or excitement, with the heightened responses it induces, is perhaps a common enough experience. But the experience resolves itself for Flint into one of calm and beauty set in suspense with the inhuman and the killing, a kind of experience which seems to permeate his poems of life in London. London had in any case always represented for Flint a kind of total metaphor for this experience, this suspense, and war intensifies its potency. The poem continues:

Yet something slinks overhead through the sky;
Men will say that they saw it pass, and then
A flash, a thud, a roar, -
A house has been cleft through three stories (sic), and burns;
And children burn in their beds,
And men are burned rescuing them;
An old man and woman are burned to death
Because the staircase has been smashed away.

But the assembled group of people was only to learn these details later, as yet "We have only heard explosions", and they climb to a top storey to see:

There is nothing to see....
But the silence and stillness are sinister.
What has been taken away, what added?
Brick and stone have become unreal,
And only the primeval trees remain,
With the primeval fear behind them and among them.....

What is that behind the trees? -
A flame-coloured circle of light that glows
And grows brighter and dimmer by turns.
Is it an airship on fire?
It burns on, and moves nearer, slowly;
It swings clear of the trees -
The moon!

There is a sudden release in this metamorphosis of airship into moon, bringing with it all that the moon represents in terms of a Symbolist aesthetic. The metamorphosis confirms the poem's pattern of bringing together incompatibles, beauty and war, calm and destruction, contemporary actuality and the hallucination of primeval memory; a pattern which is

that of Flint's ambivalent response to reality, even to so terrible a reality as this. The release felt in the appearance of the moon can in no way reduce the terribleness, which has been so baldly and directly stated. Yet the commenting and puzzling voice - "What has been taken away? what added?" - insists on the ambivalence, insists on testing the feel of the experience, the nature of consciousness itself. "Ogre", we now see, with its insulation in the present moment, presents only one side of the picture. Whether or not there may be an escape-route from the terribleness, every experience is analogic (if not anagogic), suggests other levels of experience - "otherworlds". The whole experience of the race stands in an hallucinatory way behind the particular experience, suggests itself within the flickering play of the poet's individual consciousness. Such are the unassertive but persistent vibrations beneath the unshowy surface of Flint's verse.

In the last of this series of war poems, "Hats", Flint suggests that it is the anonymous "keeper of the season-ticket" the wearer of "hats", who is to blame for the war, not the militarists and politicians alone. In fact, this is a post-war poem; hats become the emblem of suburban practicality, from which, Flint feels, has resulted not only the sordidness of city life, but the war itself, and which are perpetuated by the survivors of the war:

You have scoffed at the poet,
Because you are a practical man.....

And you called for the slaughter that sanctifies
honour..... 50

In the conclusion of the poem Flint delivers his message to that urban and suburban species of man towards which he feels at once affinity and antipathy, to which he inseparably belongs and yet from which he feels estranged:

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but such an attitude in an artist towards his own work is surely a luxury he cannot permit himself, an evasion of the challenge confronting him. So far as his art is concerned, Flint, for all the qualities and promise of his work, gave up where others did not.

It is understandable that the influence of early Yeats should be marked in the youthful Flint, and not only because Yeats was part of the immediate poetic scene. Yeats, according to Frank Kermode,

is the poet in whose work Romantic isolation achieves its full quality as a theme for poetry, being no longer a pose, a complaint, or a programme; and his treatment of it is very closely related to his belief in what Pater called 'vision' and the French called Symbol. 52

Nowhere will we find the romantic "Beauty" more insistently present, shrouded in all the dreaminess, vague sorrowfulness and voluntary misting over of consciousness which naturally belongs to it, and bodied forth in the imagery of the Celtic Twilight, than in the early sections of Yeats's Collected Poems - Crossways, The Rose, and The Wind Among the Reeds. The misty ennui that had become mandatory for poets by the end of the nineteenth century is offered in the "mist of tears" - a highly representative phrase - of the following lines:

And, ever pacing on the verge of things,
The phantom, Beauty, in a mist of tears; 53

We remember that Baudelaire defined beauty as "quelque chose d'ardent et de triste, quelque chose d'un peu vague". The evocation in Yeats's youthful verses of this phantom beauty and of dream worlds, and his interest in spiritualism and the occult, are early signs of a belief that non-material and transcendental phenomena are "real", are "facts", just as much as, and far more important than, the material reality of the everyday world. Similarly, in his writings on Irish mythology, he easily assumes the reality of ghosts and 'faeries'.⁵⁴ This found a sympathetic echo in Symonds's interpretation of Symbolism as a revolt against exteriority, rhetoric and

materialism, as well as in the medieval Golden Age of Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites. "I was in all things Pre-Raphaelite", wrote Yeats later of the period of his life under Morris's influence; and it is easy to see how the past also becomes an escape-route from present reality ("The Past", wrote Edward Thomas, "is a strange land..... Pleasure and pain there have no sting"), an "otherworld", to set alongside the Romantic dream, the occult, and the otherness or idealism of the Symbolist poets. Oisín leaves the world of action, itself not the world of present action but the heroic pagan world of ancient Ireland, to spend three hundred years in the world of dreams, in the island of dancing, the island of victory, and the island of forgetfulness. The possibilities of the symbolism of the Rose were exhaustively explored by Yeats, but centrally it is eternal beauty, the aspect in which Flint took it up. "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is an obvious dream idyll, an otherworld, like Flint's; it not only images the isolation of the artist, but is a clear statement of the town and country dichotomy in which the countryside is a Georgian romantic fantasy. But there are two features of The Wanderings of Oisín which distinguish it from the Nineties and from Morris: the hero returns, in effect, to reality, and the recurrent images have real symbolic force. "The difference between Yeats and Morris", comments Ellman, "is that the shell and birds, which in Morris would have been mere scenery, are in Yeats symbols, like the great sun itself, of a world of perfect self-sufficiency".⁵⁵ And Leavis is just to comment of The Wind Among the Reeds that "It is, though a poetry of withdrawal, both more subtle and more vital than any pure product of Victorian romanticism".⁵⁶ Moreover, for a man who in his poetry seemed to devote himself to a land of dreams, who deliberately, like Oisín, fled the world of normal everyday action, Yeats even at this stage in his life showed remarkable practical and organisational abilities in connection

with the Irish Nationalist circle to which he had attached himself.

From the beginning, then, there was something about Yeats which equipped him to survive where others, victims of the same inheritance and predicament, fell. And if he dreamt of art, it was his experience of life, the threefold pressure of Irish Nationalism, Maud Gonne, and the events surrounding his Abbey Theatre venture, including the Hugh Lane controversy, which brought him face to face with the reality which was to underpin his art. Coming to grips with "what's difficult" may often have seemed arid and unrewarding, but it was to result in triumphs at least equalling and perhaps surpassing any others in the poetry of the present century:

The fascination of what's difficult
Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent
Spontaneous joy and natural content
Out of my heart. There's something ails our colt
That must, as if it had not holy blood
Nor on Olympus leaped from cloud to cloud,
Shiver under the lash, strain, sweat and jolt
As though it dragged road-metal. My curse on plays
That have to be set up in fifty ways,
On the day's war with every knave and dolt,
Theatre business, management of men,
I swear before the dawn comes round again
I'll find the stable and pull out the bolt. 57

What comes through in this poem is the sheer effort - the poem's movement really does "strain, sweat and jolt" - the struggle of Yeats with his predicament and with the creative task. He swears he will release Pegasus again from bondage; he is struggling towards a fuller mastery of language and technique, as well as of his own experience: and in his later poetry, we might say, Pegasus was indeed free once more. "Spontaneous joy and natural content" are exactly what have become impossible not only in Yeats's personal life, but, as Flint complains in "Otherworld", in the conditions of our modern lives in this world; yet Flint's flight to a fantasy otherworld of naturalness and spontaneity had become too easy an answer for Yeats. (It had for Flint too, but he seemed unwilling to carry through

the consequences). The poem about his disappointed love for Maud Gonne also written at this time, "No Second Troy" (both appeared in The Green Helmet, 1910), similarly has an astringency of style and an attitude to life far removed from the dreamworld of the early poems: there is a grasp of real situations and difficulties which had been lacking before. In place of the languid complaint over an undefined "sorrow" or ennui, we have in the firmness of the verse a powerful dignity in the face of real adversity. The very tightness and coldness of the verse suggests an effort made to overcome and hold in check:

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
 With misery, or that she would of late
 Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
 Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
 Had they but courage equal to desire?
 What could have made her peaceful with a mind
 That nobleness made simple as a fire,
 With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
 That is not natural in an age like this,
 Being high and solitary and most stern?
 Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
 Was there another Troy for her to burn? 58

Yeats is beginning to realise that there will be no second Troy, no recreation of an heroic or gracious age in modern Ireland. It is this capacity in him to grasp and define his predicament, to relate it to specific occasions and situations, more closely perhaps than Flint, Edward Thomas or even Eliot, which enables him to transcend his Romantic-Symbolist inheritance -

We were the last romantics - chose for theme
 Traditional sanctity and loveliness; 59

- as well as his private isolation. The Golden Age of the past is recognised as an illusion and Yeats is prepared to settle for the here and now, even if it is in a state of decay and must imminently collapse, so long as poetry and his wife's spirit-mediumship will permit, after a fashion analogous to Keats's flights of the imagination, of voyages to Byzantium.

