The Poetic Theory of Yves Bonnefoy

Andrew Dickson

Ph.D.
University of Edinburgh
1982

I certify that this thesis has been composed by myself and that it is entirely my own original and unaided work.

Andrew Dickson

ABSTRACT OF THESIS (Regulation 7 6.9)

Name of Candidate A. G. DICKSON

Address .....

Degree Ph.D. *Date* 1982

Title of Thesis The Poetic Theory of Yves Bonnefoy

This thesis examines the poetic theory of Yves Bonnefoy (b.1923), concentrating on his literary and art criticism published up to 1967 but including some consideration of his later work. The first section emphasises the homogeneity of Bonnefoy's critical and poetic approaches and examines the relevance of five philosophers who may have influenced his work, whether positively or negatively - Plato, Plotinus, Hegel, Kierkegaard and Lev Shestov. It goes on to explore Bonnefoy's idiosyncratic use of certain terms and philosophical references, and introduces the notion of l'éphémère, the particular object chosen apparently at random as the site for the kind of privileged poetic experience which Bonnefoy calls présence.

The second section examines the application to language and poetry of the ideas sketched out in the first section, considering how far language in poetry is seen by Bonnefoy as evoking archetypes, the intrinsic differences he sees between English and French as vehicles for poetry, and how far poetic language may be, or may have been in the past, validated by a generally-accepted religious guarantee.

The third section examines Bonnefoy's views of the relationships between language and reality in the work of a number of individual French poets, including those whom Bonnefoy sees as having inclined to intellectual abstraction from reality and those who in his view have sought to grasp reality as it is. The section also deals with Bonnefoy's views on translation and on literary criticism, where he sees a similar contrast between English and French practice as there is between the languages themselves.

The conclusion sums up the more recent development of Bonnefoy's critical theory, and touches on two related areas of importance in the consideration of that theory; the extent to which the tendencies of his theory are reflected in his poetry; and the similarities between his views of poetry and of the visual arts.

Use this side only

Contents

A. PHILOSOPHICAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

I Introduction. The principle of homogeneity. 1

II Philosophical influences: Plato, Plotinus, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Shestov. 12

III Perception: simple classification, mauvaise présence, présence. 35

IV The concept and meaning: signification and sens 42

V L'éphémère. 46

VI The Here and Now: Hegel and poetic articulacy. The notion of seuil. 50

B. LANGUAGE AND POETRY

VII Nommer: the case of the proper name. 59

VIII Les mots profonds and le principe d'identité. 64

IX Le principe d'identité in English and French. 75

X The poetic symbol: religious and metaphysical validation. 79

XI Language as communication; vérité de parole. 89

C. FRENCH POETS AND OTHERS

XII The medieval period: La Chanson de Roland. 100

XIII Essence: Racine, Mallarmé, Valéry. 111

XIV Existence: Baudelaire, Rimbaud. 128

XV The moderns: Perse, du Bouchet and others. 142

XVI Shakespeare and the possibility of translation. 151

XVII Literary criticism, English and French. 168

D. CONCLUSION

XVIII The development of Bonnefoy's theory: sign and substance. 178

XIX The languages of Bonnefoy's poetry. 197

XX Poetic theory and the theory of art. 213

Bibliography 251

A. PHILOSOPHICAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

I The principle of homogeneity

This study must begin with a recognition of the necessary inadequacy of its approach to a complex subject. Any attempt to separate out Bonnefoy's poetic theory from the entire corpus of his work, in verse and prose, must betray the essence of that theory by the very process of extraction: for in an important sense Bonnefoy's theory is not theory at all. It is an integral part of the coherent line of literary research which Bonnefoy has carried on over thirty years - that part which is principally, rather than incidentally, informed by what he calls 'mon besoin maladroit d'une pensée cohérente' (AP, p.131).(1) In the development of Bonnefoy's poetic thought (if one may thus roughly translate 'pensée poétique', the thought expressed through poetry, and with poetry's own internal logic, as well as in prose essays which are born of the same intellectual and emotional impulse), theory takes second place to poetic practice: the critical essays are the branches and twigs of a tree whose trunk is the poetry itself. One must therefore beware of abstracting a neat, all-encompassing system from the essays, and taking this as the primary tool for investigation of the poetry. One must also beware of attaching too much importance to logical contradictions and inconsistencies within single essays, and between one essay and another. The spirit of Bonnefoy's thought is not directed towards the construction of abstract systems, and what is valid in one context may be quite invalid elsewhere. At the same time, one should not under-estimate the importance of the essays: to push a shaky metaphor a little farther, a trunk without

(1) For abbreviations of works by Bonnefoy in the references, see Bibliography, p. 251.

branches or twigs is not the whole tree. Bonnefoy undoubtedly has all the tools of conceptual thought at his disposal. If he chooses not to use them, or to use them only intermittently or in an apparently idiosyncratic way, we must respect this decision, and take it seriously: and this will itself have important implications for the content of what we are studying.

