

ANDRE GIDE VIS-À VIS CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

ANDRE GIDE VIS-À-VIS CHARLES BAUDELAIRE:
TWO LITERARY ARTISTS

by

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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I - GIDE THE PARTISAN OF BAUDELAIRE	8
CHAPTER II - GIDE THE CRITIC OF BAUDELAIRE	19
i - Baudelaire's classicism	19
ii - "La trace de l'homme" et "le frisson nouveau"	29
iii - The Imagination and the Critical Spirit	37
CHAPTER III - ASPECTS OF A COMMON AESTHETIC	55
CHAPTER IV - THE PROBLEM OF INFLUENCE	63
CONCLUSION	77
BIBLIOGRAPHY	82

INTRODUCTION

Baudelaire and Gide: the one the architect of Les Fleurs du Mal, the other the author of La Porte étroite; the former a poet, the latter a writer of prose. This generally accepted text-book classification creates the sort of distinction which scarcely admits of an affinity between two such figures as Baudelaire and Gide. The question is likely to be asked, can there be any significant points of comparison between their various writings to warrant a full-length essay? Are there more than superficial resemblances which may permit these two men to be looked upon as kindred spirits? Or in blunter terms, is there any real justification, beyond the academic exercise, for presenting a dissertation that makes claim to embrace them both? The whole *raison d'être* of this study is precisely to attempt to offer substantive evidence which will support an affirmative answer to each of the foregoing questions.

It is certain that the dichotomy normally implied when distinguishing the poet from the prose-writer would have appealed neither to Baudelaire nor Gide. "Je porte dans ma tête une vingtaine de romans et deux drames. . . .Je veux écraser les esprits, les étonner, comme Byron, Balzac ou Chateaubriand."¹

¹In Baudelaire's letter to his mother, 19 February 1858. Letter #334 in Charles Baudelaire, Correspondance générale, ed. Jacques Crépét (Paris: Louis Conard, 1947), II, 127.

These are not the words of the author of Les Nourritures terrestres, L'Immoraliste, Corydon, but of the poet Baudelaire. Nor was this just a passing remark. A quick reference to the Pléiade edition of Baudelaire's Oeuvres complètes will reveal a number of "Plans et projets de romans et nouvelles", as well as a section devoted to his "Théâtre".² On the other hand in Si le Grain ne meurt, Gide reports the delight which he, as a schoolboy, experienced on finding a passage in Schopenhauer which purported to establish a gap between the mind of the historian and that of the poet: "Et voilà donc pourquoi je n'entends rien à l'histoire! me disais-je avec ravissement: c'est que je suis poète. C'est poète que je veux être! C'est poète que je suis!"³ Indeed all through his adolescent years he was "tourmenté par un constant désir de poésie. . . .Au vrai, tout mon effort tendait à 'traduire en vers' des pensées auxquelles j'attachais beaucoup trop d'importance".⁴ Vinio Rossi states that in the unpublished part of Gide's early journal, the writer frequently alludes to his difficulty

²Charles Baudelaire, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Yves-Gérard Le Dantec and Claude Pichois, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), pp. 513-522 and pp. 537-578. All references to the Oeuvres complètes are to this edition in one volume.

³André Gide, Si le Grain ne meurt (205th ed.; Paris: Gallimard, 1955), p. 196.

⁴Ibid., p. 219.

with verse and finally "at one point simply gives up the struggle."⁵ It is clear however that Gide did not give it up for long, and though he was subsequently to compose many a line of verse, albeit of varying quality, he preferred to heed Baudelaire's benign exhortation, "Sois toujours poète, même en prose."⁶ Consciously or unconsciously Gide must have adhered to this precept, for in the Journal we find him in open disagreement with a statement by Souday, in which the critic distinguished verse from prose by affirming that with verse, not a single word can be shifted or replaced. Disputing the validity of Souday's definition, Gide argues thus:

Je soutiens: qu'il est parfaitement,
évidemment vrai que, d'un beau vers,
on ne puisse changer ni déplacer un
mot; mais que cela est également vrai
de la belle prose. Mes phrases. . .
répondent à une exigence aussi stricte,
encore que souvent plus cachée, aussi
impérieuse que celle de la plus rigoureuse
prosodie.⁷

⁵Vinio Rossi, André Gide. The Evolution of an Aesthetic (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1967), p. 21. Rossi cites the following remark by Gide, "avec le vers, on est trop esclave", and in his footnote 8, Ch. I, p. 165, he places it in "'Journal', Carnet 3 (unpublished page, August, 1888)."

⁶Charles Baudelaire, Oeuvres complètes, p. 1267. In this edition the quotation will be found in the section "Hygiène" of the "Journaux Intimes". In earlier editions it is put in "Mon Coeur mis à nu".

⁷André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), pp. 1158-59.

Later in his Journal, Gide elaborates on the factors which dictate his method of writing, and his commentary reveals the extent of his search for poetic stylisation:

Le nombre domine ma phrase, la dicte presque, épouse étroitement ma pensée. Ce besoin d'un rythme précis répond à une secrète exigence. La scansion de la phrase, la disposition des syllables, la place des fortes et des faibles, tout cela m'importe autant que la pensée même et celle-ci me paraît boiteuse ou faussée si quelque pied lui manque ou la surcharge.⁸

Jean Hytier who entitled the first two chapters of his book on Gide "Le Prosateur lyrique", observed that "lorsque Gide a voulu se montrer plus profondément poète. . .il a recouru de préférence à la prose."⁹ It becomes apparent then that the designation "prose-writer" when applied to Gide, is at once misleading, if not anomalous.

But for those who nevertheless remain lukewarm to the idea of an affinity between the Baudelaire of Spleen de Paris and the Gide of Nourritures terrestres, L'Immoraliste and Le Retour de l'Enfant prodigue, there is yet another important, perhaps even closer point of contact between these two writers, and Claudel was among the first to perceive it. When Gide's initial volume of collected essays, Prétextes (1903), reached Claudel in far-away China, he wrote back to Gide enthusiastically

⁸Ibid., p. 1223.

⁹Jean Hytier, André Gide (Paris: Edmond Charlot, 1945), p. 15.

cally:

Pourquoi ne faites-vous pas de critique
d'une manière délibérée et par préférence?
Il me semble que vous avez un très haut
point de sens critique qui est aussi rare
que le sens poétique et peut-être davantage.
Ce n'est pas tout le monde qui sait ce qu'
un homme ou un arbre veut dire. --Du moins
je ne connais que deux critiques qui aient
vraiment mérité ce nom: Baudelaire et Poe.¹⁰

Thus did Gide join the order of creator-critics, and like Baudelaire, he became a commentator on the varying forms of artistic expression: literary, musical and pictorial. The title "Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains" could apply equally well to Gide's articles and essays on figures like Mallarmé, Verlaine, Barrès, Valéry, Jammes, as it did to Baudelaire's pages on Hugo, Gautier, Pétrus Borel, Banville, Leconte de Lisle, to mention but a few names. And just as Baudelaire's passion for Wagner is matched by Gide's devotion to Chopin, so too the interpreter of Delacroix has his counterpart in the critic of Poussin.

It would be strange and surprising, and would call in-
to question the validity of this essay, had Gide the critic
failed to recognize any similarities, any correspondences be-
tween Baudelaire's life, his aesthetic and his writings on the
one hand, and those of Gide himself on the other. However,
time and again Gide refers to certain things he had in common

¹⁰Letter #4, 7 August 1903, in Correspondance Paul Claudel et André Gide, 1899-1926, preface and notes Robert Mallet (28th ed.; Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 48.

with Baudelaire: for example, they both share the same "maladie secrète" of "cette humilité devant les hommes."¹¹ The sensitive Gide, chafing under unfavourable criticism, writes: "Enfin je songe à Baudelaire, et que la plupart de ces accusations sont celles mêmes que l'on portait également contre lui."¹² If there is one reasonable inference to be drawn from this last statement, it is that identical accusations suggest very similar vices or virtues. On another occasion Gide goes so far as to imagine Baudelaire writing specially for him, and thus he records his impression after reading two lines which stirred him profoundly: "Ce vers répondait si étrangement à mon état présent qu'il me sembla que Baudelaire l'avait écrit tout particulièrement pour moi et pour cet instant précis de ma vie."¹³

Of greater consequence however is the fact that Gide's Journal as well as his critical writings are replete with references to Baudelaire and his works, and a careful analysis will reveal that not only was Baudelaire Gide's "poète préféré", but also that he shared a significant portion of the views of Baudelaire the critic and aesthetician. Small wonder then if

¹²Ibid., p. 703.

¹³Part of entry for 21 August 1938, Journal 1889-1939, p. 1309.

we find that some of the themes treated by Baudelaire should also have commanded the attention of Gide, the protean man of letters.

CHAPTER I

GIDE THE PARTISAN OF BAUDELAIRE

Gide's Journal, the many pages to which he committed his random musings, his intimate thoughts, his critical judgments and his lived experience, and where he touched upon myriad subjects ranging from the most mundane, questions of hygiene and his daily ablutions, to the more intellectual and esoteric, his reflections on matters of aesthetics, contains numerous and significant references to, as well as quotations from Baudelaire. Less numerous, though no less significant are the references to this same writer found within the texts of Gide's purely literary endeavours, beginning with Les Cahiers d'André Walter (1891), through La Porte étroite (1909) to Les Faux-Monnayeurs (1925) and Geneviève (1936). In the majority of instances, these references hold up Baudelaire as an example of literary excellence and attest to Gide's profound admiration of him as an artist and a critic. One must not underestimate the value and importance to be attached to Gide's references and quotations, and in a comparatively recent article Albert Sonnenfeld stresses this point:

Or Gide ne choisit que rarement ses citations à la légère, à l'inverse de Stendhal qui se plaisait à le faire; il ne veut ni taquiner ni émerveiller le lecteur. Une citation ajoute des dimensions et des perspectives nouvelles à l'oeuvre sur laquelle elle est greffée. Parfois elle révèle que nous avons

affaire à des archetypes où à des mythes littéraires. Plus souvent elle revêt une valeur symbolique, et livre ainsi des clefs qui ouvrent un réseau de significations secrètes.¹

In addition to other corroborative statements scattered throughout the length and breadth of Gide's correspondence and critical writings, there is one major polemical article, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet"², and a preface to a 1917 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*³, both of which provide further and conclusive evidence of Gide's high esteem for the author of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. "Baudelaire et M. Faguet" was Gide's response to an article entitled simply "Baudelaire", published in *La Revue* on 1 September 1910, in which Emile Faguet, eminent literary critic and Academician, disparagingly categorized Baudelaire as "un bon poète de second ordre, très loin d'être négligeable, mais essentiellement de second ordre"⁴, condemning him as being almost entirely devoid of imagination,

¹Albert Sonnenfeld, "Baudelaire et Gide: La Porte étroite", *La Table Ronde*, no. 232 (1967), 79-80.

²André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", first published in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, November 1, 1910.

³André Gide, "Préface aux *Fleurs du Mal*", first published in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Pelletan et Helleu, 1917).

⁴Emile Faguet, "Baudelaire", *La Revue*, September 1, 1910, quoted in part in A. E. Carter, *Baudelaire et la Critique française 1868-1917* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1963), p. 211.

and tagging as "le poète aride de la banalité"⁵, the very man whom Hugo had long before recognized and proclaimed to have introduced into the French language "un frisson nouveau". Regretting what he considered to be an article unworthy of Faguet, "l'article de vacances, l'article bâclé,"⁶ as he terms it, Gide chides the ungenerous critic for his inability to appreciate, nay understand Baudelaire. Gide's annoyance is most forcefully expressed in his rebuke to Faguet for misquoting and distorting certain lines from Baudelaire, and this leads him to declare: "Je préfère croire qu'il a peu lu et mal lu Baudelaire."⁷ After a point by point refutation of the critic's argument, Gide proceeds to a statement of the main elements contributing to Baudelaire's greatness and uniqueness as a poet, and concludes by setting him beside Racine as exemplifying the very best in French poetry.

Before however attempting a detailed analysis of Gide's critical writings and comments on Baudelaire, it would seem desirable to try to determine the Gidean view of Baudelaire's place among French poets of the nineteenth century. In this

⁵Ibid.

⁶André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes (Paris: Mercure de France, 1947), p. 120.