His marriage to Georgie Hyde-Lees and her subsequent spirit-mediumship

were the next crucial developments in Yeats's life. Marriage and the birth of children joined "theatre business" and "management of men" in making Yeats feel less estranged, more of the "normal man", less of the isolated romantic artist. Nevertheless, the sense of isolation, and its primary symbol in his poetry, the Tower, remained a prominent factor in Yeats's consciousness. And simultaneously with a closer integration into normality, marriage brought a newly-enlarged access to the other world of spirit phenomena. It scarcely seems too much to say that the maintenance of these two worlds in his consciousness is the potent source of his poetry's strength.

In the year of his marriage (1917) Yeats was sketching in Per Amica Silentia Lunae his doctrine of the self and the anti-self, the idea that in the course of "the quarrel with ourselves" we pursue an opposing, reversed self somewhat analogous to Flint's other self on his imaginary distant planet. "I think all happiness depends", Yeats wrote in a diary note, "on the energy to assume the mask of some other self.... a re-birth as something not oneself, something..... created in a moment and perpetually renewed....."⁶⁰ All happiness depends on it: for these poets life is intolerable without the capacity for momentary but constantly renewable escapes into some other self, some other world. Here, of course, are the beginnings of the system derived from his wife's spirit-communications and expounded in A Vision. This work is an excellent example of the consequences of the predicament in which poets found themselves at the beginning of this century: the need to impose an order of the imagination, a coherent system of poetic myth, upon the ruins of the old systems of myth and belief. From the earliest stage of Yeats's career it is apparent that he felt a deep need to establish some other system than the discredited official alternatives of the nineteenth century, utilitarian Christianity or scientific-humanist materialism. I have, of course, cited the example of

Hardy as suggesting the possibility of a different way out; but the history of twentieth-century poetry seems to indicate that the way of Yeats, Eliot and Graves had to be fully explored before it was possible to assess the validity of Hardy's way. There were urgent inner pressures complicating the issue, and these had to be dealt with: like Eliot's nexus of classicism, Anglo-catholicism and royalism, and like Graves's White Goddess theory, Yeats's system removes the inner personality conflicts into an objective realm - an imaginary or mythical one where the sickness can be isolated and rendered harmless. Yeats may talk about the Second Coming, the imminent collapse of civilisation, without having to face the implications of what he is saying in actual terms. Of course, Yeats knew what violence was and hated it; but it is precisely because of this that it was necessary to remove his violent faith into a mythological sphere. Whether these realms are objectively true or not is of secondary importance: they make life tolerable, and they make poetry possible by acting as source-material for imagery (A Vision, Yeats said, provided him with "metaphors for poetry").⁶¹

One of the most obvious versifications of the dichotomy of self and anti-self which became embodied in the system of A Vision, occurs in "Ego Dominus Tuus", with its debate between "Hic" and "Ille", the poet content with the world and himself, and the poet seeking "an image" or anti-self:

I call to the mysterious one who yet
Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
And look most like me, being indeed my double,
And prove of all imaginable things
The most unlike, being my anti-self,
And, standing by these characters, disclose
All that I seek..... 62

The anti-self, we see, is an extension of Yeats's life-long quest for an esoteric reality - "an image", a poetic or mythological truth - rather than

any factual or demonstrable one in the ordinary sense. There are echoes, moreover, of the poet's debate with Moneta in The Fall of Hyperion; not that "Hic" and "Ille" can be equated with the poet and Moneta, but in the nature of the issues debated and in the fact that Moneta is Keats's Vision, the source of poetic imagery, like the image that "Ille" seeks. Oddly, the specific reference to Keats in the poem does not seem to recognise the extent of Keats's mature struggle with the same dichotomy of self and anti-self, world and otherworld, action and imagination; he is accused of dwelling only in the sensuous world:

I see a schoolboy when I think of him,
With face and nose pressed into a sweet-shop window. 63

Keats is seen as one of those who "love the world" and hence are condemned to "The struggle of the fly in marmalade":

For those that love the world serve it in action,
Grow rich, popular and full of influence,
And should they paint or write, still it is action:
The struggle of the fly in marmalade. 64

For Yeats here it is the world that is a dream, and the image that is reality; Keats's dichotomy of waking and sleeping ("Do I wake or sleep?") is, in effect, given reversed values:

What portion in the world can the artist have
Who has awakened from the common dream
But dissipation and despair? 65

But, infers Yeats, how could "the coarse-bred son of a livery-stable keeper" love anything other than the world? The arrogant devaluation of Keats does Yeats no credit, though it is consistent with the cultural élitism of Yeats's general position, and consistent with the dismissal of humanitarian action which Keats himself refused to make in The Fall. We might well object that the dream in The Fall is certainly no "common" one.

But if "Ego Dominus Tuus" seems to affirm the otherworld too exclusively at the expense of "the world", this is, of course, by no means Yeats's final position. In greater poems than this Yeats not only displays

the kind of command of his material and experience, the kind of struggle with "dissipation and despair", which may win the repose of great poems, but he also repeatedly transcends the private esoteric vision to statements of ordinary experience which possess an intense human centrality. The fine "Meditations in Time of Civil War" realise a fully actual world, so that the tensions between the disastrous reality of civil war and Yeats's dream, his ideal of Unity of Culture, can be cumulatively illuminated by a procession of personal symbols through the seven poems. The common dream has failed, but the attack on it is not really validated, since Yeats's dream of Unity of Culture in a reborn Ireland was scarcely a common dream anyway, was surely not shared by the Nationalist movement as a whole; it is actually Yeats's private dream that has failed. The very failure of it is another agent bringing him face to face with normal reality. And what the reader finds in the poem-sequence is a statement with which he can readily identify, a statement of the predicament of the ordinary individual in a world of war and disorder, violence and uncertainty. The symbols used, such as "The road at my door" and "The stare's nest by my window", are at once symbols which are personal to Yeats but which might be part of any man's experience - even "Sato's gift, a changeless sword", the "magical unicorns" and "brazen hawks" are reasonably accessible: the personal "my", indeed, far from distancing the reader, encourages him to identify and feel involvement. At the same time, the sequence ends in the characteristic state of ambivalence between the two worlds; the poet turns away from "the world" to the "cold snows" of his private dream, into the Tower of his isolation, towards the land of imagination, that "Heart's fullness" which cannot in actual fact be achieved:

The abstract joy,
The half-read wisdom of daemonic images,
Suffice the ageing man as once the growing boy. 66

The irony of the "sixty-year-old smiling public man", the "comfortable kind of old scarecrow", in "Among School Children" is that, while he accepts the reality of ageing, the private inward man is not comfortable or smiling at all: he is appalled at mortality and troubled as ever by a yearning for images of the immortal and unchanging, for "cold art". These, because independent of the senses, of change, of ordinary life, are "self-born mockers of man's enterprise". But the poem's final stanza seems to suggest that this ideal perfection has a certain inadequacy about it. It leaves out of account the human being, the fact of human labour; there is a tentative shifting back to an acceptance of human limitations and "the world". The stanza proceeds to suggest a human perfection; it would involve intense labour, as the triumphs of Yeats's own art have, but it is a labour in which a unity or fusion of the physical and the ideal may take place, where the "heart's fullness" is achieved without asceticism, the aesthetic of ennui ("beauty born out of its own despair"), or the aridity of abstract intellectual enquiry. The ecstatic surge of these final rhetorical questions sweeps us as readers into a blossoming or dancing which enacts an assimilation of the human with the perfect, a "unity of being" like that of the tree and its parts, or the dancer and the dance: human limitation fused with the abstract enduring perfection, world fused with otherworld.

"Byzantium" and "Sailing to Byzantium" set out the contrary-pulling impulses with less total a sense of fusion. Byzantium becomes the perfect city of art or the imagination; unchanging perfection is then contrasted with flesh-and-blood confusion and mortality. There are contrary pulls towards the final release from the cycle of human reincarnation which figures in the system of A Vision, and back towards ordinary human life. The two-way pull of life and art which Yeats inherited from his youthful involvement with the exponents of Art for Art's Sake is transmuted into a

concern touching all men at all times, by stating it in terms of the complex interaction of the human aspiration towards perfection and the need to accept human nature, with the conditions of human life, as they are, in all their sensual grossness and confusion. Yeats is so humane a poet, despite the authoritarian and anti-humanitarian tendencies, because he recognises and gives expression to these two poles of human experience in all their complex relations, and because the battle with ennui which this process reflects is so unremittingly fought. Witnessing this in Yeats, we should be able to see that the kind of distinctions made by Ivanov and Williams - between subjective and transcendental states, or between psychological or metaphysical experience and the ordinary social world - are not, and cannot be, either/or ones. They are involved with each other; they exist in just such complex relations as Yeats explores, and the battle involves all the relationships.