As I will make clear later, a change of orientation occurs in Bonnefoy's prose writings after the mid-sixties. This study will consider in some detail only the earlier, more abstract phase of his thought (up to the publication in 1967 of Un Rêve fait à Mantoue), though reference is also made where appropriate to his later work. Any conclusions I may be able to draw will therefore necessarily deal with a phase of the development of his thought, and not with its full development, which is of course still continuing.

I wish, first of all, to point out what may be called a principle of homogeneity in Bonnefoy's work, in the sense that its parts, apparently disparate in form and content, nevertheless have all the same artistic goal. This principle runs from the four published volumes of poetry to the essays collected in L'Improbable, Un Rêve fait à Mantoue and Le Nuage rouge, and includes the more extended body of art criticism in Rome 1630: l'horizon du premier baroque, the literary criticism of Rimbaud par lui-même and the unclassifiable L'Arrière-pays. We may exclude from this homogeneity of approach only a few of the shorter uncollected reviews and magazine articles, and occasional articles, such as 'Les Romans arthuriens et la légende du Graal'[2] or 'Rimbaud devant la critique',[3] which deal with their subjects in much more

(2) Introduction to La Quête du Graal, trans. Béguin (Paris, 1965).
(3) In Rimbaud (coll. 'Génies et Réalités'), (Paris, 1968), pp. 269-87.

traditional, scholarly terms than is usual in Bonnefoy's writing. The raison d'être of this principle of homogeneity may be seen in a remark of Bonnefoy's, towards the end of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie'. Talking of the 'vrai lieu', he says: 'Nous qui avons découvert, maintenant, que le voyage, l'amour, l'architecture, toutes les tentatives de l'homme, ne sont que des cérémonies pour accueillir la présence, nous avons à les ranimer jusque sur le seuil même de ce pays plus profond' (I^2, p.127). To 'le voyage, l'amour, l'architecture' one might be tempted to add 'la peinture, la philosophie, la poésie', and even 'la critique', in the sense of creative meditation on works of art, as practised by Bonnefoy. The distinction between this and traditional academic criticism somewhat resembles the distinction - to which I shall return - between those philosophical projects which Bonnefoy would consider valid, though sometimes misguided, and those which he would see as mere juggling with concepts, and is summed up in the (anonymous) leaflet advertising L'Ephémère, the review Bonnefoy edited from 1966 to 1973: 'Et on le voit: aucune critique, au sens appréciatif ou descriptif ou analytique de ce mot, n'a place dans L'EPHEMERE. Pourtant les oeuvres de la poésie et des arts y seront interrogés: mais sous le signe toujours de cette instauration d'absolu où l'extériorité se résorbe.(4) The last clause here (which bears, I think, the unmistakable stamp of Bonnefoy's own style of thought) may seem obscure: its meaning will emerge more clearly when we come to look at Bonnefoy's ideas on poetic language, as will the sense in which he talks above of 'présence' and 'vrai lieu'.

For the moment we may simply note that Bonnefoy sees the quest of the artist, and indeed of humanity itself, as aiming at something beyond

(4) Distributed with L'Ephémère 1 (1966).

the 'tentatives' of human activity, which can thus be seen, for all their apparent diversity, as having a common goal, and to that extent as sharing a common character. The same applies to Bonnefoy's writing. Beyond the diversity of style and content of all his literary production lies a single artistic impulse.

The homogeneity of Bonnefoy's output can be seen on several levels. In the first place, many of his essays cover a wide range of topics, but relate them all to his central preoccupations. 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne', for instance, contains elements of autobiography, travel writing and art criticism: but the whole is coloured by the strong philosophical concern to be found in almost all Bonnefoy's work, a concern which, in its turn, is directly relevant to his ideas on poetry. L'Arrière-pays covers a similar diversity of subjects, while Rome 1630: l'horizon du premier baroque places Baroque art and architecture firmly in the context of the seventeenth-century ferment of ideas which produced also, for instance, the astronomical discoveries of Kepler and Galileo. Again, one of Bonnefoy's clearest statements of the philosophical dilemma of the modern artist, which is relevant to poetry no less than to the visual arts, comes at the beginning of his essay on the painter Balthus (I^2, pp. 39-41).