⁷Ibid., p. 129.

endeavour we are amply aided by Gide himself who rarely hesitated to state his prejudices and passions. His harsh judgement of Gautier is only too well-known and indeed he goes so far as to suggest that Baudelaire was purposely ironic in dedicating his Fleurs du Mal to Gautier:

L'on doute si l'un des plus ingénieux paradoxes de Baudelaire n'a pas été de dédier à Théophile Gautier ses *Fleurs du Mal*? de tendre cette coupe toute ruisselante d'émotion, de musique et de pensée, à l'artisan le plus sec, le moins musicien, le moins méditatif que notre littérature ait produit.⁸

That Gautier was without question anathema to Gide is apparent from another torrent of invective released upon him from the pages of the Journal, where the author of Emaux et Camées is peremptorily dismissed as "un des plus inutiles péroreurs dont puisse s'encombrer une littérature."⁹

Musset fares no better and is treated with equal disdain: "Vous savez que je tiens Musset et Gautier en fort piètre estime,"¹⁰ remarks Gide in a letter to André Rouveyre. As for Lamartine he appears to have received little or no

⁸ André Gide, "Les Fleurs du Mal", in his Préfaces (Neuchâtel et Paris: Ides et Calendes, 1948), p. 9.

⁹ André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 714.

¹⁰ Correspondance André Gide et André Rouveyre, 1909-1951, ed. Claude Martin (Paris: Mercure de France, 1967), p. 109.

serious attention from Gide, if we are to judge from the scant and fleeting references to him. In point of fact his name is mentioned only once in the Journal that covers the years 1889-1939, and even then the reference originates not with Gide, but with Moréas.¹¹ In the case of Vigny there are no encomiums proffered either, and Gide leaves us in no doubt that he fails to share Proust's partiality for this writer, though he shares his passion for Baudelaire. He diagnoses Vigny's condition and explains the latter's anguish as stemming from the continuous awareness of the inexpressible and the inability to express it, coupled with a desire to do so. Rejecting Faguet's emphasis on "les idées nouvelles" in Vigny's poetry, Gide affirms that "la grande erreur de Vigny avait bien été précisément de croire que la nouveauté poétique consistait à 'mettre en poésie' des idées neuves".¹² The axe falls with comparable severity on Théodore de Banville: "Les *Souvenirs* de Banville furent une de mes plus grandes déconvenues littéraires. . . Avec quelle émotion, quel tremblement joyeux, j'ouvris ce petit livre des *Souvenirs* avec quel chagrin, bientôt, je dus le refermer!"¹³ "André Gide, lecteur

¹¹ André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, p. 210.

¹² André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, p. 125.

¹³ André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, pp. 713-714.

infatigable!"¹⁴ exclaims Sonnenfeld, and well might he have added "critique infatigable!" Even "cet excellent Heredia" to whom Gide presented a copy of his first published literary effort, Les Cahiers d'André Walter, must settle for a qualified tribute.¹⁵ Extolling Baudelaire's perfection of form, Gide contrasts it with Heredia's: "Perfection très différente évidemment de celle des sonnets de Heredia par exemple, toute latine celle-ci, logique et qui se puisse expliquer. C'est de cette perfection que s'est contentée trop souvent notre langue."¹⁶

It would be erroneous to assume from the nature of the foregoing judgements that Gide only engaged in negative or adverse criticism, or that he cared only for a select number of established major writers. On the contrary a not so fashionable figure as Lautréamont, to cite but one example, drew an "éloge" from Gide who, though recognizing that this writer's influence in the nineteenth century was nil, nevertheless ventured to opine: "Mais il est avec Rimbaud, plus que Rimbaud

¹⁴Albert Sonnenfeld, "Baudelaire et Gide: La Porte étroite", La Table Ronde, no. 232 (1967), 79.

¹⁵André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, p. 347.

¹⁶André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, pp. 126-127.

peut-être, le maître des écluses pour la littérature de demain."¹⁷ Many favourable comments and at times eulogistic tributes were directed to Verlaine, Rimbaud and Mallarmé. But it is Victor Hugo, above any other, who from all evidence presents the strongest possible challenge to Baudelaire for primacy in the Gidean hierarchy of nineteenth century poets.

When in February 1902 the literary review L'Ermitage published those responses it had received to the question "Quel est pour vous le plus grand poète du XIX^e siècle?" put to some two hundred contemporary French writers, the reply of André Gide was the shortest and most cryptic. "Le fameux 'Hugo, hélas!'" suggests Sonnenfeld, "traduisait, sous une forme ironique, le regret de ne pouvoir dire 'Baudelaire', vu l'importance de l'oeuvre hugolienne."¹⁸ Sonnenfeld's inference would seem to be totally justified when viewed in the light of two subsequent comparisons between Hugo and Baudelaire which emanated from Gide's pen.

Firstly, Alissa Bucolin writing to Jérôme in La Porte étroite makes a signal avowal: "Je donnerais tout Hugo pour quelques sonnets de Baudelaire. Le mot: *grand poète* ne

¹⁷ André Gide, "Lautréamont", in his Eloges (Neuchâtel et Paris: Ides et Calendes, 1948), p. 10.

¹⁸ Albert Sonnenfeld, "Baudelaire et Gide: La Porte étroite", La Table Ronde, no. 232 (1967), 79.

veut rien dire: c'est être un *pur poète* qui importe."¹⁹ This statement assumes added significance when set beside the following entry in Gide's Journal: "Jeudi, 14 Juin 1905: Ecrit quelques notes sur Bloy. Travaillé à *La Route étroite*, à la correction de *Paludes*. Repris Baudelaire avec le plus vif plaisir".²⁰ The fact of Gide once more perusing the writings of Baudelaire at the time when he was composing La Porte étroite (La Route étroite was a provisional title) lends weight to the view that Alissa's remarks was in no wise gratuitous, but rather reflected the attitude of mind of the heroine's creator. "*La Porte étroite*, hommage à Baudelaire?"²¹ asks Sonnenfeld. The question appears quite legitimate; for it if was Alissa who theorized about the "pur" as opposed to the "grand poète", it was Jérôme who earlier had quoted a verse from "Chant d'Automne".²² Thus not one, but both of the

¹⁹ André Gide, Romans, récits et soites, oeuvres lyriques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 549.

²⁰ André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, p. 166.

²¹ Albert Sonnenfeld, "Baudelaire et Gide: *La Porte étroite*", La Table Ronde, no. 232 (1967), 88.

²² André Gide, Romans, récits et soties, oeuvres lyriques, p. 517.

principal characters of the récit are conversant with "le pur poète". Nor should the figure of Juliette be forgotten! She too gave verbal proof of her familiarity with the verses of Baudelaire.²³

More than thirty years later Gide returns to the subject of the comparative merits of Baudelaire and Hugo, this time elucidating his convictions in very unequivocal language, and henceforth dispelling any doubts about his true position. He waxes warm in one of his Interviews imaginaires (first published together in one volume in 1943), lauding Hugo's correctness of expression and conformity to the proprieties of grammar and syntax. This portion of the dialogue with his would-be interlocutor and what follows deserve to be quoted at length as clear testimony of the Gidean viewpoint, bringing together both his laconic "Hugo, hélas!" as well as an observation equivalent to Alissa's expression of her willingness to exchange "tout Hugo pour quelques sonnets de Baudelaire":

- [Gide]. Nous parlions l'autre jour des fautes de français des grands écrivains: vous ne trouverez jamais, chez Hugo, la moindre impropriété de langage, une erreur de grammaire, une défaillance de syntaxe, une faiblesse de vocabulaire, une gaucherie. Aucune des difficultés de notre prosodie, de notre langue, ne l'arrête ou ne le gêne; il prend élan sur chaque obstacle et se fait de la règle même un tremplin. . . Pourquoi me laissez-vous parler si longtemps?
- Je vous écoute. Mais, si vous avez fini de louer, oserai-je vous demander alors pourquoi

²³. Ibid.

vous nous disiez naguère: "Hugo, hélas!"
 - Je le dirais encore. Si grande que soit mon admiration, je suis mal à l'aise dans son pathos, le sentant, partout ou sans cesse, factice, ne rimant à rien, ou plutôt: ne faisant que rimer. Oui, cette pensée toujours flottante au gré du vers me laisse souhaiter plus de rigueur et d'authenticité. Je ne parle ici, bien entendu, que de Hugo lyrique, abandonnant volontiers ses romans et surtout ses drames où l'artifice flagrant ne parvient plus à nous en imposer. En revanche, mettant à part et très haut ses *Choses vues* (et tous les écrits de lui qui pourraient être rangés sous ce titre) où il se montre un prodigieux reporter, souvent, trop souvent--

Ses yeux plongent plus loin que le monde réel.

--mais ce monde réel il sait, quand il veut bien, le voir et le peindre admirablement. Ajoutons qu'il excelle dans l'invective.
 - S'il revenait sur terre, Hugo serait sans doute fort étonné de voir aujourd'hui son oeuvre immense balancée par le petit recueil de Baudelaire, et nombre de nos meilleurs esprits se ranger aux côtés de ce dernier, autant à l'étranger qu'en France.
 - Ainsi ferai-je moi-même; mais seulement après lui avoir tiré, à lui Hugo l'immense, un immense coup de chapeau.

Il prit ces derniers mots pour une invite et se leva pour prendre congé.²⁴

Though it would seem now superfluous, can we doubt that Gide might quite easily have added, in the manner of one of his characters in Geneviève, "que Baudelaire était son

²⁴ André Gide, Interviews imaginaires. La Délivrance de Tunis. (New York: Jacques Schiffrin & Co., 1943), pp. 55-57.

poète préféré et qu'il avait toujours *Les Fleurs du Mal* auprès de lui."²⁵ Gide had definitively settled the issue. With the candid outspokenness of the "Imaginary Interview" the debate was over, and his readers may henceforth take leave of what had hitherto been a moot subject.

²⁵André Gide, Romans, récits et soties, oeuvres lyriques, p. 1364.

CHAPTER II

GIDE THE CRITIC OF BAUDELAIRE

Baudelaire's classicism

The greatest compliment which Gide ever paid Baudelaire was that of comparing him with Racine, and indeed there are two occasions on which his comparisons seem more flattering to the nineteenth century poet than to the seventeenth century master. Happily for us, Gide was not content to utter sweeping generalizations, but took time to elucidate his view of Baudelaire's kinship with Racine, and in quoting Barrès he gives a clear indication of where he believed that kinship to lie: "C'est par *Les Fleurs du Mal*, peut-être, que nous reviendrons à la grande tradition classique".¹

In Gide's view, Baudelaire was a great classical poet, and writing in 1910 he insists that "à peu près seul de son époque, Baudelaire mérite de n'être point touché par ce vent de défaveur qui souffle aujourd'hui contre le romantisme."² The association of Baudelaire with the classicists is but one example of Gide's life-long preoccupation with classicism, a subject to which he returns again and again as if, in the words of Justin O'Brien, "it provided the solution to all

¹Quoted by Gide in "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, p. 137.

²André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, p. 137.

critical problems."³ It therefore behoves us to examine just what constituted Baudelaire's classicism, in Gide's opinion, and to see what were its links with Racine's.

In the first of his two "Billets à Angèle" which appeared in La Nouvelle Revue Française in March 1921 and dealt with the subject of classicism, Gide explains one of the essential elements present in the Racinian and Baudelairean poetic universe:

L'auteur romantique reste toujours en deçà de ses paroles; il faut toujours chercher l'auteur classique par delà. . . Dans toute la littérature grecque, dans la meilleure poésie anglaise, dans Racine, dans Pascal, dans Baudelaire, l'on sent que la parole, tout en révélant l'émotion, ne la contient pas toute, et que, une fois le mot prononcé, l'émotion qui le précédait, continue.⁴

The ability to make the word overflow the page, to imbue it with a plenitude of meaning, to give it not mere quantity and volume but rather quality and tone, is a distinguishing characteristic of the classical writer, of Racine as of Baudelaire. Gide refuses to entertain the complaint of those who accuse Baudelaire of bombast and noise:

A quel point faut-il avoir mal compris
Baudelaire pour lui reprocher précisément

³ Justin O'Brien in André Gide, Pretexts. Reflections on Literature and Morality, trans. J. O'Brien and others, ed. and intro. Justin O'Brien (London: Secker & Warburg, 1959), p. 16.

⁴ André Gide, "Billets à Angèle", La Nouvelle Revue Française [hereafter cited as NRF], XVI, no. 90 (March 1921), 340-341.

rhétorique et déclamation! Si parfois, dans *Les Fleurs du Mal*, on retrouve de l'une et de l'autre, l'époque en est responsable. Rien de plus étranger à Baudelaire, à l'art de Baudelaire, que l'amplification inutile du geste et que le gonflement de la voix.⁵

Gide might easily have quoted Baudelaire in his own defence, for the poet declares in a letter to his mother that: "Toutes les fois que je sens quelque chose vivement, la peur d'en exagérer l'expression me force à dire cette chose le plus froidement que je peux."⁶ However, Gide chooses to call upon another observer, this time Laforgue, to state the case positively on Baudelaire's behalf: "Le premier, dit Laforgue, il se raconta sur un mode modéré de confessionnal et ne prit pas l'air inspiré." Gide seizes upon this remark to add:

C'est par là qu'il rappelle Racine; le choix de mots, chez Baudelaire, peut être plus inquiet et de prétention plus subtile: je dis que le son de la voix est le même; au lieu de donner à leur souffle, à la manière de Corneille ou de Hugo, le plus de sonorité possible, l'un et l'autre parlent à mi-voix; de sorte que nous les écoutons longuement.⁷

⁵ André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his *Nouveaux Prétextes*, pp. 136-137.