How far it is really fair to say of Flint, Monro or Thomas that they gave up the battle is disputable - fairer perhaps to say that in one way or another they were not equal to it - but Yeats never gave up or settled for second-rate peace terms. In the last poetry, the poetry of his old age, we find vigour and sensuality where we might expect, if not senility, at least resignation and abstinence; we find mastery of experience and of his poetic materials, and a sense of coming down to the bare rock of reality. All this can be seen in the so-called "mechanical songs" of such a sequence as "Words for Music Perhaps"; the huge, spare world of Crazy Jane and the few prototypical characters she encounters is one in which we seem to touch the bone of existence, reminding us of the world of Lear's fool on the heath, of Feste's song at the end of Twelfth Night, as well as prefiguring, say, the drama of Samuel Beckett; but a world in which sexuality and mortality are affirmed. The non-transcendental, bare

reality of natural life; Yeats seems to be concluding, is the ultimate reality for mankind. In "The Circus Animals' Desertion", probably written within a year of his death, Yeats seems to accuse himself of having pulled the wool over his own eyes with his myths and "images" - his circus animals - or at least to be saying that whatever splendid images the artist may create, in the end he must come back to the bare reality of Crazy Jane. The poem shows how the "masterful images" of his work have grown out of his experience, but while celebrating this creative triumph, seems to bow finally before sensual confusion, old age, impotence, mortality, the failure of creative energy. "For Yeats," says Ellman, "is more the poet of the sea torn by sexuality and tormented by time than the poet of the perfect moment."⁶⁷ We are back with Keats's dilemma in the "Grecian Urn" Ode: is the frieze on the urn, Eliot's "Chinese Jar",⁶⁸ Thomas's moments of perception, the momentary fusion of the dancer with the dance, as much of an otherworld of perfection as humankind can hope for? Is not any poetry which records human experience and endeavour (as poetry by definition must) bound to be preoccupied for the most part with the tormented sea? Are not the struggle and the acceptance - the earned repose embodied in triumphant poetic structures - to be valued above the momentarily efficacious amulet against the ennui? "The Circus Animals' Desertion", like the bulk of Yeats's mature work, leaves us with the impression that Yeats, ultimately, concedes nothing, neither way. Art and life, perfection and the quotidian world, are held in irreducible suspension; no conclusive statement can be made about the nature of things. Through the quest for an absolute system we arrive back at the tentative and relative; the system of A Vision is as objectively valueless as any other system: its value lies in its provision of "metaphors for poetry" and in its subjective structure for accommodating the conflicts of the

poet's experience and personality. Does, then, Yeats's symbolism echo an ultimate or eternal reality, or merely project subjective states? Graham Hough is helpful about this, and brings us back to the necessary confusion I have suggested at the beginning of this chapter:

Of course the Freudian school has explored these irrational territories only in the interests of scientific positivism; the connection we are looking for is between Yeats and Jung... Yeats's *Anima Mundi* from which the images of the poet are derived is Jung's collective unconscious, from which come the archetypes of myth and legend. Yeats's mask is the unconscious, in Jung's sense, not in Freud's - not the waste-paper basket for discarded experiences and desires, but the vehicle of the buried faculties, those which are unused in the conscious life.... We find in both the same fertility and the same obscurity about the exact status of myth. When Jung explains ecstatic and mystical experience in terms of the unconscious we feel the same uncertainty as we do when Yeats talks about "the condition of fire". Into what country are we being led? Are Byzantium and the collective unconscious psychological or metaphysical entities? All remains obscure, but involved with the obscurity is a sense of richness and adequacy, the antithesis of the cheap desire to explain away what cannot be immediately understood..... 69

The answer Yeats's poetry supplies seems to be that human reality is a yearning for the first (i.e. eternal perfection) circumscribed by the actualities and the limitations of the second; the collective unconscious, whether within or in the submerged past or out there, is contained and apprehended only within the bounds of the continuing daylight consciousness of normality: and this human reality is the only reality we have.

The Otherworld which T.S. Eliot seeks in his poetry is an escape from time and from personal emotion. It is an escape, however we may look at it - we have Eliot's own word for it:

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape these things. 70

Just so: if we may accept Whiteside's view,⁷¹ Eliot was afflicted with a schizoid-tending personality, and his emotions were of a painful enough kind for him to wish to escape them. Human kind, he said in "Burnt Norton",⁷²

"cannot bear very much reality", and while this may refer to the other reality, it is perhaps an unintended irony that he himself often seemed unable to bear very much reality of the here and now: the reality of emotion, and of time - time passing and human ageing. Again and again this is apparent in Four Quartets:

Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment..... 73

Time brings in no consolation, only revenges. The passing of time is directly connected with ennui, with a sense of life "empty of meaning":

Only a flicker
Over the strained time-ridden faces
Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
Tumid apathy with no concentration. 74

Once again, life is "consumed in unfulfilment". In the sestina of "The Dry Salvages", with its "trailing / consequence of further days and hours", Eliot does not, Helen Gardner points out, re-arrange the rhymes in each stanza because "he wishes to give the effect of repetition without progression".⁷⁵ It is the meaninglessness of Time that makes life seem endlessly repetitious, that makes life boring. Baudelaire wished to stop time passing for this very reason, to freeze everything into a time-less past. All that a proper understanding of history can teach us is how to liberate ourselves from this tyranny of time, from the investment in personality and emotion which a belief in time permits, or from the sterile indifference and stoicism which we may adopt as a defence against such an investment:

There are three conditions which often look alike
Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
From self and from things and from persons; and, growing
between them, indifference
Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
Being between two lives - unflowering, between
The live and the dead nettle. This is the use of memory:
For liberation - not less of love but expanding
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past..... 76

And thus we are directly back with Tradition and the Individual Talent, written more than twenty years earlier:

..... the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence..... This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless ^{as well as of the temporal} and of the timeless and ^{of} the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. 77

What happened over the twenty years, we see, is that an aesthetic doctrine became assimilated to a religious one: "a sense of the timeless as well as ^{of the temporal} and ^{of} the timeless and ^{of} the temporal together" is precisely what Four Quartets is about, and Eliot himself comments on the twenty years it has taken him to arrive back at the same point. The essay's two major critical insights, that any work of art inevitably stands in a certain and crucial relationship to all other works of art,⁷⁸ and that "the intensity of the artistic process" is the primary criterion of value in a work of art⁷⁹ - insights of the profoundest consequence for the methodology of criticism - are merged with a defensive theory of "impersonal art" which is a direct expression of Eliot's own personality problem, his own psychological needs. He is already deeply concerned with the problems of time and timelessness, of the interactions of past, present and future, and "the expression of personality" seems to him to represent an over-investment in temporal particularities, in the sensuous-emotional fabric of life.

Running in association with this are the theories of imagery I have discussed in Chapter 2,⁸⁰ and elsewhere. In this respect, I have remarked, Eliot shows himself a true heir of the Symbolists; the imagery of poetry grows, he is saying, from some "dark embryo", evolves at some level of consciousness other than that of normality, something akin to the Yeatsian Anima Mundi. And detachment, impersonality, is essential in the poet if he is going to be "liberated" enough from the temporal and the local to apprehend these images, these hints or intimations of "another intensity".

Impersonality, as C.K. Stead puts it, 'is a direction inward, not outward, in order to discover what is eternal'.⁸¹ The dazzling panoply of techniques in Eliot's poetry is designed to this end. The omission of the narrative "links in the chain" (sequence of events is in any case pointless if time is meaningless), the snatches of narrative and of dialogue, the lyric refrains and interludes, the montages of disparate images, the ironical juxtapositions, the "paradoxical gleam", the catalogued items and strings of definite articles - all these attempt to take out the narrative or personal "I", to avoid localisation and particularisation; they attempt, in other words, to convey a sense of the timeless as well as ^{of the temporal and of} the timeless and ^{of} the temporal together. And we see why the "together" is a necessary qualification: this is related to that "definiteness of statement and indefiniteness of suggestion" in Eliot's poetry.⁸² Section III of "The Dry Salvages", for example, seems, with its medley of physical and commonplace images - "a Royal Rose or a lavender spray", "fruit, periodicals and business letters" - to insist that we have no alternative but to "fare forward" in this life, since, chained in flesh and time as we are, the only way we may "know" anything is through the temporal and physical fabric of our lives. Indeed, the imagery of poetry must, in the first instance, be drawn from here before being remade in the dark embryo. Symbolism is an attempt at "divination of the spiritual in the tangible, expressed by means of the tangible".

Nevertheless, for the poet who draws our attention to the unreality of the city and its church clock counting the hours, the local and the temporal are always unreal. Seeking an Otherworld that will be more real, he is a Symbolist who makes only a very limited accommodation with reality of the here and now - more limited than that of Flint or Thomas, or of Graves or Yeats. The central search for impersonality in his poetry, suggests L.G. Salinger, "is the counterpoise to his deep sense of unreality,

or equivocal reality, in personal emotions" (Salingar's remarks quoted in Chapter 2 are directly relevant here).⁸³ And "Prufrock" ends, as Maxwell puts it,

with a reiteration of the desire to escape to "the chambers of the sea", beyond the complexities and troubles that may possibly be raised by human associations. Prufrock does not see in the water symbol the significance often given it elsewhere in the poetry. For him it is only a sufficiently remote place of escape. 84

But doesn't the water-symbol remain connotative of escape? - isn't its significance finally that we must look for refreshment elsewhere than in a worldly dimension, the dimension of human relationships? -

The tolling bell
Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried
Ground swell, a time
Older than the time of chronometers..... 85

The way the paralysed state which is ennui in the earlier poems becomes the still centre which is eternity in the later poems, the way "the chambers of the sea" becomes "the water-symbol", suggests an essential connection between Prufrock's shrinking from too much reality and the timeless otherworld of Four Quartets. It is true that an ambience of sophisticated cosmopolitanism, of social and even racial variety, in the 1920 poems and The Waste Land suggests a wide range of experience, a Tiresias-like inclusiveness in the knowledge of human interconnections, and with the movement through to the Four Quartets (with its repeated references to "old men") there is the impression of a weighty burden of living, of weariness springing from long endeavour. But even Eliot's young men are old - "I grow old..... I grow old....." - are weighed down by some intangible weariness. Prufrock, and the case is not greatly altered if he is not young but middle-aged, as is often supposed, suffers an agonising emotional paralysis, an "aboulia"; the central concerns of human living are for him largely unreal. Here and throughout the oeuvre, in fact, the response to experience is a somewhat abnormal one. While Eliot was measuring out

his life in coffee spoons, a striking enactment of a certain kind of experience and state of mind - striking in its very lack of commitment or involvement - the poetry of Yeats, who had a civil war on his doorstep, was treating experience in a very different way, a way involving immediacy of response rather than detachment, a passionate identification with human fallibility and the imperfections of time and the flesh:

Last night they trundled down the road
That dead young soldier in his blood. 86

This is not the observation of a politic attendant Lord. One may praise the miraculous balance in Eliot of specific and general, of the particular and the remote, of the precise and the suggestive, and indeed there is a peculiar and unique achievement of a cool and memorable poise in Eliot's work, like his own description of a Chinese jar which "still Moves perpetually in its stillness". But the achievement is at a loss; the balance tires us by its very fastidiousness, and because it is a detached balance, rather than a commitment like Yeats's in which the poet is repeatedly torn between two poles of experience, the effect is of always tipping away from us, away from central and normal human concerns. Moreover, not only is Eliot's range limited and his material attenuated by comparison with Yeats, but his rejection of the validity of action in "the world" has a different bearing. There is little of Yeats's passionate pull towards action - Eliot wrote no "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" - and it rests within an essential social conformism which has nothing to do with the artist-as-rebel nexus to which Yeats, despite his public life, affiliates.