We may also note in Bonnefoy's essays the ease with which he moves from the formulation of precise ideas on particular subjects to the statement of more general principles: and here we have a further dimension of homogeneity, for these two approaches cannot be considered as operating on different levels. Theory, as the term is usually conceived, is derived by a process of abstraction from analysis of, and commentary on, particular phenomena. Bonnefoy's approach, in his essays, is quite different. He mixes the most precise with the most general remarks,

without giving either category any sort of precedence over the other. It is therefore wrong to talk of his aesthetic theory, divorced from his criticism of individual works of art. Again and again, he takes the ostensible subject of an essay as the starting-point for the presentation, from an individual angle, of more general ideas similar to those to be found, looked at from different points of view, in other essays. But this does not imply that such general ideas can be formulated in the abstract, outside the particular context in which they are presented, or that any generalised theoretical superstructure can be postulated to cover the theoretical dimension of Bonnefoy's writing, tempting though this is to the thesis-writer. Indeed the only safe generalisation about Bonnefoy's critical theory is that there is no such easily-separable superstructure. We might say that the essays are fragments of an aesthetic which, by its very nature, has to be presented in a fragmentary way; but in using the word 'fragment' we must not imply any notion of inadequacy. On the contrary, what is inadequate, according to Bonnefoy, is the abstraction inherent in an overall aesthetic theory, which makes it less satisfactory than (indeed, a different order of thing from) what emerges from creative meditation on particulars.

The oscillation between particular and general concerns is of great importance in Bonnefoy's work. We will return in a moment to the relationship between his writing and systematic thought. It may first be worth pointing out, however, another aspect of the principle of homogeneity to be found in his work - the homogeneity of prose and poetry. In considering what we must call, for want of a better word, Bonnefoy's poetic 'theory', it would be wrong to exclude all consideration of his poetry. It would in fact be just as misleading to

make a rigid distinction between 'prose works' and 'poetry' as it would be to make such a separation between, say, 'travel writing' and 'philosophy' within the prose works themselves. Both L'Improbable and Un Rêve fait à Mantoue contain items which are at least very close to being poems (respectively, 'Dévotion' and 'Sept feux' - 'Dévotion' is in fact reprinted in his collected poems (P, pp. 155-9) as well as in the revised and expanded edition of L'Improbable (I^2, pp. 133-5)), and Bonnefoy included a short poem ('Les Lumières de Brindisi') in the 1961 edition of La Seconde Simplicité, though this has not been reprinted along with the four essays from that volume in Un Rêve fait à Mantoue and the 1980 edition of L'Improbable. Conversely, we find in the books of poetry some poems, such as 'L'Imperfection est la cime' (P, p. 117), which speak directly to the reader in terms almost resembling those of prose. While it would not be appropriate at this point to embark on a discussion of the various ways in which different registers of language may relate to experience, we may, instead of making a strict distinction between prose and poetry, claim that all Bonnefoy's writing is poetic, in the sense that none of it uses only the dead language of conceptual analysis. In 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', Bonnefoy writes: 'Il y a certes dans la langue, qui analyse, cette virtualité de mutisme, contre quoi se dressent le sentiment, le désir, l'humour - commencements de la poésie' (I^2, p. 249). These 'commencements de la poésie' run through all Bonnefoy's work. This is not to claim, however, that they are always present in equal measure. In a note (dated November 1969) to the NRF/Poésie edition of Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve and Hier régnant désert, which includes two of his essays, he writes of these: 'Mais je ne les reprends aujourd'hui ni pour leur vérité, toujours entravée, ni pour le sens qu'ils pourraient porter dans les

poèmes: au contraire, pour l'écart qu'ils marquent, et qui me paraît signifiant, entre le lieu de l'image et celui de la formule' (NRF, p. 222). The 'écart' of which Bonnefoy speaks here is of course important, relating as it does to the difference between the enactment of an insight in poetic imagery and its description in the inevitably more arid, analytical discourse of prose: but the difference, in spite of what Bonnefoy implies in this note, is never a rigid distinction. One feels, rather, that while there may be wide variation in the use of language between the two 'lieux' to which he refers, they nevertheless belong to a single continuum of expression, and invoke the same quest at different levels of intensity. Different artistic forms, including the discursive essay, may in fact simply fulfil the artist's expressive needs at different times and in different contexts, as when the rejected early 'récit', L'Ordalie, contributed to the poetry of Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve. Bonnefoy notes that 'la recherche dont [le récit] était un moment prenait forme, irrésistiblement, de poèmes',(5) and enlarges on this later (1974): 'à peine L'Ordalie eut-elle été "déchirée", certains passages achevèrent, par la grâce de mots continuant de chercher leur sens, et leur lieu, de se reclasser dans l'autre livre, - Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve, surtout dans sa quatrième partie, L'Orangerie' (O, p. 41).