⁶ Letter to his mother, 20 December 1855. Letter #222 in *Correspondance générale*, ed. Jacques Crépet (Paris: Louis Conard, 1947), I, 352.

⁷ Both the quotation from Laforgue as well as the following statement by Gide, appear twice in the latter's writings. First, in "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", *NRF*, November 1, 1910, and again in his "Préface" to *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Pelletan et Helleu, 1917).

The felicitous choice of words, the pleasing and caressing cadences which reverberated in the ear long after the book was shut, and which for all that were never trumpeted forth, but rather were whispered in the restrained mode of a confessional, represented for Gide the quintessence of classical writing. Whatever contradictions may have existed in Gide's thought, whatever changing postures he may have adopted from time to time, he appears to have maintained very fixed and consistent notions on the subject of classicism. Controlled expression and style, such as Gide found in Baudelaire's verses, were a prerequisite for the successful classical work, and so some years after he had first noted these qualities in Baudelaire's poetry, Gide was to make the now famous remark that: "L'oeuvre classique ne sera forte et belle qu'en raison de son romantisme dompté."⁸

This "romantisme dompté" touches upon what were for Gide two fundamental characteristics of classicism, the one existing on the internal or psychological plane and to do with the writer, the other on the external or physical, and pertaining to his work. As might be expected, Gide discerned

⁸André Gide, "Billets à Angèle", NRF, XVI, no. 90 (March 1921), 338.

It is interesting to note that a certain unanimity of thought on the quality of Baudelaire's expression appears not only in Laforgue and Gide, but in Proust as well. In "A Propos de Baudelaire", Chroniques (Paris: Gallimard, 1927),

these particular constituents of classicism in the man Baudelaire as well as in the product of his Muse. In his "Réponse à une enquête sur le classicisme", Gide reveals his conception of classicism to be "un harmonieux faisceau de vertus, dont la première est la modestie", and he visualizes romanticism as being "toujours accompagné d'orgueil, d'infatuation."⁹

p. 215, Proust observes: "A côté d'un livre comme *Les Fleurs du Mal*, comme l'oeuvre immense de Hugo paraît molle, vague, sans accent." A few lines later he speaks of "ces accents religieux, dans les pièces sataniques" (*Ibid.*, P. 216). Farther on in the same essay, we read:

Ces sentiments que nous venons de dire,
sentiment de la souffrance, de la mort
d'une humble fraternité, font que Baudelaire est, pour le peuple et pour l'au-delà, le poète qui en a le mieux parlé.
Les majuscules de Hugo, ses dialogues
avec Dieu, tant de tintamarre, ne valent
pas ce que le pauvre Baudelaire a trouvé
dans l'intimité souffrante de son coeur
et de son corps.

Proust thus joins Alissa Bucolin of *La Porte étroite* in choosing the quality of the slender volume of Baudelaire's poems over the unwieldy, amorphous mass of Hugo's romantic outpourings. Proust's perception of "accents religieux" in Baudelaire's poetry has a parallel in Laforgue's "mode modéré de confessionnal"; his criticism of "tant de tintamarre" in Hugo amplifies Gide's allegation of this poet's propensity to give "le plus de sonorité possible" to his "souffle". Moreover Proust seems to have truly appreciated Baudelaire's ability to contain his emotions within "l'intimité souffrante de son coeur et de son corps", for in the same letter to his mother mentioned earlier (see note 6), the poet had written: "L'un de nous peut mourir, et vraiment il est douloureux de penser que nous sommes exposés à mourir sans nous voir. Vous savez combien, j'ai horreur de toute emphase." Here is an instance of what Gide would have called "son romantisme dompté".

⁹ André Gide, "Réponse à une enquête sur le classicisme", in his *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Louis Martin-Chauffier (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), X, 25-26.

But the work of art is for him the final outcome of the struggle between classicism and romanticism inside each mind and "l'oeuvre d'art classique raconte le triomphe de l'ordre et de la mesure sur le romantisme intérieur."¹⁰ By mastering and holding in check his romantic impulses, the purist among writers demonstrates his modesty, which Gide assures us is "le principal secret du classicisme."¹¹ The psychological subordination of the individual is accompanied on the exterior and physical, that is to say in his work, by a corresponding submission "du mot dans la phrase, de la phrase dans la page, de la page dans l'oeuvre. C'est la mise, en évidence d'une hiérarchie."¹² This sense of order is in Gide's assessment the first essential of a work of art, reflecting as he notes in the Journal "Logique, disposition raisonnable des parties".¹³ And where of course does all this lead, if not to classical perfection? That Baudelaire should stand out for Gide as his ideal of the classical poet derives from his having possessed

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹André Gide, "Billets à Angèle", NRF, XVI, no. 90 (March 1921), 337.

¹²André Gide, "Réponse à une enquête sur le classicisme", in his Oeuvres complètes, X, 26.

¹³André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, p. 664.

the two cardinal virtues of classicism to an extraordinary degree.

Baudelaire's modesty as Gide sees it manifests itself in two ways: One we have already commented upon and relates to the poet's concern never to exaggerate the emotion and to contain it when it seeks to burst forth; the other has earlier been alluded to in our Introduction, though in a somewhat different context, and turns out to be "cette humilité devant les hommes".¹⁴ Gide even appears to have found this second a bit excessive, speaking of "l'attitude presque servilement obséquieuse de Baudelaire à l'égard de Mérimée, tout comme à l'égard de Sainte-Beuve."¹⁵ Nevertheless he goes on to attribute it to "cette incurable modestie. . . que je ne comprends que trop bien."¹⁶ However on the subject of the sense of order in Baudelaire's work, on his sense of form, in short, of his classical perfection, Gide has no reservations. On the contrary he gives way to an eloquent but explicative panegyric:

La forme! comment oserons-nous, après de telles déclarations, proposer à M. Faguet la seule explication plausible du mystère qui l'étonne tant aujourd'hui: c'est à

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 619.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 1208.

¹⁶ Ibid.

la perfection de sa forme que Baudelaire doit sa survie.¹⁷

In his "Préface aux *Fleurs du Mal*", Gide elaborates on his earlier observation:

La forme est le secret de l'oeuvre. Cette harmonie des contours et des sons, où l'art du poète se joue, Baudelaire ne l'accepte jamais tout acquise; il l'obtient par sincérité, il la conquiert et il l'impose.¹⁸

Thus did Gide analyse the magic formula of Baudelaire's success and the secret of his perfection. In his search for an inner perfection, Baudelaire was perhaps even more classical than Racine, or so Gide seems to imply, for though he recognizes Racine to have achieved "une perfection plus cachée", it happened "comme à son insu", whereas "Baudelaire le premier, d'une manière consciente et réfléchie, a fait de cette perfection secrète le but et la raison de ses poèmes".¹⁹ Consequently, the appearance of Les Fleurs du Mal was a momentous occasion in the history of Western poetry:

Et c'est pourquoi la poésie--et non seulement la française, mais l'allemande et l'anglaise tout aussi bien--la poésie européenne, après *Les Fleurs du Mal* n'a plus pu se retrouver la même.²⁰

¹⁷ André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, p. 126.

¹⁸ André Gide, "Les Fleurs du Mal", in his Préfaces, p. 10.

¹⁹ André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, p. 127.

²⁰ Ibid.

If modesty and order head the list and are the cardinal virtues of classicism, they are by no means the only important ones. Gide singles out litotes, the expressive analogue of modesty, as yet another component: "Le classicisme --et par là j'entends: le classicisme français--tend tout entier vers la litote. C'est l'art d'exprimer le plus en disant le moins."²¹ Need we enquire whether the verses of Baudelaire reveal any evidence of this tendency? In 1938 the aging Gide, deeply moved by two lines from Baudelaire's "Semper Eadem" that seemed to him to be pregnant with meaning, sought to explain their peculiar power: he found that the generalization which Baudelaire made and casually invited the reader to accept as a commonly held view, was in fact a notion which each of us had hitherto been inclined to think of as his own privately discovered truth. Quoting the two verses--

Quand notre coeur a fait une fois sa vengeance,
Vivre est un mal. C'est un secret de tous connu.

--he continues, "Du reste c'est bien là ce que disent ces mots 'secret de tous connu'."²² For Gide these lines typify the classical element of litotes present elsewhere in Baudelaire's writings, and lead him to remark that "Baudelaire est habile

²¹André Gide, "Billets à Angèle", NRF, XVI, no. 90 (March 1921), 340.

²²André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, p. 1309.

à confier à quelques paroles qui d'abord n'ont *l'air de rien* ses vérités les plus profondément douloureuses."²³

The extent to which Gide perceived and appreciated this subtle "poetic crushing of thought in Baudelaire"²⁴ may be judged from an entry in his Journal for 5 August 1934. There Gide ponders on the necessity for teaching people how to read quietly and for their own enjoyment. Wishing that an opportunity were offered him to expound on the art of reading, he imagines himself giving a course of six lectures and choosing Baudelaire by way of illustration: "J'expliquerais son amour du Sonnet. (Espace limité à remplir, et qui interdit 'inspiration' successive)".²⁵ Since the sonnet is in the words of L. E. Kastner, "the fittest vehicle for the concise expression of an isolated poetic thought", and is "the only kind of poem with a fixed form which can escape the reproach of arbitrariness",²⁶ it duly accords with Gide's conception of the

²³Ibid.

²⁴André Gide, Pretexts. Reflections on Literature and Morality, trans. J. O'Brien and others, ed. and intro. Justin O'Brien, p. 334.

²⁵André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, p. 1214.

²⁶L. E. Kastner, A History of French Versification (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), p. 233.

the ultimate in perfected classical poetry, with its modesty and restraint, with its order, with its concentration of *multum in parvo*. Logic and instinct therefore both demanded that Gide should choose for his contemplated series of lectures the poet whose own stated preference for and perfection of the sonnet form, harmonized with the tenets of a literary and artistic school of which Gide thought himself the best and almost the only living representative.²⁷

"La trace de l'homme" et "le frisson nouveau"

Approving though he was of Baudelaire's classicism, Gide appreciated that this aspect alone could not fully explain the poet's genius, nor account for what was unique in Les Fleurs du Mal. Classical perfection was of paramount importance, but it had never been for Gide the be-all and end-all of the work of art. Since the work of art was not simply a pure abstraction, but a conscious creation, Gide was anxious to see some mark of the consciousness behind the work, and in his early "Feuillets" he admits: "L'harmonie parfaite tou-

²⁷ In a letter to Armand Fraisse dated 19 February 1860, Baudelaire declares:

Parce que la forme est contraignante, l'idée jaillit plus intense. Tout va bien au sonnet. . . Il y a là la beauté du métal et du minerai bien travaillés. . . Quant aux grands, longs poèmes, nous savons ce qu'il en faut penser; c'est la ressource de ceux qui sont incapables d'en faire de courts.

--Letter #502 in the Correspondance générale, ed. Jacques Crépet (Paris: Louis Conard, 1948), III, 39-40.

Having identified modesty as the essence of classicism,

jours imaginable me plaisait moins que la déformation hargneuse de cette harmonie selon une personnalité. . . .La trace de l'homme était ce que je cherchais dans toute oeuvre."²⁸ Gide's concern not only for the art, but also "pour la trace de l'homme" is particularly appropriate in the case of Baudelaire, since it accords with a confession which the author of Les Fleurs du Mal made to Ancelle:

. . . .dans ce livre atroce j'ai mis *tout mon coeur, toute ma tendresse, toute ma religion (travestie), toute ma haine?* Il est vrai que j'écirai le contraire, que je jurerai mes grands dieux que c'est un livre d'art pur, de *singerie, de jonglerie*, et je mentirai comme un arracheur de dents.²⁹

After all this, it is only natural to enquire what trace of Baudelaire's personality does Gide discern in Les Fleurs du Mal, and how does it enhance his poetry?

The most prominent and commonly acknowledged trait of Baudelaire's character, and one emphasized by Sartre in his psycho-analytic study, is summed up in the "deux postulations

Gide informs Angèle that "je puis bien vous dire à présent que je me considère aujourd'hui comme le meilleur représentant du classicisme. J'allais dire le seul; mais j'oubliais MM. Gonzague Truc et Benda." --André Gide, "Billets à Angèle", NRF, XVI, no. 90 (March 1921), pp. 337-338.