The attitude towards experience as a valid source of knowledge or fulfilment to which all Eliot's poetry points:

There is, it seems to us,
At best, only a limited value
In the knowledge derived from experience. 87

is, taken judiciously, a useful safeguard against inflated expectations and the despair which might be their consequence. The actual fabric of life is seen

of different verse forms used in the four poems: it is a continuation of the way in which Eliot throughout his work will commit himself neither to fixed forms nor free verse, and the marvellous sensitivity with which he handles his irregular verse vehicles is itself, on the negative side, a kind of evasion. The aged eagle seems to wheel endlessly without ever quite dropping to strike; the language, too, of the Four Quartets is centrally involved in this. The lyrical passages may often be pastiche, but what are we to set over against their clinical stiffness? There are many passages of inimitable evocation and rhythmic subtlety, but they constantly become entangled in word-juggling and the "paradoxical gleam":

Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning.

It is a perilous undertaking - are these genuine profundities or are they taking us into blind allies? Of course this paradox, this appearance of getting nowhere - "In my beginning is my end" - is at the root of the poem's statement; but there is a crucial problem here in the way the language constantly drifts towards negativeness, constantly seems to balk at giving the reader a positive response, and in the way the poem resolves itself into a massive tautology. If you are writing a poem about the invalidity of experience, of time, emotion and personality, you dare not invest too heavily in language which might realise too convincingly the phenomenal and emotional textures of life. Eliot has himself in an impasse: poetry depends upon language used to realise concrete states, yet Eliot has no concrete states to communicate, only "hints and guesses". But is it not possible for poetry to realise a "sense of mystery" as Maxwell says the Four Quartets do? The trouble is that this sense of mystery, it seems to me, is not really given in the poetry - it is only meditated and commented upon. A shaft of sunlight and the laughter of children, the rhythmic spasms of "Quick now, here, now, always", "The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast

water" - what active pressure in symbol, or imagery, or rhythm takes us through, even within the patterned world of the poem, a realised ecstatic or mystical experience? 'In these timeless moments', says C.K. Stead, 'communion with the Infinite has been achieved; but they lie outside the poem'.⁹¹ But if they lie outside the poem, how are we to know the communion has been achieved? Eliot makes his point often enough - "You say I am repeating" - the patterns revolve and revolve, but the elegant detachment and balance of his mind itself works against any final definition: he is not what Helen Gardner says he is, a visionary poet; he does not have "the power to render 'unknown modes of Being'". We want a compensation for the "continual extinction of personality", but because Eliot can only give us "hints and guesses", we don't know whether the goods are reliable or will ever be delivered.

All this brings us to a position, it seems to me, where Raymond Williams's strictures on the timeless as an evasion of dynamic social consciousness tell heavily against Eliot, despite, or partly because of, his own kinds of expressed social concern. Those who share Eliot's view of reality will, it goes without saying, set aside a good deal of this analysis as irrelevant. The terms of the objection, it will be argued, are not such as Eliot would have accepted: precisely what he is saying is that such terms must be rejected if we are ever to know the greater reality. We must not, says F.O. Matthiessen for example, dismiss Eliot 'for not giving the same affirmation of life that you find in Keats'.⁹² But I am trying to account for Eliot, not to dismiss him; we might consider also the terms both of censure and advocacy in these excellent remarks of Salinger:

His own poetry is defective as a criticism of life because he is too deeply concerned with horror and boredom....

But his greatness as a poet lies in his striving to grasp a metaphysical reality - to maintain a detachment resembling that of the mystics against the pressure of his own scepticism.....

Eliot does not define his metaphysical reality or describe a contemplative experience, so much as recreate the experience dramatically..... 93

Exactly; like The Waste Land, Four Quartets is a dramatic enactment of the quest for the otherworld, but not of the arrival there, and in both poems we are faced with the aesthetic problem of Yvor Winters's "heresy of imitative form". The scepticism which throws its colouring so heavily over all Eliot's work, and imparts to it much of its hallmark of modernistic disenchantment, is a strength in one light, directly involved in the judicious restraint from over-investment. But because Eliot will never stick his neck out too far, because he cannot be sure that even the other reality may not possibly be a mere "disconsolate chimera",⁹⁴ it contributes to the weakness in presenting that very reality, as well as to that general sense of devitalisation which in his work paradoxically counters the vitality of imagery and technique. Lucas and Myers have argued in relation to The Waste Land that the impersonality and scepticism are in fact a means by which the poet avoids responsibility, balks the implications of the 'scenes' he creates, and they find this 'debilitating';⁹⁵ if, on the other hand, we claim, as Stead does, pointing to Eliot's statements about the 'passive' nature of poetic composition, that this is a refined version of 'negative capability', we do have to ask - despite Matthiessen - where there is any exact equivalence in Eliot to the vision of Moneta and the affirmation of life which is won by Keats out of the negativity, the impersonal toil. The dramatic realisation of the quest does not overcome the sense of evasion. However, it does without question leave us with a very remarkable poetic spectacle of a man suffering, and a man struggling against that suffering, a man striving to grasp something:

only those who have personality and emotions know what it is to want to escape from these things.

Eliot clearly recognises that we are bound by time and the flesh, and

have to live with the fact; he is highly successful at holding despair at arm's length, at surviving on life's own terms. His commanding and penetrating artistic intelligence creates potent images of the modern consciousness and strategies which brilliantly mirror the detachment of his mind. He remains a dominating figure with whom we have to come to terms, and reading his poetry, with its determined struggle and its own kind of repose:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. 96

is a discipline, an extension of the reader's sensibility, and a fuller revelation of what the modern consciousness is. It is a consciousness in which moving between two worlds has become a habit of mind, a means by which experience is measured and determined and, above all, rendered manageable:

But, as the passage now presents no hindrance
To the spirit unappeased and peregrine
Between two worlds become much like each other,
So I find words I never thought to speak
In streets I never thought I should revisit
When I left my body on a distant shore. 97

Returning to the beginning, revisiting streets that follow like a tedious argument, this variant of Stetson can now re-pronounce as a judgement upon experience what had been said twenty years before, that it is only the "refining fire" that restores significance and brings repose. Of course, Four Quartets is a Christian poem about the struggle with the meaninglessness of time and place finding its points of release in God manifesting himself in daily life - the timeless in the temporal. The emphasis throughout on "pattern" is an insistence that it is not just the "timeless moment" which gives meaning to place and to history, but the pattern of which such moments are hints or glimpses, that is, the system of God's authority. It is to discipline and authority, in art the authority of tradition, in life the

authority of Christian doctrine, that Eliot turns as a refuge from, and a bulwark against, ennui. Whether we find the objective symbolism convincing or prefer to read the poetry as a subjective account of Eliot's inner struggle, it is in the expression of the predicament and of the struggle against it that Eliot's universality lies, and at least, through the sustained balancing of world against otherworld, he achieved in poetry which is at once compelling and unsatisfactory, a negative victory.

These lines in Robert Graves's 'Song of Contrariety' (Whipperginny, 1923):

Far away is close at hand,
Close joined is far away, 98

record what seems to be the controlling principle of Graves's mind: the principle of contrariety, a psychological disposition in which nothing can be apprehended without simultaneously apprehending its contrary. In the early poem "Outlaws" (Country Sentiment, 1920), two distinct areas of consciousness co-exist: that of normal daylight vision, "the eye", the rational self; and that which is "beyond sight", the topsy-turvy world of the outlaws or "old gods", the suppressed irrational self:

Owls - they whinny down the night;
Bats go zizag by.
Ambushed in shadow beyond sight
The outlaws lie.

Old gods, tamed to silence, there
In the wet woods they lurk,
Greedy of human stuff to snare
In nets of murk.