We may add here that, just as Bonnefoy's prose never reaches an extreme of analytic conceptualisation, so his poetic language never comes anywhere near abandoning a coherent line of discourse. His study of, and devotion to, Mallarmé has never led him - as may have been the case with some modern French poets - to rarefy even further the purely

(5) L'Ephémère 1 (1966), p. 52.

stylistic features of Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard. We may quote Pierre de Boisdeffre's perceptive remark that Bonnefoy 'résout par le langage l'équation que d'autres situent au-delà du langage, au risque de n'en jamais trouver la solution'.(6) This notion has important implications for the consideration of Bonnefoy's poetic theory and practice, particularly for the notion of 'vrai discours', and will be further developed later: for the moment, we may simply note that Bonnefoy's practice occupies a middle band in a spectrum of linguistic usage which may be imagined as between extremes of prosaic and poetic discourse. These extremes are, admittedly, logically inconceivable, but can be conveniently postulated as a theoretical framework when we are talking of possible varieties of language.

It may be appropriate here to add two remarks which, while referring primarily to Bonnefoy's prose style, have a direct bearing on his thought. Indeed, a further dimension of his homogeneity of approach is that style and content are inseparable throughout his work. I have mentioned above his rejection of analytic and conceptual language: and one can see the intrusion of 'le sentiment' and 'le désir' in the intensity of a passage such as this, from 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne': 'Je ne sais pas le nom de cette pierre terreuse, dont la surface est en friche. Elle paraît tout utilitaire, vieux drap qu'on a roulé sur un corps. Mais le couvercle est ôté, la tombe vide. O pure joie, qui prend soudain le coeur! O souvenir, mais dans l'abolition du temps! ' (I^2, p. 17).

Here, it is the religiously-felt intensity of the experience Bonnefoy is describing which raises the rhetorical tone. But elsewhere, a

(6) Pierre de Boisdeffre, 'Un Siècle de poésie française: de Baudelaire à Yves Bonnefoy', Arts-Loisirs 66 (28 December 1966), p. 29.

similarly high-flown style may indicate anger, or sorrow - though the intensity of the emotion involved may almost be disguised by the smoothness of the tone. One must read the following, for instance, carefully before seeing how damning Bonnefoy's criticisms of Valéry actually are - and then the style seems to lend them extra dignity and force:

> Quelle décadence, pourtant, de l'ambition poétique! Dans cette poésie moderne qui prétend à la succession de la pensée religieuse, dans cette langue française profonde, presque éveillée, à laquelle Baudelaire a rappelé quelle place elle avait gardée au Dieu inconnu, et celui-ci cette passante, ce cygne, cette feuille du lierre tachée de boue, dans cette découverte et dans cette instauration Valéry est l'apostat, le nouveau philosophe des lumières, celui qui parle de la clarté de l'esprit quand de son corps et son coeur il a consenti d'être une ombre. (I^2, p. 101)

Bonnefoy's writing is in fact always informed by a passionate concern for its object as such, though the well-polished surface of his prose may at first sight give an impression of excessive attention to mere stylistic detail.

A second feature of his style might similarly be liable to misinterpretation by the unwary reader. This is his fondness for inserted qualifications and parentheses, which may on examination turn out to be more striking than the original propositions to which they are attached. Examples abound: I take a few, almost at random, from the first few pages of 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité':

> Pour tous les linguistes, semble-t-il, ce que le mot cheval représente, c'est ce qui n'est, disons, ni l'âne ni la licorne. (I^2, p. 245)

> Voici ce qui, je crois, commence la poésie. Que je dise 'le feu' (oui, je change d'exemple, et cela déjà signifie) . . . (p. 246)
>
> Et j'imaginerai, ou me rappellerai - on verra peut-être plus tard que les deux notions s'équivalent - que j'entre . . . (p. 246)
>
> J'appellerai cette unité rétablie, ou tout au moins qui affleure, la <u>présence</u>. (p. 249)

There is hardly a page in Bonnefoy's essays which could not provide an example of this sort of thing. It can indeed also be found in his poetry:

> Souvent dans le silence d'un ravin
> J'entends (ou je désire entendre, je ne sais)
> Un corps tomber parmi les branches. (P, p. 106)