²⁸ André Gide, "Feuillets" in his Journal 1889-1939, pp. 343-344.

²⁹ Letter to Ancelle, 18 February 1866. Letter #992 in the Correspondance générale, V, 279.

simultanées" which the poet beheld in every man, himself being no exception. Baudelaire recalled in later life: "Tout enfant, j'ai senti dans mon coeur deux sentiments contradictoires, l'horreur de la vie et l'extase de la vie."³⁰ Paradoxical as it may sound, Gide gave part of the credit for the harmony in Baudelaire's work to the very antithesis within his personality, pointing out first of all that this antithesis was natural and not contrived: "Issue d'intimes contradictions, l'antithèse chez Baudelaire n'est plus extérieure et verbale, procédé d'art à la manière de Hugo; mais loyale."³¹ Just how it affects Baudelaire's poetry is perceptively analysed by Gide: "C'est ainsi que partout en ses vers la douleur reste mêlée de joie, la confiance de doute, la gaîté de mélancolie, et qu'il cherche inquiètement dans l'horrible un tempérament de l'amour."³²

The trace of the man Baudelaire does not end with a perception of the subtle antithesis which permeates much of his writings. Gide's analytical mind went beyond a mere recognition of "la dualité de l'homme" to discover "une complexité déconcertante, une cabale de contradictions bizarres,

³⁰ Charles Baudelaire, "Mon Coeur mis à nu", in his Oeuvres Complètes, p. 1296.

³¹ André Gide, "Les Fleurs du Mal", in his Préfaces, p. 14.

³² Ibid.

d'antagonismes presque absurdes",³³ and these could be sensed in such pithy maxims as "Le goût de la concentration productive doit remplacer chez un homme mûr, le goût de la déperdition",³⁴ or again, "De la vaporisation et de la centralisation du Moi. Tout est là."³⁵ Gide maintains that not only Baudelaire's prose-writings, but his entire poetic work bear the perceptible imprint of what Albert Guerard calls a "metaphysic of the divided ego."³⁶ This would help to explain the existence in his poetry of certain elements which disconcerted his contemporaries as well as many of those who came later, and which Gide described as "Certains gestes, certains tons crus, certains sujets de poème, et même je pense quelque affectation, une complaisance amusée à prêter au malentendu".³⁷ Little appreciated at the time, these elements

³³Ibid., p. 11.

³⁴Charles Baudelaire, "Fusées", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1247.

³⁵Charles Baudelaire, "Mon Coeur mis à nu", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1271. Gide quotes both this remark as well as the one immediately preceding in "Les Fleurs du Mal" in his Préfaces, p. 16.

³⁶Albert J. Guerard, André Gide (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1963), p. 34.

³⁷André Gide, "Les Fleurs du Mal", in his Préfaces, pp. 10-11.

were judged by Baudelaire and later by Gide to possess aesthetic value. Baudelaire had insisted that "Le Beau est toujours bizarre", ³⁸ and in "Fusées" he explained that "Ce qui n'est pas légèrement difforme a l'air insensible;--d'où il suit que l'irrégularité, c'est-à-dire l'inattendu, la surprise, l'étonnement sont une partie essentielle et la caractéristique de la beauté."³⁹ The notion of surprise had a particular appeal for Gide who noted in his Journal that "l'art serait, malgré la plus parfaite explication, de réserver encore de la surprise".⁴⁰ Accordingly it was this element which he found the most striking when he came to compare his two favourite artists, Baudelaire and Chopin: "mais surtout je voudrais dire que je retrouve chez l'un et chez l'autre un même emploi de la *surprise*, et des extraordinaires raccourcis qui l'obtiennent."⁴¹ In addition he provides us

³⁸Charles Baudelaire, "Exposition universelle", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 956.

³⁹Charles Baudelaire, "Fusées", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1254.

⁴⁰André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, p. 196.

⁴¹André Gide, "Notes sur Chopin", in his Oeuvres complètes, ed. Louis Martin-Chauffier (Paris: Gallimard, 1939), XV, 101.

with a concrete example of "le rôle de l'étonnement" in one of Baudelaire's poems. Quoting the following two lines from "Parfum exotique"--

Des hommes dont le corps est mince et vigoureux
Et des femmes dont l'oeil par sa franchise étonne.

--Gide observes: "L'étonnement (artistique) vient ici de ce que Baudelaire ne considère de l'homme que le corps, et de la femme (ici) que la qualité morale."⁴²

It stands to reason that the literary compositions of a mind so delicately subtle, so decidedly complex, and as enigmatic as the proverbial sphinx, would demand some degree of concentrated attention from the reader, if they are to be fully comprehended. Moreover, an unusual mind will likely express itself in an unusual fashion. Gide appreciated this but not so all the critics. An exasperated Brunetière accused Baudelaire "de la faiblesse et de l'impropriété de l'expression", and asked "Sommes-nous obligés de comprendre?"⁴³ Gide would brook none of this: "Mais non! mais non; nous n'y sommes pas obligés! Non plus que nous ne le sommes, heureusement, d'approuver ici Brunetière."⁴⁴ What Brunetière had evidently not

⁴²André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, p. 1214.

⁴³Ferdinand Brunetière, "Baudelaire", La Revue des Deux Mondes, June 1, 1887, quoted in part in A. E. Carter, Baudelaire et la Critique française 1868-1917, p. 83. Also quoted by Gide in "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, pp. 131-132.

⁴⁴André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, p. 132.

sensed was that Baudelaire's verse "sait quêter du lecteur une sorte de connivence, qu'elle l'invite à la collaboration",⁴⁵ and rather than being a drawback, Gide saw this as a source of power. Rejecting the accusation of vagueness, he countered:

L'apparente impropriété des termes. . . ,
cette savante imprécision dont Racine déjà
usait en maître. . . , cet espacement, ce
laps entre l'image et l'idée, entre le
mot et la chose, est précisément le lieu
que l'émotion poétique va pouvoir venir
habiter.⁴⁶

Thus what had been intended as negative points of criticism against Baudelaire were transformed by Gide into positive attributes in favour of the poet.

The charge of "l'impropriété des termes" brings us back to an aspect of Baudelaire's writing previously mentioned, namely his choice of vocabulary. Earlier our attention was drawn to what Gide had determined were the classical virtues of control and restraint characterizing the poet's idiom. But the allegation of inappropriate expression furnished Gide with an opportunity to discuss a different aspect of Baudelaire's language, an aspect that was new, peculiarly Baudelairean at the time of composition and first publication, and thereafter considered to be modern. Explaining Baudelaire's abhorrence of set phrases and hackneyed metaphors, Gide insists on the poet's calculated use of the unexpected in his

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

employ of the resources of the language. This novel technique, intended to avoid banality of expression and to forestall an attitude of casual indifference on the part of the reader, is discussed by Gide:

Il [Baudelaire] se plaît même souvent à désorienter le lecteur par un rapport dont on ne reconnaît pas d'abord l'exactitude et, préférant aristocratiquement l'étrange au banal, il estimera qu'une association d'images et de mots est parfaite, non point lorsqu'elle peut servir toujours, mais au contraire quand elle ne peut servir qu'une fois.⁴⁷

Such a deliberate and skilful "association d'images et de mots" is for Gide a measure of the consummate artistry of the literary craftsman. The least attempt to alter Baudelaire's verse spoils his creation: "cherche-t-on à remplacer un seul mot, l'harmonie tout entière du vers et de la strophe, le son du poème entier parfois, n'est plus que celui d'une belle cloche fêlée."⁴⁸ Herein lies an essential aspect of Baudelaire's musicality as Gide interprets it. His concern is not so much with the classical and traditional "caresse fluide ou le choc harmonieux des sonorités verbales",⁴⁹ as with a constituent of Baudelaire's technique which Gide sees as novel to French poetry and that he describes in the following

⁴⁷ André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétexes, p. 133.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 132.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 130.

terms:

Ce choix certain de l'expression, dicté non plus seulement par la logique, et qui échappe à la logique, par quoi le poète musicien arrive à fixer, aussi exactement que le ferait une définition, l'émotion essentiellement indéfinissable.⁵⁰

But even Baudelaire himself had already hinted at this "extra-logical" element of poetic writing in his essay on Théophile Gautier, where he summarized it thus: "Manier savamment une langue, c'est pratiquer une espèce de sorcellerie évocatoire".⁵¹ And let us not forget that the mysterious in Baudelaire's verse was recognized in his own lifetime by Hugo--"vers pleins d'ailleurs de frissons et de tressaillements"⁵²--who first acclaimed it a new quality in French poetry.

The Imagination and the Critical Spirit

We are wont to ask how it came about that a poet whose work includes so many seemingly disparate elements--the classical and the modern, the simple and the complex, the clear and the mysterious--, was able to combine them into a fully integrated whole? How did he achieve the "architecture

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Charles Baudelaire, "Théophile Gautier", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 690.

⁵²Victor Hugo, Correspondance in Oeuvres complètes de Victor Hugo, ed. la Librairie Ollendorff (Paris: Albin-Michel, 1950), ser. 8, II, 314.

secrète" which Barbey d'Aurevilly perceived within a month of the first appearance of Les Fleurs du Mal, and to which so much attention has subsequently been directed.⁵³ Gide supplies us with the answer in the last section of his article "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", where he treats Faguet's main criticism of Baudelaire: "Il n'a quasi aucune imagination."⁵⁴ Gide's talent as a polemicist is fully displayed in this last part of his reply where he takes up Faguet's first and sharpest thrust against Baudelaire and repulses it in a triumph for the poet. If we have also chosen to discuss last this aspect of Gide's criticism of Baudelaire, it is for not too dissimilar

⁵³Les artistes qui voient les lignes sous le luxe et l'efflorescence de la couleur percevront très bien qu'il y a ici une *architecture secrète*, un plan calculé par le poète méditatif et volontaire."--Barbey d'Aurevilly, "Baudelaire: *Les Fleurs du Mal*", In *Le XIX^e siècle*, ed. Jacques Petit (Paris: Mercure de France, 1964), I, 203-204. Quoted in D. J. Mossop, *Baudelaire's Tragic Hero: A Study of the Architecture of Les Fleurs du Mal* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 1. Mossop mentions that the article by d'Aurevilly was written for *Le Pays* within a month of the appearance of the first edition of Les Fleurs du Mal in 1857, but he omits to state that it was refused by the literary magazine. It was eventually published in the Appendix to the third edition of Les Fleurs du Mal (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1868).

Since Barbey d'Aurevilly first commented on the architecture of Les Fleurs du Mal, a number of studies have appeared on the subject, the most comprehensive being that of Mossop mentioned above. In addition two articles which deserve notice are: L. F. Benedetto, "L'Architecture des 'Fleurs du Mal'" in *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, XXXIX, 1912. R. Feuillerat, "L'Architecture des 'Fleurs du Mal'" in *Studies by Members of the French Department of Yale University* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941).

⁵⁴Quoted by André Gide in "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétexes, p. 133.

reasons. Not only shall we here be concerned with what Gide considered to be the prime factor of Baudelaire's success as an artist and a critic, and the key to his perfection of form, but we shall also have occasion to question the interpretations and commentaries of critics that have shed an unfavourable light on Gide's knowledge of Baudelaire. In seeking to redress the inaccuracies of critical comment, our avowed aim is to vindicate the depth and store of Gide's knowledge of the poet, and thus in turn ensure a triumph for Gide.

Faguet's observation on Baudelaire's lack of imagination raises no protest from Gide; on the contrary he welcomes and embraces the view. But since Faguet, like Brunetière before him, had made the imagination the fountain-head of poetry, how was one then to explain the existence of Baudelaire and Les Fleurs du Mal? For Gide this could only be done by acknowledging that Baudelaire was more than a mere poet, if by poetry one meant "un certain développement oratoire versifié."⁵⁵ Gide saw the nineteenth century writer as "le premier artiste en poésie",⁵⁶ whose work illustrated the truth of Oscar Wilde's aphorism that the imagination imitates,

⁵⁵ André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétexes, p. 134.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

the critical spirit creates. The exclusion of imagination, whether deliberate or involuntary, is in Gide's opinion no handicap nor barrier to good creative writing. Penury of imagination, he assures us, stood Baudelaire in good stead:

Dans le cas particulier de Baudelaire, . . .
cette raréfaction de l'imagination l'a servi,
le contraignant à ne jamais tenir quitte son
intelligence. . . son sens critique, d'une
si scrupuleuse et tenace fidélité.⁵⁷

Gide never seems to tire of employing superlatives when referring to Baudelaire: "Baudelaire était avec Stendhal la plus admirable intelligence critique de son époque";⁵⁸ and he awards him yet another first: "[il] a proprement créé la critique d'art moderne."⁵⁹ In Socratic fashion Gide takes time to explain his terms, pointing out firstly that when he speaks of criticism, his emphasis is more on self-criticism than on criticism of another's work. His definition equates with that of Wilde whom he quotes; he translates it as "Cet esprit de choix, ce subtil tact d'omission".⁶⁰ Gide maintains that because of their critical intelligence, both Baudelaire and Stendhal deserve to be set apart from the Romantics:

C'est cet immanent sens critique par quoi
Baudelaire se sépare si nettement de l'école
romantique, à son insu du reste ["L'imagination,

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 134-135.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 135.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 136.