Look up, else your eye will drown
In a moving sea of black;
Between the tree-tops, upside down,
Goes the sky-track. 99

This is born of pain, of the struggle to keep the rational mind from submerging in the "nets of murk", the "sea of black" - the neurasthenia produced by Graves's war experiences.. But even before he had been to

the front, an intense interest in a world of fairy-story and nursery-rhyme indicates that Graves's mind was pre-disposed to this principle of twoness or contrariety - the real world where things happen according to the normal physical, spatial and temporal laws; and a mythical world where anything can happen. Of course, "Outlaws" may easily be read as a struggle between id and super-ego, Freudian ideas having been mediated to Graves by W.H.R. Rivers who treated him for shell-shock - Graves's early critical writings, such as On English Poetry (1922), pioneer the application of Freudian ideas to poetry. But just as easily we can see in the

Old gods almost dead, malign,
Starving for unpaid dues:
Incense and fire, salt, blood and wine
And a drumming muse.

a preliminary statement of the pagan iconography of the White Goddess theory. In "The Hills of May" (The Pier Glass, 1921) there is an early foreshadowing of the Goddess herself. A mysterious "proud lady" who walks with "a virgin heart" takes "the Wind" as her lover, "Scorning in her gay habit, Lesser love than this".¹⁰⁰ A conflict between an ideal, non-physical love and the carnal love of the real world - at the end of the poem the proud lady "has left our bournes for ever, Too fine to stay" - is already announced as one of the commanding dualities of Graves's poetry.

It is clear that under the near-hysterical struggle in the early poems with his war-neurosis, where the trappings of melodrama take on a startling and intense reality, there lies some kind of pre-existing maladjustment; perhaps we can again talk about an incipient schizoid personality. Sassoon called the young Graves "a fad-ridden crank".¹⁰¹ In Good-Bye to All That he himself attempts to explain certain peculiarities in his make-up in terms of his mixed racial origins and "a conditioning in the Protestant morality of the English governing classes".¹⁰² Perhaps

only "a fad-ridden crank" could have written The White Goddess, and that work must certainly be seen as the successful culmination of a series of attempts by Graves not only to cope with his war-neurosis but also to reconcile the conflicts more deeply embedded in his nature. He came to see writing poetry itself as a defence against psychic chaos. Language, he says in "The Cool Web", cuts us off and protects us from the childhood world of intense pure experience, which is also, in Gravesian terms, the pure, timeless ideal of poetry to which the time-bound and earthbound poet can never more than approximate. But without this protection, without the rational arrangement of words which is not only speech but also poetry, we should be lost: "if we let our tongues lose self-possession.....We shall go mad no doubt and die that way".¹⁰³ Michael Kirkham, in The Poetry of Robert Graves, looking for a way of defining the unique character of Graves's best poetry, suggests that:

the most nearly adequate is that it is an individual blend of romantic and realistic impulses - the balancing of an aspiration towards a perfect, timeless state of being where contradictions are resolved against an acute sense of the limits set by actuality. 104

If this is so, Graves exactly fits the pattern of consciousness I have traced, in which some form of psychological stress or disturbance produces poetry of tension between world and otherworld, realistic and Romantic-Symbolist impulses.

The other dimension of consciousness in Graves is always ambivalent; it may be a desired release from the burdens of everyday reality, a breakthrough into timeless perfection, or it may be a submerging in horror and madness; and both Freudian and Jungian figurations may be traced. The earlier poetry is continuously haunted by ghosts, Graves's memories of war; but an hallucinatory state which accompanies this and reminds us of other poets we have examined, persists in his later poetry of the two worlds. In "The Pier-Glass" (1921) a woman herself like a ghost haunts a "lost manor"

to which she is "Drawn by a thread of time-sunk memory", and seeks some way through to a natural, daylight level of consciousness where she will be relieved of these memories and no longer pursue this phantasmal existence.¹⁰⁵

"Down", a closely-related poem from the same volume, records the struggle of a sick, perhaps dying, man to hold on to normal consciousness. He remembers how in childhood there was no difficulty in the transition back and forth from the world of darkness to the daylight world:

There he had lain
As if unborn, until life floated back
From the deep waters.
Oh, to renew now
That bliss of repossession, kindly sun
Forfeit for ever, and the towering sky! 106

The idea of childhood's easy movement back and forth between the two worlds finds a perfect correlative in the Victorian children's story which Graves knew from his own nursery days, Alice through the Looking-Glass, and his "Alice", coming four years after the Pier-Glass poems (Welchman's Hose, 1925), is a key point of reference for Graves's poetry of the two worlds. The dark threat of the Pier-Glass poems appears to have been mastered; the adult poet can now play detachedly with the paradoxes and contrarities of his theme, he can accept the world of unreason as no longer a phantasmal darkness yet "as true as anything you'd swear to". He is safe returned from the nightmare of the war and its aftermath, but left with a firm belief in the reality of the other world:

But her greater feat
Was rounding these adventures off complete:
Accepting them, when safe returned again,
As queer but true, not only in the main.
True, but as true as anything you'd swear to,
The usual three dimensions you are heir to. 107.

The world beyond actuality here seems beneficent and innocuous, and from now on Graves consistently unites this aspect of the irrational and the unknowable with its awful aspect, so that finally the White Goddess is seen as an object of both love and awe. Graves's assertive technical

control had until now been a desperate struggle against chaos; in "Alice" the rhythms play with a hint of mockery against the sedate couplet form, there is a slight discordance in the rhymes, all contributing to a speculative tension, a holding of opposites in uncontradicting juxtaposition. Thus disarmed, the reader accepts the paradoxes easily; the matter-of-fact off-handedness is the correct tonal keynote for the relativism of the poem. Alice is "of a speculative bent", and the two worlds are accepted in a spirit of philosophical relativism which recalls Flint's and is the next stage in Graves's accommodation of inner conflicts.

Graves is a thoroughly good Romantic in his antipathy to scientific thought, and the scientist was to be excluded from access to the mysteries of the Goddess. He had represented Alice as immune from "the trap in which the scientist would fall" of assuming that one kind of reality cancels another, that the worlds of fantasy and actuality cannot exist side-by-side and be equally real. But this itself implies the opposite of a simple antithesis; "In Broken Images" (Poems 1929) not only opposes scientific and poetic modes of thought, but also the two sides of Graves's own nature, the romantic and sceptically realistic. In the same vein of sceptical but unscientific relativism, "The Devil's Advice to Story-Tellers", in the poem of that title, is

Nice contraction between fact and fact
Will make the whole read human and exact. 108

Neither science nor metaphysics, Graves seems to believe, can make sense of existence; it follows that the "nice contradiction between fact and fact" which is often how experience strikes us can only be reconciled or made sense of in a myth-system. This phase of scepticism and relativism in Graves's work stretched from about 1926-1938, when Graves was strongly under Laura Riding's influence; her rigorously intellectual influence undoubtedly helped Graves to bring the confusion of his earlier work under

control, and, often using imagery of exile (the two poets lived in Majorca), to achieve the detachment necessary for the overcoming of his nightmares and hauntings. The relativism and scepticism, as well as the wittily bizarre and humorous elements of Graves's poetry at this time enabled him to hold his two worlds in uneasy but obedient suspense: it was a process of the assertion of the will, and as in Eliot or Baudelaire, "impersonality" helped him to hold off the sickness, to assert his grasp on normality and sanity. Standing centrally within this phase is "The Terraced Valley" (Ten Poems More, 1930), like "Alice", I feel, one of the touchstones for Graves's poetry of the two worlds. The starting-point of the poem, like that of nearly all Graves's important work, appears to be the poet's love for a woman; a "deep thought" of her sends the poet into a poetic trance (according to Graves all true Muse-inspired poetry is bestowed upon the poet in a state of trance) in which he penetrates into the world of Unreason, a reversed world of dream and fantasy like Alice's world through the looking-glass. The imagery of "a new region" immediately reminds us of Keats and Thomas's journeys into countries of the mind:

In a deep thought of you and concentration
I came by hazard to a new region:
The unnecessary sun was not there,
The necessary earth lay without care -
For more than sunshine warmed the skin
Of the round world that was turned outside-in. 109

(I quote the revised version which appears in the Collected Poems.) There is an unnatural heat in this new region, and the landscape possesses an abnormal clarity and flatness; it is like a surrealist painting and, indeed, reminds us of the artificial paradises (there are no "birds of the air") of Baudelaire's hashish or opium dreams. We have often noticed that these phenomena in poetry of suspending normal consciousness and finding a loophole in time are accompanied by suggestions of a feverish delirium which could be induced by sickness or drugs; here the poet seems

to experience an unnatural singing in the ears:

Singing of kettles, like a singing brook,
Made out-of-doors a fireside nook.

In Graves's case this probably derives from the experience of shell-shock (there is no evidence of his having taken drugs at this time). Thus the poem looks both backward in Graves's life, and forward to the escape from Time which communion with the White Goddess was to represent.

Necessarily, since all normal states are confused or reversed in this new region, sex becomes transcended ("Hermaphrodizing love"); the other world is outside time and beyond physical laws, like the world of "Alice" it has its own "rules and moves". The magical element is strong here, and the strangeness of the landscape is emphasized not only by the surreal detail and the series of witty paradoxes in terms of which the landscape is described, but also by the irregularity of the verse: each stanza forms its own pattern, has its own "rules". But when the poet looks around for his "love" in this other world he cannot find her:

But you, my love, where had you then your station?
Seeing that on this counter-earth together
We go not distant from each other;
I knew you near me in that strange region,
So searched for you, in hope to see you stand
On some near olive-terrace, in the heat,
The left-hand glove drawn on your right hand,
The empty snake's egg perfect at your feet -

But found you nowhere in the wide land,
And cried disconsolately, until you spoke
Immediate at my elbow, and your voice broke
This trick of time, changing the world about
To once more inside-in and outside-out.