If Bonnefoy's asides were mere ornamentation, his style would soon appear affected: but they are most often essential parts of the content of what he wants to convey. For instance, the 'semble-t-il' and 'disons' of my first example point the irony of Bonnefoy's deliberate distortion of certain linguists' analysis of meaning; the change of example in the second quotation is crucial for his ideas on 'les mots profonds'; the tentative identification of memory and imagination in the third is essential to his conception of all human experience being realised in its fullness through imaginative re-creation, as we see also in the verse extract; and the most important feature of <u>présence</u> is that it cannot be taken as firmly established, but can be asserted only through being said to 'affleurer'. I shall deal with these notions at greater length in due course: it seems worth pointing out here, however, the importance of an apparently incidental stylistic feature in their formulation. It is tempting, indeed, to compare the function of such apparent ornamentation in Bonnefoy's own prose style

with the supremely important function he assigns to the 'ornement' of the tombs in Ravenna, or to the decorative style of Baroque art: however, an exploration of this would not be immediately relevant at this point.

Both the features of style on which I have commented - the high-flown quality of Bonnefoy's tone, and his fondness for indirect statement - show his conviction that the direct, over-facile formulation of a truth will inevitably destroy it. This in its turn is connected with his distrust of straightforward conceptual thought. At the end of an interview with L'Express in 1959, he replied to the question 'Notre conversation vous a-t-elle permis d'exprimer l'essentiel de votre pensée de la poésie?' in the following terms: 'Oh! non, malheureusement. J'ai sûrement été trop conceptuel, trop affirmatif. Alors pourtant que je sais qu'il n'y a pas de vérité qui ne se dissipe en partie dans sa formule. J'ai sûrement commis le péché de réponse. J'aurais préféré questionner'.(7) The notion of the unreliability of language is central to Bonnefoy's thought on poetry and on art in general: and this notion leaves its mark on his style, as everywhere else. We should take note at this point of his fundamental distrust of straightforward conceptual thought and its corollary, ordinary descriptive language - or, he implies sometimes, as in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', all language: 'Je m'en veux d'employer, quand il faudrait vraiment dire, ce langage des à-peu-près. Mais quels mots désormais pourront ne pas nous trahir?' (I^2, p. 122). A large part of Bonnefoy's poetic project is, in fact, the search for an answer to this question. But before dealing explicitly with this, we must tackle the problem of the philosophical background to his work.

(7) L'Express, 17 December 1959

II Philosophical influences: Plato, Plotinus, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Shestov

If it is true to say that Bonnefoy puts forward no abstract and separable poetic theory, it is equally true that his thought cannot be assimilated to any ready-formulated philosophical system. He nevertheless habitually alludes to the work of philosophers, and for that reason it is justifiable to investigate, a little more fully than Bonnefoy himself makes explicit in his essays, his relationship with the work of the philosophers he refers to - not in order to systematise his thought artificially, but to shed light on certain of its aspects, for it is undeniable that Bonnefoy does, at least some of the time, think in philosophical terms. His mode of thought is not, however, that of what might be very generally called linear logic: that is, of a system in which premise leads directly to premise, until, by a series of logical steps, a watertight theory has been evolved which will explain adequately all the phenomena from which it is abstracted. Any such process of analytical reasoning is rejected by Bonnefoy. Instead he proposes, though never in explicit and abstract terms, a more roundabout procedure, a process of indirect allusion and evocation rather than of direct definition and argument. It is as if windows were being opened, from various angles, through which we might glimpse the truth, but never for long, and never in such a way as to allow us to grasp it completely. Bonnefoy makes this point in a passage which is not only a direct statement of a general point of theory, and incidentally a comment on Kierkegaard, but also, analogically, a statement, and at the same time an illustration, of Bonnefoy's own intellectual method: 'Il n'y a pas de ciel. Cette immortalité dont la joie retentit par instants chez Kierkegaard n'est la fraîcheur et l'écho d'une demeure que pour ceux seulement qui passent. Pour ceux qui veulent posséder, elle sera un mensonge, une déception, une nuit' (I^2, p. 26).

Bonnefoy's intellectual quest may be described as a movement towards some form of certainty which nevertheless must be avoided at all costs, because as soon as such a certainty has been formulated, it is betrayed by the formulation itself. Language, of course, is intimately bound up in this quest: but we may leave purely linguistic considerations aside for the moment, and deal with Bonnefoy's philosophical position - insofar as he may be said to take one up - and with the references he makes in his essays to classical and modern philosophy.