⁶⁰Ibid.

cette reine de facultés", dira-t-il. (*Curiosités esthétiques*, p. 227.)), et, tout comme Stendhal, croyant représenter le romantisme, s'y oppose--ou du moins, en en repoussant la rhétorique et l'utopique convenu, n'en garde plus que la frémissante conscience de sa modernité.⁶¹

The meaning of this passage, though it ought to be clear, has given rise to misinterpretations on the part of two critics, with one of them basing his entire article, which purported to show a certain deficiency in Gide's knowledge of Baudelaire, on his very own misinterpretation. Robert Nugent in "Gide as Critic of Baudelaire" paraphrases Gide's statement thus:

In this self-criticism Baudelaire is to be distinguished from the Romantics, though he was not aware--according to Gide--of the role of self-criticism, having praised the imagination as "cette reine des facultés" (in the *Curiosités esthétiques*). Baudelaire, disdainful of the obvious rhetoric of the Romantics, joins us by his *modernité* and initiates a line of poets who seek a *poésie voulue*.⁶²

Robert Cargo in "A Note on Gide's knowledge of Baudelaire" construes the passage somewhat differently, stating that Gide saw in Baudelaire "a critical spirit directing the

⁶¹ André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, p. 136.

⁶² Robert Nugent, "Gide as Critic of Baudelaire", Modern Language Forum, XXXVII (March-June 1952), 31.

creative one", but that "Gide oddly maintained, however, that Baudelaire was unaware of this action exercised by his critical faculties."⁶³

It is curious that Cargo should refer to Nugent's article, but without apparently realizing the difference in their interpretations and merely pointing out that "Robert Nugent. . . does not question Gide's observations in the NRF essay."⁶⁴ For in fact whereas Nugent was stating that according to Gide, Baudelaire was unaware of the role of self-criticism in writing, Cargo is alleging that Gide claims Baudelaire's ignorance of the action exercised by his own critical intelligence. The distinction is subtle, but real.

It is submitted however that both critics have erred in their different interpretations of Gide's comments. Logic and a careful reading of the entire paragraph will reveal that "à son insu du reste" can only refer to the whole clause "C'est cet immanent sens critique par quoi Baudelaire se sépare si nettement de l'école romantique", and not just to "cet immanent sens critique." Both critics ignore the second part of the sentence--"et, tout comme Stendhal, croyant représenter le romantisme, s'y oppose"--which, if conceptually taken together with the first part, leaves no room for ambiguity. Gide is

⁶³Robert T. Cargo, "A Note on Gide's Knowledge of Baudelaire", Romance Notes, VII, no. 2 (Spring 1966), 105.

⁶⁴Ibid., 107.

simply commenting on Baudelaire's failure to recognize the fact of his separation from the Romantic school by virtue of his ever-present critical intelligence.

It would appear that Gide's footnote in which he quotes Baudelaire's famed assertion--"l'imagination, cette reine des facultés", is very likely the origin of the misinterpretations. Gide merely implies that Baudelaire, in according supremacy to the imagination, erroneously believed himself to belong to the Romantic school. At the most Gide is criticizing Baudelaire's hierarchy of values: He is proposing that Baudelaire was misguided in placing the role of the imagination above that of the "sens critique"; but there is no suggestion of Baudelaire's unawareness of the role of self-criticism, far less of the role of his own critical intelligence. We think it expedient here to repeat in his own language Gide's explanation of his use of the word "critique": "Lorsque je parle de critique, on a bien compris qu'il s'agit de celle qu'on applique non point tant à l'oeuvre d'autrui, qu'à soi-même."⁶⁵ To claim therefore that Gide in one and the same sentence will speak of "cet immanent sens critique" only to qualify it immediately with "à son insu du reste", is to accuse the twentieth century critic of a gross and stark contradiction

⁶⁵ André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétexes, p. 136.

bordering on meaninglessness.

As if the passage itself were not sufficiently clear, we will look for further enlightenment at the whole body of Gide's comments on Baudelaire's critical intelligence. Two pages before the controversial paragraph, Gide cites, translates and explains a sizeable passage from Oscar Wilde's "The Critic as Artist" in his Intentions. A reference to the original English version as well as to the context from which Gide makes his translation, will convincingly show that Gide could not have been saying what the two critics differently understood him to have said. Gide's translation is of a part of Gilbert's reply to a statement made by Ernest, the other figure in the dialogue. We will reproduce only so much of the conversation as will be necessary to dispatch our problem and Gide's critics:

Ernest. I should have said that great artists worked unconsciously, that they were "wiser than they knew," as, I think, Emerson remarks somewhere.

Gilbert. It is really not so, Ernest. All fine imagination work is self-conscious and deliberate. . . . Every century that produces poetry is, so far, an artificial century, and the work that seems to us to be the most natural and simple product of its time is always the result of the most self-conscious effort. Believe me, Ernest, there is no fine art without self-consciousness, and self-consciousness and the critical spirit are one.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist", The Writings of Oscar Wilde: Intentions, Oxford ed. (London and New York: A. R. Keller & Co., 1907), VI, 135-136.

In his long footnote Gide quotes in translation what he calls "quelques passages significatifs",⁶⁷ and ends by including the last two sentences from Gilbert's speech above. One is hard put then to follow either Nugent or Cargo and to envisage how Gide, who fully endorsed Wilde's remarks, who recognized that "conscience et esprit critique ne font qu'un",⁶⁸ who took care to check the details of his argument before engaging the academics, could ever have entertained, let alone have committed to the printed page either the notion of Baudelaire's failure to perceive the role of self-criticism or that of the poet-critic possessing "un sens critique, mais sans conscience".

Fallaciously maintaining Gide's "failure to see that Baudelaire was quite conscious of the duality of his creative power",⁶⁹ Robert Cargo argues that Gide appears to be unfamiliar with the poet's own statements concerning the poet-critic in "Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris", and Cargo cites the following section:

Ce serait un événement tout nouveau dans

⁶⁷ André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétextes, p. 134.

⁶⁸ Ibid. Gide translates a number of lines from Oscar Wilde's "The Critic as Artist" in his footnote. The quotation is part of Gide's translation.

⁶⁹ Robert T. Cargo, "A Note on Gide's Knowledge of Baudelaire", Romance Notes, VII, no. 2, (Spring 1966), 106.

l'histoire des arts qu'un critique se faisant poète, un renversement de toutes les lois psychiques, une monstruosité; au contraire, tous les grands poètes deviennent naturellement, fatalement, critiques. Je plains les poètes que guide le seul instinct; je les crois incomplets. . . Il serait prodigieux qu'un critique devînt poète, et il est impossible qu'un poète ne contienne pas un critique. Le lecteur ne sera donc pas étonné que je considère le poète comme le meilleur de tous les critiques.⁷⁰

It is once more submitted that Cargo is also wrong in suggesting Gide's ignorance of the views expressed in the poet's essay on Wagner. The evidence indicates that Gide was very familiar with all of Baudelaire's writing published to date and including "Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris", when he penned his article against Faguet in 1910. Jean Delay states that Gide's most important reading during October and November 1890 was Baudelaire's posthumous work "Mon Coeur mis à nu". Delay informs us that during December 1890, when Gide was in the company of Paul Valéry in Montpellier, the two of them spent much time talking about "their gods, their dreams, their plans", and Gide's masters at this time were "Flaubert, Baudelaire, and as always, Schopenhauer."⁷¹ When in February

⁷⁰ Charles Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1222. Quoted by Robert T. Cargo in "A Note on Gide's Knowledge of Baudelaire", Romance Notes, VII, no. 2 (Spring 1966), 106.

⁷¹ Jean Delay, The Youth of André Gide, abridged and trans. June Guicharnaud (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 210.

1891 Gide was introduced into the hallowed company of Mallarmé's literary circle, not only did he soon find that his own master in poetry was venerated and much discussed by the group, but he also records in Si le Grain ne meurt that "[ils] recherchaient dans la musique encore la littérature. Wagner était leur dieu. Ils l'expliquaient, le commentaient."⁷² Is it conceivable that during this time they omitted to mention Baudelaire's essay, especially after Charles Morice reminded everyone in July 1892 that "C'est un poète, c'est Charles Baudelaire, qui a rendu le premier éclatant hommage à Delacroix et à Wagner"?⁷³ The whole atmosphere of this period, when articles proliferated on Baudelaire, was conducive to Gide becoming thoroughly conversant with the poet's writings. A. E. Carter observes with reference to Baudelaire: "La phrase de Maeterlinck. . .: 'Le père spirituel de notre génération.' C'est l'idée qui domine les dix années comprises entre 1892 et 1902."⁷⁴ In these circumstances how could Gide have even avoided becoming *au fait* with Baudelaire's entire work?

In our effort to settle the question of Gide's knowledge of Baudelaire, we will find three entries in his Journal to be of particular interest. The significance of the entry

⁷²André Gide, Si le Grain ne meurt, p. 255.

⁷³Charles Morice, "De la Critique contemporaine", Le Parti national, July 20, 1892. Quoted in part in A. E. Carter, Baudelaire et la Critique française 1868-1917, pp. 117-118.

⁷⁴A. E. Carter, Baudelaire et la Critique française 1868-1917, p. 119.

for 14 June 1905--"Repris Baudelaire avec le plus vif plaisir"⁷⁵--has elsewhere been discussed. Gide notes that Baudelaire and Poe were the subject of Paul Claudel's discourse on 1 December 1905:

"Poe et Baudelaire", déclare Paul Claudel, avec une sorte de fureur contenue "sont les deux seuls critiques modernes"; puis il fait un éloge, très intelligent d'ailleurs, de l'intelligence critique de Baudelaire et de Poe, mais dans des termes si voisins de ceux qu'employait récemment, précisément au même sujet, Rémy de Gourmont, que je me tiens à peine d'en faire la remarque.⁷⁶

At least then there exists on record a statement by Gide himself of his having been present at two *causeries* where the central theme was precisely that of Baudelaire's critical intelligence. Are we still to doubt that he was well acquainted with Baudelaire the critic? Are we to believe that the comment on Baudelaire's art criticism in Gide's reply to Faguet was no more than a purely gratuitous remark, a worthless value judgement with no base of knowledge of the poet's "Critique artistique"?

In 1908, just two years before the publication of "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", Gide was stirred to anger against Wagner at a time when tributes were being offered to the

⁷⁵André Gide, Journal 1889-1939, p. 166.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 187.

memory of the German musician, and we read in the Journal:

Enquête du *Berliner Tageblatt*.
Il s'agit, à l'occasion du XXV^e anniversaire
de la mort de Wagner, de pressentir les
"sommités artistiques et intellectuelles
de toute d'Europe pour avoir leur opinion
sur l'influence du wagnérisme, spécialement en
France."⁷⁷

On this occasion, for certain, Baudelaire could not have been overlooked. He was, after all, the father of Wagnerism in France. Gide's reply to the enquiry makes it clear that he was long acquainted both with "la personne et l'oeuvre de Wagner",⁷⁸ as well as with critical comments and opinions about him. Yet Cargo has ventured to say that Gide was unfamiliar with Baudelaire's comments about the poet-critic in "Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris". It seems more likely that Cargo was unfamiliar with the fact that part of the very same passage which he cites, and moreover the sentence which he omits, form the epigraph to Gide's essay on Paul Valéry:

Tous les grands poètes deviennent naturellement, fatalement, critiques. Je plains les poètes que guide le seul instinct; je les crois incomplets. Dans la vie spirituelle des premiers, une crise se fait infailliblement, où ils veulent raisonner leur art, découvrir les lois obscures en vertu desquelles ils ont produit, et tirer de cette étude une série de préceptes dont le but divin est l'infaillibilité dans la production

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 259.