The imagery of the White Goddess poems is already developing - the mediterranean-like setting, the snake's egg, the picture of the woman as he hoped to see her. Thus the ending of the poem, where the actual woman speaks and breaks the "trick of time", may indicate Graves's unreadiness yet to encounter the sacred mysteries. But it may also or alternatively signify that such ideal love cannot exist; there is no communication

between lovers at this level. The otherworld may represent an alternative reality, but love cannot survive without fulfilment in the physical world: this is consistent with the conflict of ideal and physical love, reflecting a sexual maladjustment beneath the more ostensible and dramatic problem of adjustment occasioned by the war, which persists in such poems of this period as "Sick Love" (1929), and "Ulysses" and "The Succubus" (1937). It will be noted, however, that Graves never renounces the normal world, and consistently attaches only mythical or magical significance to the "trick of time"; never such metaphysical significance as Eliot.

By 1938 the Goddess is coming squarely into Graves's mental line of vision and there appear to be, as he announces in the poem of that title, "No More Ghosts". The romantic impulse in his nature may now be given a much freer rein, but there is a surviving current of toughness and scepticism from the discipline of the Laura Riding period. "Through Nightmare" (Poems 1938-45) seemingly reverses the situation of "The Terraced Valley", in that here it is the woman, the poet's mistress, who is able to step outside time while he remains behind in the normal world. Travelling through nightmare, she finds herself in a place "at large remove beyond all dream", a "lost and moated land", inhabited by "the untameable, the live, the gentle", to whom "there's no way in by history's road".¹¹⁰ This is Graves's "Lost Acres" which, in that poem, cannot be found on any map; there is "no scientific need to plot these acres of the mind".¹¹¹ The "untameable" who dwell there obviously relate to the "old gods" of the much earlier poem, but now these are also "gentle" - there is a benignant and inspiring side of the unknown region. The poet is clearly on the verge of initiation into the mysteries of the Goddess of whom he was henceforward to see the poet's earthly mistress as a temporal manifestation; an account of the initiation itself is given in the same volume in "Instructions to the Orphic Adept".

The poem is "in part translated from the Timpone Grande and Campagno Orphic tablets", and the Orphic Adept is being instructed on what to do when his "mazed spirit" descends, after death, into Hades:

So soon as ever your mazed spirit descends
From daylight into darkness, Man, remember
What you have suffered here in Samothrace,
What you have suffered. 112

At the same time, it is essential to read the poem as a poetic journey from reality (Samothrace) into yet another region of the mind, and the death as a symbolic one from which rebirth ensues. Thus the "mazed spirit" can represent, again, the poet's imagination in a state of dream or trance. The injunction - a primary Orphic precept - to the poet-adept to remember suffering, which takes us back to the memory theme of the Pier-Glass poems, is crucial: as with Keats in The Fall of Hyperion (with which there are a number of parallels) it is only through ordeal, through survival of suffering, that initiation into the mysteries and access to a vision of the Goddess are achieved. The landscape through which the adept will pass recalls that of "A Terraced Valley", with elements of Baudelairean unreality:

The Halls of Judgement shall loom up before you,
A miracle of jasper and of onyx.
To the left hand there bubbles a black spring
Overshadowed with a great white cypress.
Avoid this spring, which is Forgetfulness;

Instead, at another pool "the pool of Memory", the adept will have to reply to certain riddles, but he will already have been armed by the oracle with the answers:

Then you shall answer: "I am parched with thirst.
Give me to drink....
I also am of your thrice-blessed kin,
Child of the three-fold Queen of Samothrace;
Have made full quittance for my deeds of blood....

Graves has purged himself of the burden of guilt he has carried with him since the war - "I...Have made full quittance for my deeds of blood";

he is one of the elect, having dedicated himself to the true Muse; and the consequent escape from Time is represented in imagery familiar in the same connection in both Yeats and Eliot, imagery of the wheel:

But they will ask you yet: "What of your feet?"
 You shall reply: "My feet have borne me here
 Out of the weary wheel, the circling years,
 To that still, spokeless wheel: - Persephone.
 Give me to drink!"

And at the still centre for Graves, of course, is not Anima Mundi or the Christian God, but Persephone - an aspect of the White Goddess. (For Keats it was Moneta - the Goddess of Memory.) Persephone figures, of course, in a death-rebirth cycle; not only is the poet now released from guilt, but also from the dilemma of his two worlds, and may now command the ghosts of which he was previously victim:

You shall drink deep of that refreshing draught,
 To become lords of the uninitiated
 Twittering ghosts, Hell's countless populace.....

In this poem, which combines the strengths of Graves's retellings of classical myth such as "Theseus and Ariadne" with the highly-charged atmosphere of what he calls his "magical" poems (the versifications of the material elucidated in prose in The White Goddess), the classical Underworld replaces the world through the looking-glass of "Alice", but as in that poem knowledge of both worlds is held in untroubled suspense. The descent in "Down" to the "flame-axis of this terrible earth" which is there dreaded, is here undergone willingly, since the "adept" has been forearmed by the oracle and prepared by ritual dedication. The poet of "A Terraced Valley" was not similarly forearmed, and hence could not deal adgautely with the "trick of time". It is important that the adept's passage through Hades is followed by symbolic rebirth, or, as far as the poet is concerned, a return to normal consciousness. It is necessary to drink of the "pool of Memory" in order to remember simultaneously the experience of both worlds; the adepts may then return as oracles to earth -

Pronouncing oracles from tall white tombs
By the nymphs tended.

- the poet, to write poems like Graves's on the Single Theme of the Goddess and her poet-lover.

Like Keats's and Edward Thomas's, Graves's metaphysics are rooted in physical reality: he is a myth-maker, not a mystic. His "trick of time" is just that: a psychological oddity, nourished by painful maladjustment and unbearable memories, from which he cannot free himself until he discovers a mythological faith in which the suffering can be contemplated without intolerable unease. But always he returns from the journey into myth to the sustaining fabric of concrete phenomena. The theme of resurrection, or return, is, as we have seen, recurrent; from his earliest poems existence is represented as a successive dying to be brought back to life to die again, and he records an actual experience of having been wounded in the trenches and returning to consciousness after several days, only to read a report of his own death in The Times. This theme is finally integrated in the White Goddess theory as the archetypal story - the Single Theme - of the poet-lover ritually sacrificed at the hands of his mistress the Goddess, to rise again and renew his love. But "The Survivor" (Poems and Satires, 1951) puts the theme into the intensely personal and intimate context of his actual life; it is a poem which sums up the two great ordeals of his life, which have burnt themselves into his poetic personality, what J.M. Cohen¹¹³ speaks of as the ordeal by war and the ordeal by love:

Is this joy? - to be doubtless alive again
And the others dead? Will your nostrils gladly savour
The fragrance, always new, of a first hedge-rose?
Will your ears be charmed by the thrush's melody
Sung as though he had himself devised it?

And is this joy: after the double suicide
(Heart against heart) to be restored entire,
To smooth your hair and wash away the life-blood,
And presently seek a young and innocent bride,
Whispering in the dark: 'for ever and ever'? 114

The tough old-soldier pose with its contradictory inhering tenderness is not only typical of the irremovable dualities of his nature but presents another of the continuous strategies for coping with despair. To be "restored entire" is an ambiguous blessing since renewed life means renewed suffering, but this "fragrance..... of a first hedge-rose" and "thrush's melody" are the marks of a man who, like Keats, can never escape the pull of sensuous phenomena: again and again in his poetry we find his vivid and richly concrete imagery directing us away from the transcendental.

To come at last to poems such as "Return of the Goddess", with its stress on her savage cruelty, is to see clearly the character of the White Goddess theory as a sublimation of the neurotic imaginings, and perhaps specifically of a repressed desire for vengeance on those who plunged him into the turmoil of the war and its consequences (including a broken marriage). Like Eliot and Yeats, Graves envisages the collapse of a decadent civilisation and embraces an ostensibly anti-liberal-humanist view of the remedies for the malaise of modern man. Capitalism and Communism, he asserts in The White Goddess, both worship false gods; man must submit himself to the cleansing purgation of a pagan religion which sets Unreason above Reason and obeys the orgiastic principle of blood-sacrifice demanded by the seasonal rhythms of agriculture. We may see this as a ritually cleansing re-enactment of the orgy of bloodshed in which he himself took part, but it is, of course, itself a negation of the insistently rational side of his own nature. Such speculations only become possible because they are removed into the sphere of myth, because they are detached from reality. Like Baudelaire, Graves removes abnormal and anti-social impulses into a harmless realm and there acts out his personal drama. The question of whether he actually believes in the Goddess puts this point in focus. In his descriptions of her -

Whose broad high brow was white as any leper's,
 Whose eyes were blue, with rowan-berry lips,
 With hair curled honey-coloured to white hips. 115

- he leans heavily on countless pictures of beautiful women in English poetry. Graves himself points out such sources as this in The Ancient Mariner:

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
 Her locks were yellow as gold:
 Her skin was white as leprosy,
 The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
 Who thicks man's blood with cold. 116

That she is so obviously a literary concoction (though Graves would object that the similarities are due to all true poets having had personal knowledge of her) reduces her credibility: we remain unconvinced that Graves has had a "vision" of her in any sense other than in his imagination.