The central element in Bonnefoy's philosophical outlook is his deep distrust and rejection of what he calls the concept, and of its inevitable consequence, the philosophical system. These words, as they are normally used, sound innocuous enough: but throughout Bonnefoy's writing, from 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne' (1953) onwards, they carry a precise and idiosyncratic pejorative meaning. This is not easily conveyed in terms which must themselves be conceptual, but we can see clearly the general drift of Bonnefoy's thought at the beginning of 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne':

> Sans doute le concept, cet instrument presque unique de notre philosophie, est-il dans tous les sujets qu'elle se donne un profond refus de la mort. Je tiens pour évident qu'il est toujours une fuite . . .
>
> Il y a une vérité du concept, dont je ne prétends pas être le juge. Mais il y a un mensonge du concept <u>en général</u>, qui donne à la pensée pour quitter la maison des choses le vaste pouvoir des mots. On sait depuis Hegel quelle est la force de sommeil, quelle est l'insinuation d'un système. Je constate au-delà de la pensée cohérente que le moindre concept est l'artisan d'une fuite. Oui, l'idéalisme est vainqueur dans toute pensée qui s'organise. Mieux vaut refaire le monde, y est-il dit obscurément, que d'y vivre dans le danger. (I^2, pp. 11-13)

The ways in which Bonnefoy sees thought as interacting with the world are complex, but his statement may seem at first glance somewhat over-emphatic. If we abandon rational thought entirely, what is left? Bonnefoy would doubtless reply that if we give ourselves up to rational thought, we risk abandoning everything else - not merely death, as mentioned here, but also the whole of existential reality, with its inevitable, and glorious, 'danger'. The concept, and its consequence, the system, leave reality behind, in favour of a sterile abstraction. According to Bonnefoy, reality is, properly speaking, not only ineffable but also inconceivable in the terms of analytic thought: which is not to say that it cannot be approached, either through the kind of privileged moment of experience which Bonnefoy calls <u>présence</u>, or through language in one of its privileged registers concomitant with this experience. I shall return later to the positive side of Bonnefoy's rejection of the concept: for the moment I wish to consider only its negative side. The act of conceptualisation, of the formulation of a systematic process of thought and the inevitable invocation of 'le vaste pouvoir des mots', by which we must understand ordinary conceptual language, is always a flight from the reality of the object to which thought directs its attention: and Western philosopy, Bonnefoy claims, has always been the slave of this abstraction. But one must point out immediately that Bonnefoy is not always as resolutely 'anti-conceptual' as he is in the passage quoted above. The multivalent ambiguities of abstraction and of meditation anchored in the concrete, which we may refer to in non-rigorous terms as essence and existence, pervade his thought in permutations and combinations of bewildering complexity. For instance, the pejorative tone of 'idéalisme' in the passage quoted above goes against Bonnefoy's clear distinction, later in the same essay,

between 'concept' and 'idée'. If Bonnefoy's use of the term 'idée' sometimes moves dangerously close to his use of 'concept', while at other times the word refers to something totally different, this inconsistency should not be seen as a fault in his thought, for he not only makes no claim to be a systematic philosopher, but positively claims the opposite: 'Je ne sais, je ne veux pas dresser la dialectique du monde, placer le sensible dans l'être avec cet art minutieux de la patiente métaphysique: je ne prétends que nommer' (I^2, p. 21).

The use of 'nommer' here begs one or two questions which Bonnefoy considers fully elsewhere. But we may say in general that the inconsistencies discernible in Bonnefoy's thought are quite self-conscious, springing from his concentration in any given context on the indivuality of the objects of his scrutiny. One may nevertheless sometimes criticise Bonnefoy for his apparent delight in complexity of thought for its own sake, which his 'besoin maladroit d'une pensée cohérente' (AP, p. 131) may make rather more involved than is strictly necessary. As Manuel de Diéguez remarks, Bonnefoy's early criticism, with its insistence on the convoluted relationships between 'l'universel' and 'le singulier', still accepts those very 'perspectives de la logique' which it criticises, and therefore has at its disposal no other tool than 'celui qu'ont contaminé deux millénaires de métaphysique de l'être'.(1) However, it is perhaps not as easy as de Diéguez implies for a thinker brought up in an analytical tradition to jettison this mode of thought. Although such a line of metaphysical speculation may be, in his phrase, 'le premier falsificateur du langage', because it poses pseudo-problems (such as that of the existence of 'the good') based perhaps, in this

(1) Manuel de Diéguez, 'Yves Bonnefoy et la critique du style', Esprit (December 1960), p. 2123.

instance, on nothing more solid than the grammar of most Western languages, starting with Greek, a naturally analytical thinker cannot simply shuffle off this particular intellectual coil, and arrive directly at a simpler and saner view of things. The process must be more anguished, and must take in a full exploration of the paths which, in his own case, Bonnefoy sees as typical of Western thought, accepting those parts which are of genuine value: 'Nous sommes des Occidentaux et cela ne se renie pas. Nous avons mangé de l'arbre de science, et cela ne se renie pas. Et loin de rêver d'une guérison de ce que nous sommes, c'est dans notre intellectualité définitive qu'il faut réinventer la présence, qui est salut' (I^2, p. 40). The development of Bonnefoy's criticism shows just such a process. If, particularly in his earlier essays, he exposes himself to the temptations offered by several philosophical systems, in the end he always rejects such systems, this whole process being itself a necessary stage in his intellectual development. Some consideration of the systems which have influenced him, to some extent at least, may however be useful.