⁷⁸Ibid.

poétique.⁷⁹

No other sentence than the last better describes the conscious working of the critical intelligence, and it is Gide, not Cargo, who quotes it. It should be pointed out that Gide's essay on Valéry was initially published in Le Divan on 1 July 1922, whereas Cargo's article was concerned with what he wrongly believed Gide to have stated in "Baudelaire et M. Faguet" which first appeared in November 1910. Even so Cargo's article, which makes claim to being a contribution to scholarship, both by virtue of correcting what its author thought was an inaccurate critical comment and at the same time revealing a deficiency in Gide's knowledge of Baudelaire, ought to have included some mention of Gide's subsequent quotation from "Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris". In any event we believe it has been proven beyond reasonable doubt that Baudelaire's essay on Wagner was well-known to Gide before he wrote his reply to Faguet. Following his misinterpretation, Cargo's omission becomes all the more grievous since he chose to end his article with the cynical remark that

⁷⁹ Charles Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1222. Quoted by André Gide in "Paul Valéry", Le Divan, July 1, 1922.

"Gide's oversight is all the more ironic since he severely chides Faguet for his ignorance of Baudelaire."⁸⁰ But because Cargo's error was originally based on his failure to pay proper attention to an entire sentence, Gide might mockingly have chided him with the very words he employed in referring to Faguet: "Je veux bien qu'[il] n'ait pas vu que la phrase continuait".⁸¹

Though it is now manifestly clear that Cargo was wrong in his particular criticism of Gide's knowledge of Baudelaire, ironically enough he chose the one passage which allows Gide's knowledge of the poet to be censured in any way. The terms "romantisme" and "imagination" need to be specially defined when used in any context to do with Baudelaire. Contrary to what is implied in Gide's statement concerning Baudelaire's belief in his kinship with the Romantics, it must be noted that Baudelaire would have aligned himself with only a few of those who were grouped under this nomenclature. In "Qu'est-ce que le romantisme", Baudelaire observes that "s'il est resté peu de romantiques, c'est que peu d'entre eux ont trouvé le romantisme".⁸² Baudelaire's conception of what con-

⁸⁰Robert T. Cargo, "Note on Gide's Knowledge of Baudelaire", Romance Notes, VII, no. 2 (Spring 1966), 107.

⁸¹André Gide, "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", in his Nouveaux Prétexes, p. 129.

⁸²Charles Baudelaire, "Qu'est-ce que le romantisme", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 878.

stitutes romanticism sets him apart from the general throng of Romantics. He explains that "Pour moi, le romantisme est l'expression la plus récente, la plus actuelle du beau",⁸³ and he elaborates further: "Qui dit romantisme dit art moderne,--c'est-à-dire intimité, spiritualité, couleur, aspiration vers l'infini, exprimées par tous les moyens que contiennent les arts."⁸⁴ Gide's comment obscures the fact that Baudelaire believed himself to represent romanticism only within the limits of the poet's own definition of the term.

There is one other criticism which may be made of Gide the critic of Baudelaire. In pointing out the role of Baudelaire's critical intelligence and in opposing it to the poet's extolling of "l'imagination, cette reine des facultés", Gide seems not to have appreciated that Baudelaire and he were not as divided as it might at first appear. In "Le Gouvernement de l'imagination", the poet quotes and indicates his approval of a passage from Catherine Crowe's The Night Side of Nature, which he translates thus: "Par imagination, je ne veux pas seulement exprimer l'idée commune impliquée

⁸³Ibid., p. 879.

⁸⁴Ibid.

dans ce mot dont on fait si grand abus, laquelle est simplement *fantaisie*, mais bien l'imagination *créatrice*."⁸⁵ The imagination is largely a flowering of the intellect: "Elle est l'analyse, elle est la synthèse".⁸⁶ This is a far cry from the flights of fancy of the Romantic poet, where according to Philippe Van Tieghem, "Aucune réflexion préalable et vraiment consciente ne vient le guider. Il suit son instinct ou celui de ses lecteurs."⁸⁷ We may reproach Gide then for not making the distinction between Baudelaire's use of the word "imagination" and its Romantic connotation, for not recognizing that in the Baudelairean aesthetic, "l'imagination, grâce à sa nature suppléante, contient l'esprit critique."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Charles Baudelaire, "Le Gouvernement de l'imagination", in his Oeuvres complètes, pp. 1040-41.

⁸⁶ Charles Baudelaire, "La Reine des facultés", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1037.

⁸⁷ Philippe Van Tieghem, Les Grandes Doctrines littéraires en France (6th ed.; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 182.

⁸⁸ Charles Baudelaire, "La Reine des facultés", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1040. Margaret Gilman devotes a large section of chapter 3 entitled "The Poet as Critic" in her book Baudelaire the Critic (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), to a discussion of the development of the concept and the role of the imagination in Baudelaire's writings. In a subsequent article, "From Imagination to Immediacy in French Poetry", Romantic Review, XXXIX, no. 1 (Feb. 1948), 30-49, she takes up the subject again, and mentions that "Baudelaire maintains that the imagination includes the critical faculty".--p. 31.

If we have taken the liberty in our two preceding paragraphs of being adversely critical with respect to two points in all Gide's writings on Baudelaire, it is because we firmly believe that it cannot detract from the weight of evidence earlier adduced to establish the soundness and extent of Gide's knowledge of the poet's work. That it was even thought desirable in the first place to examine the foundation of Gide's knowledge stemmed from the fact that had the allegation of Gide's unfamiliarity with certain of Baudelaire's writings been allowed to go unchallenged, it would have left open to question the value and authenticity of Gide's critical comments on the poet. However we can happily conclude that not only was Gide profoundly knowledgeable in Baudelairean studies, but that he truly appreciated and assessed the multiple aspects of Baudelaire's literary genius with an accuracy which remains well-nigh infallible even today.

CHAPTER III

ASPECTS OF A COMMON AESTHETIC

In the course of our analysis of Gide's critical writings on Baudelaire, it was impossible not to sense that so much of what appealed to Gide about Baudelaire, as for instance the latter's classicism, stemmed from the fact that Gide also shared similar ideals and principles pertaining to the creative process and the work of art. It is thus easy to see that just as Baudelaire's art and literary criticism reflect his own artistic taste, so too Gide's criticism is revelatory of his particular aesthetic bias. Quite apart from the dispassionate observer's perception of a coincidence of views between Baudelaire and Gide in the province of art, there is on record among the "Feuillets" of Gide's Journal a firm statement which provides the soundest basis and the surest justification for arguing on behalf of a common aesthetic:

Dans ces vers de Baudelaire:

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

où le lecteur inattentif ne reconnaît qu'une cascade de mots, je vois la parfaite définition de l'oeuvre d'art. Je saisis à part chacun de ces mots, j'admire ensuite la guirlande qu'ils forment et l'effet de leur conjuration; car aucun d'eux n'est inutile et chacun d'eux est exactement à sa place. Volontiers je les prendrais pour titres des successifs chapitres d'un traité d'esthétique:

1. Ordre (Logique, disposition raisonnable des parties);
2. Beauté (Ligne, élan, profil de l'oeuvre);
3. Luxe (Abondance disciplinée);
4. Calme (Tranquillisation du tumulte);
5. Volupté (Sensualité, charme adorable de la matière, attrait).¹

The preceding quotation obviously cannot be taken to cover the totality of an aesthetic, since it deals uniquely with the work of art, but herein it concerns Gide's primary preoccupation, and treats of that aspect of the subject which, as we would have gathered from "Baudelaire et M. Faguet", Gide sees as all important to the eventual survival of the work of art, namely its form and composition. The common underlying quality of its composition is equilibrium, another name for constraint, for modesty, and is inherent in such terms as "disposition raisonnable", "abondance disciplinée" and "tranquillisation du tumulte".² Of equilibrium Gide wrote in "Littérature et Morale":

L'équilibre, c'est la "santé" parfaite; ce que M. Taine appelle un accident heureux; mais il est irréalisable physiquement à cause de ce que nous disions; réalisable seulement dans l'oeuvre d'art. L'oeuvre d'art est un équilibre hors du temps, une santé artificielle.³

¹André Gide, "Feuillets", in his Journal, p. 664.

²An apt statement which confirms that "tranquillisation du tumulte" and "l'équilibre" are near equivalents, is to be found elsewhere in the Journal: "L'art est aussi distant du tumulte que de l'apathie". Journal, p. 393.

³André Gide, "Littérature et morale", in his Journal p. 94.

Though Baudelaire wrote less prodigiously than did Gide on the subject of the composition of the work of art, this by no means signifies that he paid less attention to this aspect of artistic creation, and his short essay "Des Méthodes de composition" reveals the interest which it held for him. Like Gide his insistence is on quality and not on quantity, and on technique in the creative process. Thus he could write that "Couvrir une toile n'est pas la charger de couleurs, c'est ébaucher en frottis, c'est disposer des masses en tons légers et transparents".⁴ The beauty which is achieved is classical in the sense that it results from the disciplined and conscious organization of the work of art, and on this both Baudelaire and Gide are agreed.

Art however is not pure technique, it is not just form. There must be the raw materials out of which the work of art is fashioned. The stuff from which the work of art is created is to be found within the artist as well as in the world outside him. The existence and fusion of the offerings of these two sources are recognized by Baudelaire and Gide, who seem to employ almost identical terms to give expression to their ideas. Baudelaire writes: "Qu'est-ce que l'art pur suivant la conception moderne? C'est créer une magie suggestive contenant à la fois l'objet et le sujet, le monde extérieur

⁴Charles Baudelaire, "Des Méthodes de composition", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 481.

à l'artiste et l'artiste lui-même".⁵ Gide speaks in a similar vein: "L'oeuvre de l'artiste ne m'intéresse pleinement que si, tout à la fois, je la sens en relation directe et sincère avec le monde extérieur, en relation intime et secrète avec son auteur".⁶ Gide's wish to get down beneath the surface of the work to see "la trace de l'homme" is matched by a parallel desire in Baudelaire who wants that "un tableau doit avant tout reproduire la pensée intime de l'artiste".⁷

While both declaring that the work of art must contain elements from the exterior world, our two aestheticians vigorously maintain that this does not equate with a slavish reproduction of external reality in its prismatic diversity. There is no dearth of evidence to show that Baudelaire and Gide were strongly opposed to any view of art as a photographic representation of nature, the word nature being used here in the context of sensually perceived reality, and not human nature. Almost indignant, Baudelaire demands "Qui oserait assigner à l'art la fonction stérile d'imiter la nature?"⁸ He makes it clear that "La première affaire de l'artiste est

⁵Charles Baudelaire, "L'Art philosophique", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1099.

⁶André Gide, Incidences (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 93.

⁷Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1846, IV", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 891.

⁸Charles Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la vie moderne", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1185.

de substituer l'homme à la nature et de protester contre elle".⁹ Nature herself cannot satisfy, since she does not offer beauty: "Je trouve inutile et fastidieux de représenter ce qui est, parce ce que rien de ce qui est ne me satisfait. La nature est laide, et je préfère les monstres de ma fantaisie à la trivialité positive".¹⁰ Gide is no less adamant and intones in similar accents: "Le vrai retour à la nature, c'est le définitif retour aux éléments: la mort. . . . Et n'est-ce pas, artiste, pour s'opposer à la nature et s'affirmer".¹¹ Thus for him as well "L'art ne reproduit pas la nature: Je n'admets qu'une chose pour ne pas être naturelle: l'art".¹² As their language above suggests, both writers envisage a struggle with nature. Says Baudelaire: "Le dessin est une lutte entre la nature et l'artiste, où l'artiste triomphera d'autant plus facilement qu'il comprendra mieux les intentions de la nature".¹³ Gide is even more aggressively emphatic:

L'erreur m'exaspérait toujours plus, de ceux qui croient devoir fiancer art et nature. Certainement l'art hait la nature; s'il la

⁹ Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1846, XII", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 931.

¹⁰ Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1859, III", in his Oeuvres complètes, pp. 1036-37.

¹¹ André Gide, "Les Limites de l'art", in his Oeuvres complètes, III, 405.

¹² André Gide, Corydon (Paris: Gallimard, 1924), p. 38.

¹³ Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1846, VII", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 914.

recherche toujours, c'est comme un chasseur
en embuscade et comme son rival qui ne
l'embrasse que pour l'étrangler.¹⁴

Art then must never be servile, must not be subordinated to the tangible or the intangible, must minister neither to nature nor morality. Baudelaire and Gide are both firm on this point, maintaining that subservience to anything beside itself is destructive to the work of art. Two statements from "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe" will suffice to confirm Baudelaire's stand. With respect to the end of poetry, he writes: "La poésie ne peut pas, sous peine de mort ou de déchéance, s'assimiler à la science ou à la morale; elle n'a pas la Vérité pour objet, elle n'a qu'Elle-même".¹⁵ Not only does poetry suffer by pursuing an end foreign to itself, but the poet himself as well sustains a loss: "Je dis que, si le poète a poursuivi un but moral, il a diminué sa force poétique; et il n'est pas imprudent de parier que son oeuvre sera mauvaise".¹⁶ In a letter to Jules Renard, Gide is as decidedly dogmatic as the author of "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe": "L'oeuvre d'art ne doit rien prouver; ne peut rien prouver sans tricherie".¹⁷ Perhaps the most famous statement of Gide on the

¹⁴ André Gide, Journal, p. 344.