There is, moreover, evidence to suggest that Graves himself sees the otherworld as a symbolic projection of self rather than something which "exists" out there. We have already noticed that some of his imagery of the otherworld is reminiscent of Baudelaire's artificial paradises, his "paysage opiacé",¹¹⁷ resulting from hashish or opium dreams. Graves has come to believe that a great deal of what our inherited myth-structures have in common can be explained in terms of the visions produced under the influence of hallucigenic mushrooms. The excitement produced by eating such mushrooms, says Graves, "induces.....spatial and temporal delusions - of the sort that fascinated Lewis Carroll's Alice when she nibbled the mushroom".¹¹⁸ And "European ideas of heaven and hell may well have derived from similar mysteries" as those performed still by Mexican Indians in which hallucigenic mushrooms are eaten.¹¹⁹ If the visionary otherworld, whether heaven or Hades or some other timeless and extra-spatial dimension, is merely a trick of consciousness experienced under stimulants such as opium or mushroom, it obviously has only subjective existence. Alethea Hayter, in her Opium and the Romantic Imagination,

insists that "there is no objectively real landscape to which opium admits its votaries; it only directs their attention to certain features in the landscape of their own imaginations, and casts a livid shadow over them."¹²⁰ But if we can often find common features in these landscapes, as psychoanalysis no less than literary criticism shows we can, are we not back with the "collective unconscious", the Anima Mundi, Graves's "old gods" in their "lost acres"? - where these poets seek, by going within or back, community through myth, and in which Ivanov's two types of Symbolism seem to become confused. Something which once, in our earliest history, held us together - so the inference seems to be - has now fallen apart; to regain contact with that would be to regain contact with one another, and the objective validity of its heavens or hells would, in a sense, be of secondary importance.

Writing poetry, Graves maintains, is impossible; the most a poet can do is discipline himself to approximate as closely as possible to the timeless and perfect ideal. Yet this in itself seems to be a way of mythologising the real nature of the struggle his poetry records with his own despair. With the publication of the fourth Collected Poems in 1959, according to Kirkham, the third phase of Graves's poetic development ended; with the books of verse published since then he has entered another phase, in which he "celebrates the Black Goddess of Wisdom, who in early Jewish, Orphic and Sufi mystery cults brought to the few who, having suffered continuous death and recreation at the White Goddess's hand, had fully served their apprenticeship to her, knowledge of a final certitude in love".¹²¹ Graves's problems of consciousness do seem to have been largely overcome when he discovers the White Goddess, bringing a measure of repose, in which the conflict of ideal and physical is no longer so strongly troublesome, and which is mythologised as the Black Goddess, though his verse has sometimes seemed more mannered and predictable as some of the conflict has

gone out of it. The status of Graves's individual poems is difficult to determine; accomplished as they are, there is nearly always a sense that he is holding something back. But this is inherent in their materials, and he has always insisted, continuously revising and excluding in order to enhance it, upon the unity and totality of the Collected Poems. It is, in effect, a complete and unified work recording his particular problems of consciousness, his struggle with despair and a kind of victory over it; only in accumulation do the poems tell the whole story - and if Graves has altered poems to fit that whole story and possibly exaggerated the consistency of his work, can we, from this point of view, complain? - and they rank, when considered in this way, among the most impressive poetic endeavours of the century.¹²²

The reader finds in Eliot's poetry a mood and an atmosphere he recognises, and memorable phrasings and rhythmic patternings which seem impeccably to generalise particular psychic moments; he feels with Graves that he, too, has fought some such battle as this between the two sides of his own nature - the bestial and the idealistic, the sober and the frenzied; with Yeats, that he has felt an analogous pull between his personal life and public events, and the larger pull between aesthetic perfection and everyday squalor or paltriness. Yeats, at least, has succeeded in introducing public events into poetry without falsifying the subjective self, without falling back into the poetry of rhetoric against which, in its late-Victorian form, he had consciously schooled himself. Eliot believes or wants to believe in his otherworld, whereas Yeats and Graves are conveniently ambiguous, so that we may make of their otherworlds what we will. But the phenomena of consciousness and the struggle to survive which they record fit a pattern consistent with that in Flint, Monro and Edward Thomas; whether the other reality is within or out there, whether there was a time, about which we have confused psychic memories

and garbled messages in our various myth-systems, when we were able to achieve community with that reality, whether we can or cannot achieve fully meaningful 'community' in the here and now, a way of setting down the problem and simultaneously achieving rich poetic statements was found, each in his own way, by all these poets.

NOTES

1. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, 1961, p. 2.
2. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, 1973, p. 246.
3. Ibid., pp. 246-7.
4. 'Simbolismo', Enciclopedia Italiana, Rome and Milan, 1936-44, pp. 793-5. The quotations are from a private translation by a friend, A. Lojkin.
5. cf. Chapter 3, p. 136 - 7.
6. See Introduction, Note 18, for my use of 'Symbolism' and 'symbolism'. A.G. Lehmann claims that the French Symbolist poets were not themselves very successful myth-makers. 'Hardly the stuff of Oedipus or Lear, Faust or Satan', comments Lehmann of their attempts at developing myths (The Symbolist Aesthetic in France, p. 247). It seems to be only with the modern poets that a way is found of bringing the Symbolist method into close alliance with the creation of personal mythologies.
7. Joy Grant, Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop, p. 119.
8. Otherworld, p. 1.
9. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
10. Ibid., p. 2.
11. Ibid., p. 2.
12. Walter Pater, Appreciations, 1910, p. 66.
13. Graham Hough, The Last Romantics, University Paperbacks, 1961, p. 137.
14. Otherworld, p. 2.
15. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
16. Ibid., p. 3.

17. Ibid., p. 4.
18. Ibid., p. 4.
19. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
20. cf. Chapter 4, p. 252.
21. Otherworld, p. 5.
22. Ibid., p. 6.
23. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
24. The Waste Land, ll. 60-68.
25. These remarks may be compared with what I say about Monro and Eliot in Chapter 2, especially pp. 87 - 93 ; cf. also Chapter 5, p. 301.
26. Otherworld, p. 7.
27. Ibid., p. 8.
28. Ibid., pp. 8-9.
29. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
30. Ibid., p. 12.
31. See Cyrena N. Pondrom, 'Selected Letters from H.D. to F.S. Flint: A Commentary on the Imagist Period', Contemporary Literature, Vol. X, no. iv, 566.
32. Otherworld, p. 31.
33. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
34. Ibid., p. 13.
35. Ibid., p. 14.

36. Ibid., p. 14.
37. Ibid., pp. 14-15. In his Death of a Hero, Aldington describes a similar march through London streets at night, also mentioning London Bridge station, (New York, 1929, p. 254 ff.).
38. Otherworld, p. 15.
39. Ibid., p. 16.
40. F.R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry, Penguin, p. 88.
41. See Chapter 4, p. 248.
42. Otherworld, p. 17.
43. Ibid., p. 19.
44. Ibid., p. 48.
45. With the exception of 'The Making of Lilith', if that may be described as a poem. See Introduction, Note 6. Since I do not propose to discuss this piece in the text, it is perhaps worth mentioning here that it reveals a continuing concern in Flint with the problem of consciousness. It depicts, in the form of Man being brought to life by God and Satan, the birth of consciousness, and subsequently the pain and dissatisfaction which automatically come with consciousness.
46. The Monthly Chapbook, no. i (July 1919), 14.
47. 'Sea Rose', Collected Poems of H.D., New York, 1925, p. 3.
48. Flint seems to have spent the war years in London. I have not been able to discover why he was not called up for military service during the war, or to obtain corroboration of Glenn Hughes's statement that Flint served in the army for 11 months in 1919 (see Imagism and the Imagists, p. 165), though since Hughes personally interviewed Flint, this must be so.
49. Otherworld, p. 54.
50. Ibid., pp. 58-60.

51. 'Verse Chronicle', The Criterion, Vol. XI, no. xlv, 687.
52. Op.Cit., p. 29.
53. 'Amusha and Vijaya', Collected Poems, 1950, pp. 12-13.
54. See e.g. Mythologies, 1959.
55. Richard Ellman, The Identity of Yeats, Faber paperback, 1964, p. 118.
56. New Bearings in English Poetry, p. 38.
57. Collected Poems, p. 104.
58. Ibid., p. 101.
59. 'Coole Park and Ballylee 1931', Ibid., p. 275.
60. Quoted by Ellman in Yeats: The Man and the Masks, Faber paperback, 1961, p. 177.
61. A Vision, 1962, p. 8.
62. Collected Poems, pp. 182-3. The poem was printed as a preface to Per Amica Silentia Lunae.
63. Collected Poems, p. 182.
64. Ibid., p. 181.
65. Ibid., p. 182.
66. Ibid., p. 232.
67. The Identity of Yeats, p. 222.
68. 'Burnt Norton', l. 142.
69. The Last Romantics, p. 262.

70. T.S. Eliot, The Sacred Wood, Methuen paperback, 1960, p. 58. C.K. Stead thinks that 'the poet's escape from "personality" which Eliot describes in this essay is not an escape from self, but an escape further into the self.' (The New Poetic, p. 127). This is consistent with his general argument that both Yeats and Eliot seek to express levels of experience where 'the mind of the individual becomes the general mind of the race.' (p. 35). But this does not seem to me to alter the fact that escape is what is sought - escape from 'time and personal emotion'; or the fact that in poetry these levels of experience can only be, as I put it, 'contained and apprehended....within the bounds of the continuing daylight consciousness of normality.'
71. See Chapter 5, p. 293.
72. 'Burnt Norton', ll. 42-3.
73. 'Little Gidding', ll. 129-32.
74. 'Burnt Norton', ll. 100-4.
75. Helen Gardner, The Art of T.S. Eliot, Faber paperback, 1968, p. 38 FN.
76. 'Little Gidding', ll. 150-9.
77. The Sacred Wood, p. 49.
78. Ibid., p. 50.
79. Ibid., p. 55.
80. See pp. 97 - 100.
81. Op.Cit., p. 143.
82. See Chapter 2, p. 88 , and note 36.
83. L.G. Salingar, 'T.S. Eliot: Poet and Critic', The Modern Age, Penguin, 1961, p. 334. And see Chapter 2, p. 83.
84. D.E.S. Maxwell, The Poetry of T.S. Eliot, Routledge paperback, 1960, p. 52.