I must mention, first of all, the influence of Plato: for the dichotomy between reality and concepts, or, on a different level of thought, between reality and ideas, with which Bonnefoy is much concerned, may be seen as having its roots in Plato's theory of Forms. This, however, as I have remarked above, is not so much a precise philosophical influence (which could simply be considered and accepted or rejected by Bonnefoy) as an all-pervading climate of thought from which he may wish to escape, but cannot. The precise ways in which Plato's influence can be seen in Bonnefoy's work are indeed difficult to chart. One of the difficulties which we encounter in trying to pin them down is the fact that the Forms are used in different contexts by Plato in reference

to notions as disparate as, on the one hand, the generalising tendency of ordinary language whereby individual instances of a category (say, 'dog') are recognised as belonging to it, and, on the other hand, the immortality of the soul.

In addition to the immense range of reference encompassed by the theory of Forms - and it would be possible to argue that the sharp distinction which so concerns Bonnefoy between a mere generalising principle, or concept, and a spiritual reality transcending physical existence, or Idea (at least, as Bonnefoy uses that word in some contexts), is simply not operative, and certainly not recognised as such, in Plato's thought - we have the difficulty presented by Bonnefoy's varying references to the actual mode of existence of the Forms (to stick for the moment to the standard English term). His opinion on this point seems to have changed radically between his first important work, Anti-Platon (1947), and 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne' (1953). In Anti-Platon, as its title suggests, he sees the Forms purely as agents of abstraction, like ordinary language, diverting man's attention from the unique reality of the world: 'Il s'agit bien de cet objet', and the individual object seen as such 'pèse plus lourd dans la tête de l'homme que les parfaites Idées, qui ne savent que déteindre sur sa bouche' (P, p. 11). This rather simplistic view of Plato as an enemy of the real world - indeed, of life itself - comes out even more clearly in the following passage, included in Anti-Platon on its first publication in 1947 but subsequently deleted: 'J'imagine Platon calcaire, stratifié, horizontal . . . qui se construit dans l'espace et ignore le temps. Un faux soleil éclaire ce philosophe fixe; le vrai soleil est mouvement . . . Que nous importent les Idées! Il y a l'odeur et les bruits.'(2)

(2) La Révolution la nuit 2 (1947), pp. 14-15, quoted by Annie P. Prothin, 'The Substantive Language of Yves Bonnefoy', Sub-Stance 20 (1978), p. 55.

Towards the end of 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne', however, Bonnefoy writes:

> Qui tente la traversée de l'espace sensible rejoint une eau sacrée qui coule dans toute chose. Et pour peu qu'il y touche, il se sent immortel. Que dire, ensuite? Que prouver? Pour un contact de cette espèce, Platon dressait tout un autre monde, celui des fortes Idées. Que ce monde existe, j'en suis sûr: il est, dans le lierre et partout, la substantielle immortalité. Simplement il est avec nous. Dans le sensible. L'intelligible, disait Plotin, est l'expression du grand et changeant visage. Rien qui puisse être plus près de nous. (I[2], p. 26)

This is a particularly interesting example of Bonnefoy's idiosyncratic use of philosophical reference in his prose writings. The juxtaposition of 'sensible' and 'intelligible' seems a deliberate (and deliberately poetic and non-analytical) pointing-up of what Bonnefoy sees as the ambiguous relationship, in the thought of Plato and of his successors, between the experience of the mind and that of the senses. 'Intelligible' in its normal philosophical usage is of course the opposite of 'sensible': the Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française (8th edition) defines it as 'qui est perçu comme plus ou moins réel par la pensée pure et non par les sens', and gives as an example 'Les idées de Platon constituent un monde intelligible'. The implied adaptation here of Plato's ideas to make them refer to existence as well as to essence is therefore somewhat eccentric, for it is frequently considered - and Bonnefoy seems to have considered at the time of Anti-Platon - that the principle behind the theory of Forms is that they are not incarnated in physical substance, but exist above and beyond it.