¹⁵ Charles Baudelaire, "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe". Quoted by Henri Peyre in Pensées de Baudelaire, ed. Henri Peyre (Paris: José Corti, 1951), p. 139.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ André Gide, "Réponse à la lettre de Jules Renard",

subject of the thematic content and the end result of the work of art is to be found in the Journal, where he eloquently clarifies his position:

J'ai écrit, et suis prêt à récrire encore, ceci qui me paraît d'une évidente vérité: "C'est avec les beaux sentiments qu'on fait de la mauvaise littérature". Je n'ai jamais dit, ni pensé, qu'on ne faisait de la bonne littérature qu'avec les mauvais sentiments. J'aurais aussi bien pu écrire que les meilleures intentions font souvent les pires oeuvres d'art et que l'artiste risque de dégrader son art à le vouloir édifiant.¹⁸

The apparent implication of the foregoing statements is that the work of art is divorced from morality. In fact however neither Baudelaire nor Gide inclined to this view. The very search for beauty and perfection in the work of art means that the finished product will be morally pure, morally uplifting. Indeed it is by refusing to be didactic that art can aspire to ultimate purity. Baudelaire remarks very specifically on this fact:

Plus l'art voudra être philosophiquement clair, plus il se dégradera et remontera vers l'hiéroglyphe enfantin; plus au contraire l'art se détachera de l'enseignement et plus il montera vers la beauté pure et désintéressée.¹⁹

in his Nouveaux Prétextes, p. 286.

¹⁸ André Gide, Journal, II, 52.

¹⁹ Charles Baudelaire, "L'Art philosophique", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1100.

In similar terms Gide claims that it is because art did not and does not allow itself to be contaminated with non-aesthetic considerations, that it is now embraced by the Church: "C'est la séparation de l'art et de la morale, son détachement, son désintéressement des questions morales, qui permet aujourd'hui à la religion de s'emparer de l'art".²⁰

Thus for Baudelaire and for Gide, a common preoccupation with the work of art was the way to a common salvation. The aesthetic was always moral.

²⁰André Gide, Journal, p. 793.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROBLEM OF INFLUENCE

Having made a case for Baudelaire as Gide's *poète préféré*, followed by an analysis of the latter's critical comments on the nineteenth century writer, and thence having proceeded to postulate a *parenté d'esprit* in the domain of their aesthetic thinking, a discussion of the question of influence would seem to emerge as a logical corollary. If the term influence has so far been absent from our vocabulary, it is because in the words of Henri Peyre, "Il n'est pas de notion ou d'expression qui, plus que celle d'influence, soulève d'amères controverses et des incompréhensions acharnées"¹. Peyre is moreover quite right in affirming that "La critique fait fausse route lorsqu'elle conclut de toute ressemblance entre deux auteurs à une influence, ou lorsqu'elle confond influence et ressemblance."² Yet we feel authorized to discuss this subject with particular reference to Gide, and not just on account of the fact that he happened to

¹Henri Peyre, "André Gide et les problèmes d'influence en littérature", Modern Language Notes, XVII (November 1942), 558.

²Ibid., XVII, 564.

give a lecture entitled "De l'influence en littérature", but rather because he was quick to admit his own susceptibility to influences. Indeed he welcomed any influence (Gide himself refused to distinguish between "good" and "bad" influences³), and saw this as a precondition to becoming "a great mind".

He had but little respect for those who anxiously sought to avoid influences: "Ceux qui craignent les influences et s'y dérobent font le tacite aveu de la pauvreté de leur âme."⁴ And this leads him ultimately to the following conclusion:

Un grand homme n'a qu'un souci: devenir le plus humain possible,--disons mieux: *Devenir banal*. Devenir banal, Shakespeare, banal Goethe, Molière, Balzac, Tolstoï. . . Et chose admirable, c'est ainsi qu'il devient le plus personnel.⁵

³In his lecture "De l'influence en littérature" delivered before a Brussels literary society named La Libre Esthétique on March 29, 1900, Gide declared: "On convient généralement qu'il y a de bonnes et de mauvaises influences. Je ne me charge pas de les distinguer. J'ai la prétention de faire l'apologie de toutes les influences."--André Gide, "De l'influence en littérature", in his Oeuvres complètes, III, 251.

⁴André Gide, "De l'influence en littérature", in his Oeuvres complètes, III, 262.

⁵Ibid., III, 262-263.

Multiple influences neutralize each other, obviate the inordinate predominance of any particular one, but at the same time they nourish the mind, and permit the gifted intellect to realize its true capacity. Gide steadfastly maintains that "l'artiste véritable, avide des influences profondes, se penchera sur l'oeuvre d'art, tâchant de l'oublier et de pénétrer plus arrière."⁶ What does he hope to find? Gide explains-- "L'artiste véritable cherchera derrière l'oeuvre, l'homme, et c'est de lui qu'il apprendra."⁷ Once again we conjure a vision of Gide pouring over Les Fleurs du Mal in quest of "la trace de l'homme Baudelaire".

We need not tarry then to enquire whether we would have Gide's assent to a discussion on the subject of what influence Baudelaire, his favourite poet, might have had on him. However for reasons of proper perspective, any investigation of Baudelaire's influence on Gide must of necessity extend to other influences, and almost immediately one is confronted by divergent and contending schools of thought. There are those who argue indefatigably for the influence exercised by Mallarmé and the Symbolists. Archambault categorically declares that "Gide . . . n'a jamais renié le Symbolisme"⁸, and Germaine

⁶Ibid., III, 269.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Paul Archambault, Humanité d'André Gide (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1946), p. 72. Archambault's statement is quoted by Martin Kanes in "Gide's Early Attitude to the Symbol",

Brée with equal conviction writes: "L'influence mallarméenne est celle qui, à longue échéance, a, plus que toute autre, agi sur l'oeuvre de Gide."⁹ On the other hand there is the contrary opinion of Jean Hytier who states concerning Gide that "Il n'a guère fait que passer par le Symbolisme, et ce mouvement n'a laissé que des traces dans son oeuvre."¹⁰

Against those who insist strenuously upon the depth of Mallarmé's influence on Gide, two incontestable facts must be opposed. Firstly it has earlier been shown that Gide was a disciple of Baudelaire before he met Mallarmé, which forthwith precludes any suggestion that it was the latter who stimulated Gide's interest in Baudelaire.¹¹ We may without hesitation say that Gide "suivait déjà sa pente". The second point of note has to do with Gide's first published work, Les Cahiers d'André Walter. This book, critical opinions agree, is no technical masterpiece, but G. W. Ireland expresses a generally held view that "there is almost no theme of Gide's

Symposium, XIII (Fall 1959), 215, foot. 3.

⁹ Germaine Brée, André Gide, l'insaisissable Protée (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles-Lettres", 1953), p. 42.

¹⁰ Jean Hytier, André Gide, p. 41.

¹¹ See p.46, foot. 71.

maturity which is not already present in the *Cahiers d'André Walter*.¹² It is significant that André Walter remains sane just sufficiently long to finish his book, and then wishes for death. This leads Albert Guérard to observe that Gide's first work "ends with the triumph of art".¹³ But Les Cahiers d'André Walter was written before Gide met Mallarmé, was published within three weeks of their first meeting, was republished with minor changes two months thereafter, and strikingly enough contained lines from Baudelaire's poem "Recueillement", the inclusion of which drew praise from Pierre Louÿs.¹⁴ Any influences which might have led Gide to the conviction of the primacy of art must then have preceded Mallarmé's.

In order to extricate ourselves from the morass of critical opinion relating to the subject of influence, we will turn to Paul Valéry, who confirms the verity of Baudelaire's remark previously cited, that "Tous les grands poètes deviennent naturellement, fatalement, critiques", and which remark we have also noted was quoted by Gide in his epigraph

¹²G. W. Ireland, Gide (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 8.

¹³Albert J. Guérard, André Gide, p. 55.

¹⁴Gide was first introduced to Mallarmé early in February 1891. According to Naville's Bibliography of Gide's writings, Les Cahiers d'André Walter was put on sale on February 27, 1891. The second and revised edition appeared on April 25, 1891. See Arnold Naville, Bibliographie des

to his essay on Valéry.¹⁵ Valéry it is who most authoritatively stresses the link between Baudelaire and Mallarmé, and thus allows us to appreciate that if Gide is in any way indebted to Mallarmé, the latter owes an even greater debt to Baudelaire, the original creditor:

La plus grande gloire de Baudelaire. . . est
sans doute d'avoir engendré quelques très
grands poètes. Ni Verlaine, ni Mallarmé,
ni Rimbaud n'eussent été ce qu'ils furent
sans la lecture qu'ils firent des *Fleurs*
du Mal à l'âge décisif.¹⁶

This comment, issuing from the pen of one who owed his early poetic inspiration to Mallarmé, stands out against Henri Peyre's attempt to play down Baudelaire's influence on those who came after him, Gide included. In an article entitled "Remarques sur le peu d'influence de Baudelaire", Peyre cursorily and misleadingly sums up Gide's interest in Baudelaire as being evident only in "deux essais rapides de Gide, dont le prétexte était l'article sottement hostile à Baudelaire de Faguet, ou le désir de rabaisser Théophile Gautier."¹⁷

écrits de André Gide (Paris: Guy Le Prat, 1949), pp. 37-38.

¹⁵ See p.50, foot. 79.

¹⁶ Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), I, 612.

¹⁷ Henri Peyre, "Remarques sur le peu d'influence de Baudelaire", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, LXVII, no. 2 (1967), 427-428.

It should be pointed out that Peyre produces no evidence in support of his reference to "deux essais rapides";

Rejecting Peyre's view and convinced that L. J. Austin's observation--"L'influence de Baudelaire sur Mallarmé est évidemment un sujet trop vaste pour être traité en quelques pages"¹⁸---is likewise applicable to Baudelaire's influence on Gide, and having already noted the concurrence of Baudelaire's and Gide's views on certain major aesthetic questions, we shall content ourselves to establish that on a fundamental aesthetic problem, the one which separates Mallarmé from

two months elapsed between the publication of Faguet's article on September 1, 1910, and Gide's reply on November 1, 1910. Moreover, considering the depth of analysis in Gide's essay, coupled with the examples he cites of Faguet misquoting Baudelaire, it is difficult to share the opinion which alleges a hurried publication. As for the article "Théophile Gautier et Charles Baudelaire: A propos d'une nouvelle édition des *Fleurs du Mal*", *Les Ecrits Nouveaux*, November 1, 1917, all the evidence belies Peyre's claim of haste. This article, notes A. E. Carter in *Baudelaire et la Critique française*, p. 265, is but "La préface, légèrement retouchée, de l'édition Pelletan et Helleu, which became available to the public in early June 1917. On this very preface Gide admitted to having spent much time and energy before eventually completing it in December 1916. He recorded in an entry to his Journal:

Je me suis remis pendant deux jours à la traduction du *Typhon*; mais que j'ai bientôt lâchée pour me donner plus entièrement à cette préface pour une réédition des *Fleurs du Mal*, que m'a demandée Helleu (Pelletan). J'ai peiné terriblement les premiers jours, dans un état de fatigue, de stupidité et d'exaspération indicible; mais ce soir, où je viens de mettre le point final, je ne suis pas trop mécontent du résultat.-- *Journal*, p. 584.

¹⁸L. J. Austin, "Mallarmé disciple de Baudelaire: 'Le Parnasse contemporain'", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, LXVII, no. 2 (1967), 437.

Baudelaire, Gide is a disciple of Baudelaire and not of Mallarmé.

It should come as no surprise if we find that the crux of the problem, the vital distinction which sets Baudelaire and Gide on one side, and places Mallarmé on the other, lies in the nature of the symbol and its relation to the work of art. We shall endeavour to reduce the subject to its bare essentials for the purposes of clarity.

In "Le Gouvernement de l'imagination", Baudelaire articulates a credo which reveals that in his cosmology, empirical phenomena are but symbolical reflections of a superterrestrial and absolute reality:

Tout l'univers visible n'est qu'un magasin d'images et de signes auxquels l'imagination donnera une place et une valeur relative; c'est une espèce de pâture que l'imagination doit digérer et transformer.¹⁹

"Baudelaire is convinced that the essence of reality is not material but spiritual"²⁰, states Douglas Parmée, and true knowledge of absolute reality is the recognition of the relations between the elements of the sense-apprehended world and the various corresponding aspects of the transcendent object. Both Mallarmé and Gide held this same vision of Baudelaire's universe, but it is predicated here that this is the

¹⁹Charles Baudelaire, "Le Gouvernement de l'imagination", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1044.