85. 'The Dry Salvages', ll. 35-8.
86. Collected Poems, p. 230.
87. 'East Coker', ll. 81-3.
88. 'Little Gidding', ll. 163-5.
89. 'The Dry Salvages', ll. 212-4.
90. Collected Poems, p. 217.
91. Op.Cit., p. 179.
92. F.O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T.S. Eliot, Oxford paperback, 1959, p. 108.
93. Op.Cit., p. 340.
94. 'Burnt Norton', l. 158.
95. John Lucas and William Myers, 'The Waste Land Today', Essays in Criticism, Vol. XIX, no. ii (April 1969), 193-209.
96. 'Little Gidding', ll. 239-42.
97. 'Little Gidding', ll. 120-5.
98. Robert Graves, Collected Poems 1965, p. 49. The Collected Poems, which I quote in all cases, contains much revision. For this reason, the source of the original version of each poem is given in brackets in the text.
99. Ibid., p. 9.
100. Ibid., p. 207.
101. Siegfried Sassoon, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer (Part 6, I), Faber paperback, 1965, p. 108.
102. Goodbye to All That, Penguin, 1960, p. 282.

103. Collected Poems, p. 47.
104. Michael Kirkham, The Poetry of Robert Graves, 1969, p. 10.
105. Collected Poems, p. 24.
106. Ibid., p. 28.
107. Ibid., p. 38.
108. Ibid., p. 89.
109. Ibid., p. 138.
110. Ibid., p. 170.
111. Ibid., p. 99. A revision, however, has removed the word 'scientific'; I quote the version in Poems 1926-1930, p. 61.
112. Ibid., p. 203.
113. J.M. Cohen, Robert Graves, Writers and Critics Series, 1960, p. 111.
114. Collected Poems, p. 215.
115. Ibid., p. 201.
116. Coleridge, The Ancient Mariner, III, ll. 190-4.
117. See Baudelaire: Oeuvres Complètes, Paris, 1961, p. 422.
118. 'What the Centaurs Ate', Steps, 1958, p. 323.
119. Foreword, The Greek Myths, Penguin, 1955, p. 10.
120. Alethea Hayter, Opium and the Romantic Imagination, 1968, p. 326.
121. Op.Cit., p. 6.

122. There are, of course, important ways in which a collection of lyric poems cannot be the same thing as a long poem; equally, there are valid objections to Eliot's attempt to construct a poem of something like epic status out of a collection of fragments. Nevertheless, Graves clearly offers the Collected Poems to us as a unified work, and we must judge it on its merits.

CONCLUSION

The three poets who have been studied in some detail may have lacked, as Herbert Read remarked in a general way of the Imagists, 'momentous intelligence' of the sort that marks out major endeavours in the history of the arts. Yet each was unique in sensibility while at the same time seeming to take part in certain large general movements of feeling and awareness. Their sense, at a crucial point in time, of the need for a new English poetic fundamentally shaped their lives and their work, and they held tirelessly to their convictions in this respect. Edward Thomas died early, Harold Monro when he appeared to be finding his feet at last as a poet, F.S. Flint's development was oddly arrested in 1920. There is nothing useful to be said about what might have been, though some commentary has seen the death of Thomas, at least, as a factor in the misdirection, away from the Hardy-inspired line, of twentieth-century English poetry. In their poetry as it exists there is a profound uncertainty, always about the situation in which they find themselves, and sometimes about strategies and techniques for expressing it. To whatever dogmas the poets may have voiced allegiance, the poetry itself communicates no preconceived view of life; each experience is treated on its merits, proving its own case or lack of a case. The cast of mind is one which has no 'solidities' like the Medieval, the Augustan or the Victorian mind. Their mediation between Romantic and realistic, between isolation and involvement, their attempt at some sort of rapprochement of image and discourse in poetry, is the result of a dogged probing, as the criticism as well as the poetry shows, for a way out of the post-Romantic impasse of the Nineties and the first decade, and is representative of a general dialectic between the modern poet and 'the universe outside him'.

The three poets gave voice to the oppressed and bewildered individual, with his dreams and visions, his half-smothered erotic and emotional intensities, his longing for contact with others, with the earth, with 'beauty', with some sort of cosmic force. Flint in particular was one of the first of modern poets and intellectuals not to have come from the old educated classes, and was supremely isolated, never at ease in the middle-class suburbia towards which he gravitated. But he shares with Monro and Thomas the confessional and anti-heroic disposition which becomes so pervasive in modern writing. All three poets are totally disabused about their predicament; they discover no final comfort; they record with a steady fidelity the private and public condition of their time. Their poetry is quite distinctively a manifestation of the 'modern mind'. Any sensitive present-day person who does not recognise among their painful introspections a good deal of his own experience is very likely deceiving himself.

The revolutionary potential of the refusal to falsify the self which stems from Rousseau is active in their work, and in that of the poets with whom they have been associated in the foregoing discussion. Since this is an impulse which will not fit authoritarian moulds, it is odd that some great moderns have adopted authoritarian postures. Here we confront an uncomfortable dilemma: was T.E. Hulme, and the type of doctrine he represents, a necessary evil? I do not think one can claim that T.E. Hulme's influence has not had harmful consequences. It has helped run into the ground that notion of 'civilisation' expressed by Leonard Woolf in a passage quoted in my Introduction, and helped furnish a semblance of intellectual substance to the anti-humanitarian creeds of our century. It is not a question of partisanship; no one political dogma, as we well know, has been able to prove itself immune to the anti-liberal contagion. There was bound, of course, to be reaction

against the liberal-humanist current running in the early years of the century; tendencies always set up counter-tendencies. But something had, at the same time, gone wrong; Hulme, Pound, Eliot, and others such as A.R. Orage, Ford Madox Hueffer and Wyndham Lewis, saw that language was not being used with the right kind of concreteness and the right kind of discrimination, and they connected this with a state of cultural and spiritual ill-health. They considered that the 'civilisation' which those who thought like Woolf were propagating was itself unhealthy. Among other things, 'tradition' had to be kept up. And I have tried to show how the polemically announced cultural élitism, the anti-Romantic 'classicism' and 'impersonality', the anti-liberalism, are in some measure contradicted by the poetry itself; how the art-statement which the poetry of men like Yeats, Eliot and Graves makes is humanist in its import. It is, in a phrase of which there is no need to be ashamed, a criticism of life.

This is one of the conclusions to which the present study appears to lead us, and it is intimately involved with another. A.G. Lehmann speaks of a wish, which lies at the heart of the Symbolist aesthetic, 'for art to be completely different from anything else men do, and for symbolist poetry in particular to branch away from anything previous schools and movements had aimed at and 'bourgeois' orthodoxy approved.' But, he continues,

the symbolist masterpiece.....never saw the light.....
all literature of any note that has stemmed from
symbolism has not so much intensified its tenets
to the exclusion of all else as operated a fusion
between its innovations and the products of quite
other traditions in art.

Poetry exists, and is experienced by the reader, too inalienably in the echo-chamber between the intangible world of Ideas and the phenomenal world of everyday experience. Pure Idea, or the inward forms of our psyche, are not directly accessible to us, and in order to become

accessible at all they must be given an embodiment which is both mimetic of things we know and organised into structures which make sense to us in one way or another - of which the relationships between parts are graspable, which form pattern. Whenever a successful fusion of this kind fails to take place, as it largely does in Surrealist art on the one hand or Social Realist art on the other, and sometimes even in the work of such a master as T.S. Eliot, poetry forfeits some of its claim upon us. But it is precisely this struggle with which the poets we have examined have been occupied, and it is out of this struggle that their work at its best has become meaningful as a criticism of life which is simultaneously 'beautiful'.

It is against this background that Thomas, Monro and Flint, in their grappling with the problem of consciousness, acquire full significance. The striving to achieve the true voice of feeling, the attempt to record with the greatest exactness the 'feel' of an experience, the quest for identity, are endeavours to define again for their generation what sort of a creature man is. The significance of remembering, of what I have referred to as the 'memory theme', is not only nostalgic, not only an escape from the painfulness of present reality. Remembering creates and sustains identity, helps to create the 'totality of self', and it imbues knowledge with concreteness in a way which is fundamentally involved in the operations of poetic creation itself. 'Remembrance is like direct feeling', wrote William James, 'its object is suffused with a warmth and intimacy to which no object of mere conception ever attains'.² The poetry of consciousness is an attempt to render verbally facets of the stream of consciousness - to invoke this phrase is to suggest much wider literary affiliations - which William James asserted ordinary language distorts and simplifies. Hence the need for a synthesis of image and discourse, of symbolism and realism, for a sense of the timeless

and the temporal together. The poets are trying to come as close as possible to the mind in movement, to give us a concrete realisation of it, and the endeavour constitutes a revalidation for our own time of poetry's perpetual role as a counter-force to the dehumanising abstractions and standardisations which civilisation, in certain of its guises, is always foisting upon its own begetters.

FOOTNOTES

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2. Reprinted from The Principles of Psychology, New York, 1890,
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The Berg Collection of the New York Public Library; the Library of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire; Mr. Christian Berridge; the Academic Center Library, University of Texas; the Yale University Library; Dartmouth College Library; and King's School, Canterbury; all possess letters by or to Edward Thomas.

A MS notebook is in the Lockwood Memorial Library, State University of New York at Buffalo. Additional MS 44990 is in the Dept. of MSS of the British Museum. Don. d.28 and Don. e.10 are in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The Berg Collection possesses a large collection of Thomas's MSS, published and unpublished.

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