²⁰Douglas Parmée, Twelve French Poets (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), p. 33 of the Introduction.

limit of any common aesthetic which these three might have shared with regard to the symbol. Henceforth Baudelaire and Gide together, and Mallarmé separately, tread different paths.

Systematizing Baudelaire's poetics we find that the intuitive faculty grasps the affinities, the imagination assimilates then, and Beauty is attained "through a conscious arrangement of natural elements that will afford a finite prehension of the infinite".²¹ Gide's view is almost identical. Justin O'Brien reports that Gide was "never quite able to believe in *reality* and its independent existence. . .; to him the artist had to be 'somewhat of a mystic' who saw through the screen of phenomena."²² One of Gide's canons is that there is no art without transposition, and he twists the proverbial adage to give expression to his belief--"Dieu propose et l'homme dispose".²³ For Baudelaire as for Gide, not only is the achievement of Beauty a conscious and calculated effort of the artistic will to organize and structure the phenomenological world, but indeed the Ideal of Beauty can find ultimate expression in any artistic medium. The gap which

²¹William W. King, "Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Metaphysics or Aesthetics?", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXVI (1967), 117.

²²Justin O'Brien, Portrait of André Gide (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953), p. 336.

²³André Gide, "Les Limites de l'art", in his Oeuvres complètes, III, 407.

here separates these two from Mallarmé could not be wider.

Where Mallarmé is concerned, the world of Reality and more particularly the Ideal of Beauty had nothing to do with the individual conscience or consciousness of the poet. Mallarmé's understanding of the spiritual principle underlying the universe is almost the opposite of Gide and Baudelaire's. His principle is what he terms *le Néant*, which Parmée defines as "the nothingness of pure spirit when deprived of any of its fortuitous physical externals."²⁴ The poet must objectify himself, must seek to become by use of his mind a complete abstraction, a pure idea. Beauty was to be achieved through the power of the word, and the magically evocative nature of words. W. W. King explains that "the word must be stripped of its objective banality with which the world had encrusted it" and one of the ways of securing this was to loosen "the conventionally strict denotational referents to which words correspond."²⁵ Only now can Mallarmé hope to find

²⁴Douglas Parmée, Twelve French Poets, p. 38 of the Introduction.

²⁵William W. King, "Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Metaphysics or Aesthetics?", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXVI, (1967), 118.
Perhaps "subjective banality" would have been preferable to "objective banality", since Mallarmé regarded the connotations acquired by the word as accretions whose origin was the human intellect.

his Ideal of Beauty: "Qu'une moyenne étendue de mots, sous la comprehension du regard, se range en traits définitifs, avec quoi le silence".²⁶ Gone is the consciousness, the organizing intellect of the artist, or rather the poet, for there is no question of any other art-form excelling poetry in glimpsing the "small portion of that ideal beyond."²⁷

Such a view of things would have been anathema to Baudelaire as it evidently was for Gide when he rejected Mallarmé and his Symbolist past. Witness Baudelaire's *prise de position* in a section of "Le Gouvernement de L'imagination":

Ainsi, de la nature, par exemple. "La nature n'est qu'un dictionnaire", répétait-il fréquemment. Pour bien comprendre l'étendue du sens impliqué dans cette phrase, il faut se figurer les usages nombreux et ordinaires du dictionnaire. On y cherche le sens des mots, la génération des mots, l'étymologie des mots; enfin on en extrait tous les éléments qui composent une phrase et un récit; mais personne n'a jamais considéré le dictionnaire comme une composition dans le sens poétique du mot.²⁸

Since he refuses the conventional dictionary with its store

²⁶Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crise de vers", in his Oeuvres complètes. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), p. 364.

²⁷William W. King, "Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Metaphysics or Aesthetics?", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXVI (1967), 121.

²⁸Charles Baudelaire, "Le Gouvernement de l'imagination", in his Oeuvres complètes, p. 1041.

of meanings, with its literal and figurative acceptations, can we envisage Baudelaire evincing the slightest enthusiasm for Mallarmé's dictionary of pure words? Nor would Gide either have subscribed to emptying words of their human content, of words becoming symbols for inaccessible realities, where as King rightly states, "symbols point to other symbols rather than to Reality directly."²⁹ According to Martin Kanes, it was to this whole abstract notion of the symbol that Gide objects in Le Voyage d'Urien. Discussing the internal structure of this work, Kanes develops his argument thus:

This internal structure implies the adequacy of the symbol if nothing else. . . . But such a concept reduces the artist to a mere observer of detached entities; it negates the human quality of the poet who translates and transmutes these images. It was against this degrading implication that Gide protested in attempting to introduce discursiveness into his work.³⁰

For Baudelaire it is the work of art as a whole, the "forêt de symboles" arranged, synthesized, in which there exists a "fundamental principle of unity whereby all antitheses are reconciled",³¹ that constitutes the real symbol,

²⁹William W. King, "Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Metaphysics or Aesthetics?", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXVI (1967), 121.

³⁰Martin Kanes, "Gide's Early Attitude to the Symbol", Symposium, XII (Fall 1959), 207.

³¹William W. King, "Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Metaphysics or Aesthetics?", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXVI, (1967), 120.

and not the many trees and words which go to make the forest and the work of art respectively. Gide reaches much the same conclusion in one of his "Réflexions":

RHETORIQUE. En étudiant la question de la raison d'être de l'oeuvre d'art, on arrive à trouver que cette raison suffisante, ce symbole de l'oeuvre, c'est sa composition.

Une oeuvre bien composé est nécessairement symbolique. Autour de quoi viendrait se grouper les parties? Qui guiderait leur ordonnance? sinon l'idée de l'oeuvre, qui fait cette ordonnance symbolique.

L'oeuvre d'art, c'est une idée qu'on exagère.

Le symbole, c'est autour de quoi se compose un livre.

La phrase est une excroissance de l'Idée.³²

Having now determined that Gide shares far more of the fundamental principles of Baudelaire's aesthetics than he does of Mallarmé's, we return to the vexed question of influence. Only prophetic insight and pontifical certainty can permit the critic to assert unequivocally the degree of direct influence exercised by one writer or his work upon another writer. Hence the most reasonable and intelligent line of approach to the subject is that to be found in one of Gide's early works, Les Nourritures terrestres. Gide refuses to play the role of master and allow Nathanaël to become a servile disciple. Rather he accepts to act as a guide who

³² André Gide, "Réflexions sur quelques points de littérature et de morale", in his Oeuvres complètes, II, 424. Also in his Journal, p. 94.

walks beside his younger companion, pointing out to him.

"Une des milles postures possibles en face de la vie."³³

In like manner we may conclude that Gide accepts Baudelaire as his guide, without allowing him in the final analysis to become his master.

³³ André Gide, Romans, récits et soties, oeuvres lyriques, p. 248.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of our study we stated it as our goal to demonstrate in the pages which followed that there were significant points of comparison to warrant and justify the undertaking a serious essay uniting Baudelaire and Gide. The chronological sequence of their lives required the adopting of a perspective where the emphasis was on Gide's relation to Baudelaire. This dissertation makes no pretence to being comprehensive in the sense of having thoroughly examined all the points of comparison. Indeed the secret ambition of the thesis has been to convince the reader that much fruitful study can be done in applying the aesthetic principles commonly shared by these two writers to a study of their literary creations.

To have attempted an application of principles such as the one just suggested, without first establishing the fact of a common sharing, would have been indefensible as being contrary to the scientific method of scholarship. That Baudelaire was Gide's "poète préféré" would in itself be sufficient justification for a comparative study of these two writers, but it was initially to be proven that Baudelaire occupied first place in the Gidean hierarchy of French poets. One need not be supremely wise to perceive that any rewarding investigation must straightway proceed to examine the content

of Gide's critical writings on Baudelaire. Like Bernard Shaw's, Gide's critical judgements, his prefaces, are very often more immediately revealing of his thoughts and principles than are the purely literary works. Both Baudelaire and Gide would hasten to remind us of what has previously been mentioned, namely that it is the artist, the man whose primary consideration is one of aesthetics, who makes the best and often the most interesting critic. Thus it was inevitable that a discussion of Gide the critic of Baudelaire should perforce involve and extend to questions of aesthetics.

It is worthy of note that despite an attack from Sartre on his bourgeois mentality and attacks from other quarters on the lack of philosophic content in his work, Gide continues to enjoy a wide reading public. These criticisms only serve to underline the accuracy of Gide's judgement concerning the approach to his own work: "Le point de vue esthétique est le seul où il faille se placer pour parler de mon oeuvre sainement."¹ A few months after first setting down this precept, Gide appended a rider which happily accommodated his insistence on an other factor, "la trace de l'homme", in the work of art. In his Journal entry October 13, 1918, Gide makes the following affirmation:

¹André Gide, Journal, p. 652.

C'est du point de vue de l'art qu'il sied de juger ce que j'écris, point de vue où ne se place jamais, ou presque jamais, le critique. . . .C'est du reste le seul point de vue qui ne soit exclusif d'aucun des autres.²

The primacy of aesthetics therefore demanded that we take time to discuss Baudelaire and Gide in this context. Not to have reflected on the problem of influence would have been to skirt one of the most interesting but perhaps most troublesome questions to which our essay has given rise, and whatever influence Baudelaire might have exercised on Gide contributes to the strength of the argument that proposes kindred artistic temperaments between these two writers. In "De l'Influence en littérature", Gide speaks of sources of influences which are chosen for the very fact that the particular influence is one desired, and he maintains that influences act through resemblances:

Les influences agissent par ressemblances.
On les a comparées à des sortes de miroirs
qui nous montreraient, non point ce que
nous sommes déjà effectivement, mais ce
que nous sommes d'une façon latente.³

Thus Baudelaire, Gide's favourite poet, was a chosen influence, and the resemblance is to be found in their according attitudes to art. It is significant that it was within the body of one

²Ibid., p. 658.

³André Gide, "De l'Influence en littérature", in his Oeuvres complètes, III, 257.

of Baudelaire's poems, "L'Invitation au voyage", that Gide found "la parfaite définition de l'oeuvre d'art." The artistic creation and the artistic theory were fused, and never existed separately.

However justified our approach to Baudelaire and Gide through a study of their critical and aesthetic views, it will legitimately be argued that Baudelaire is and will be remembered as the author of Les Fleurs du Mal, that Gide will remain the "prosateur", however "lyrique", who composed L'Immoraliste, La Porte étroite, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, that neither of these writers will owe his reputation to his critical work. Valid and indisputable as the argument is, it stresses rather than negates the usefulness of an investigation which seeks to ascertain the common principles that guided Baudelaire and Gide to literary success and renown. Inevitably our study revolves around the shared aesthetic of these two writers, and at the centre of the aesthetic lies the work of art, an end in itself. Each poem of Les Fleurs du Mal is a work of art, capable of standing on its own. But each poem also fits into the architectural structure of Les Fleurs du Mal, the composite work of art. A comparable analogy is that of the Earth, a seemingly autonomous unit, yet only a microcosm in the eternal macrocosm of the Universe. Each "récit" of Gide has an independent existence, he tells us this himself, but each work joins the totality of his literary

creation in being concerned with some aspect of "le problème d'André Gide".⁴ Each poem of Les Fleurs du Mal is concerned with some feature of the "Spleen" or the "Idéal" of Les Fleurs du Mal, with one or the other of "les deux postulations simultanées" which we may regard as the crux of "le problème de Charles Baudelaire." No wonder then if Gide and Baudelaire look at each other through the "Mirror of Art".⁵

⁴In his Journal Gide makes the following comment:
Chacun de mes livres se retournent contre
les amateurs du précédent. Cela leur
apprendra à ne m'applaudir que pour le
bon motif, et à ne prendre chacun de mes
livres que pour ce qu'il est: une oeuvre
d'art.--Journal, p. 787.

That Gide's works are not totally isolated creations is revealed in the following statement, also from the Journal:

Qui donc persuaderai-je que ce livre [*La Porte étroite*] est jumeau de *l'Immoraliste*
et que les deux sujets ont grandi con-
curremment dans mon esprit, l'excès de l'un
trouvant dans l'excès de l'autre une per-
mission secrète et tous deux se maintenant
en équilibre.--Journal, pp. 365-366.

⁵This is the title of a book of critical studies by Baudelaire, translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne.--
The Mirror of Art, ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Phaidon
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