Broad generalisations in this area are dangerous, but the question of Plato's conception of the relationship of Forms (or Ideas) to particulars is summed up by Sir David Ross as follows:

> First, . . . Plato consistently thought of Ideas as different from sensible things. Secondly, . . . he thought of them as completely objective, neither as thoughts nor as the 'contents of thoughts' (whatever that phrase may mean), but as entities whose existence in presupposed by all our knowledge. Thirdly, . . . he thought of them as existing separately from sensible things; but to the question of whether Plato consistently so thought of them no simple answer can be given.(3)

Ross goes on to examine in Plato's work 'a group of words implying or suggesting the immanence of the Forms, and a group implying or suggesting their transcendence' - including several instances of contrasting usages within a single dialogue. There is therefore no case for any single dogmatic interpretation of what Plato 'really meant'. What is important for our purposes is not to consider which interpretation of Plato is correct, or indeed whether Plato can embrace a whole gamut of interpretations, but rather to note how Bonnefoy uses at different times and in different contexts varying views of the work of a philosopher with whom he has considerable sympathy as points of reference for his own meditation on the nature of spiritual and physical reality, however distant that meditation may be from conventional (and certainly from Platonic) philosophical speculation. His later attitude towards, and interpretation of, Platonic thought is perhaps best summed up in his remark in his essay on Valéry that 'toujours, de Platon à Plotin et au premier christianisme, la philosophie de l'Idée est venue se guérir à cette eau plus vive, /de cette chose réelle/' (I^2, p. 98).

What Bonnefoy may be searching for in Plato is possibly - as is indicated in the passage on 'l'intelligible' from 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne' quoted above - more readily to be found in Plotinus, to whom Bonnefoy

(3) Sir David Ross, Plato's Theory of Ideas (Oxford, 1951), pp. 227-8

sometimes refers explicitly, and more frequently evokes by the mention of 'l'Un' or 'l'Unité'. This again is not so much a rigorously demonstrable influence - in the sense that Bonnefoy cannot be shown to expound Plotinian doctrines - as an element in the general background to Bonnefoy's own thought. The 'eau sacrée qui coule dans toute chose', for instance (I^2, p. 26), recalls - whether or not as a deliberate echo by Bonnefoy hardly matters - such passages in Plotinus as the following, which deals with what Stephen MacKenna translates in this context as 'the One-and-All':

> Imagine a spring that has no source outside itself; it gives itself to all the rivers, yet is never exhausted by what they take, but remains always integrally as it was; the tides that proceed from it are at one within it before they run their several ways, yet all, in some sense, know beforehand down what channels they will pour their streams.
>
> Or: think of the Life coursing throughout some mighty tree while yet it is the stationary Principle of the whole, in no sense scattered over all that extent but, as it were, vested in the root: it is the giver of the entire and manifold life of the tree, but remains unmoved itself, not manifold but the Principle of that manifold life.(4)

The notion that reality may be imbued with a kind of vibrant and unifying life, providing a spiritual validation of the existence of the phenomenal world, which, however, must not be seen as something separate from that world but as existing at its centre, is echoed in Bonnefoy's philosophical quest. His intellectual method also has affinities with that of Plotinus. As we have already seen, Bonnefoy does not aim at the formulation of a coherent body of abstract theory, but deals in individual essays with a series of disparate subjects considered in their own terms;

(4) Plotinus, The Enneads III.8.10, trans. MacKenna (London, 4th edition, 1969), p. 249

the essays nevertheless spring from a common mode of thought which might be expressed in a more abstract way, were it not that such a form of expression would be foreign to its whole principle. Similarly, the Enneads of Plotinus represent the consideration of individual philosophical problems in the light of an overall mode of thought which itself is never worked out explicitly; as P. Henry says, 'Plotinus's system is never explicit; it is not articulated into theorems as is the case with Proclus, or into questions as with St Thomas, but is throughout implicitly present as a totality in each particular theme'. (5)

It would be wrong, however, to draw too close comparisons between the thought of Bonnefoy and that of Plotinus. For all that Plotinus' thought is not articulated systematically, it nevertheless implies a system in which philosophical categories stand in certain definite relationships one with another (however much interpretations may differ as to what these relationships actually are). This is not the case with Bonnefoy, whose essentially unsystematic perception of the world does not admit of precise categorisation. For this reason Bonnefoy's use of philosophical terminology is liable to appear inconsistent. In relation to Plotinus it may be worth looking more closely at what Bonnefoy makes of 'l'Un' and 'l'Unité'.

The One in Plotinus is, strictly speaking, ineffable. P. Henry expresses this in clear but rather negative terms - the only terms, perhaps, which do not entirely falsify the very difficult notion he is intending to convey - when he writes:

> The One is the One and nothing else, and even to assert that it 'is' or that it is 'One' is false, since it is beyond being or

(5) P. Henry SJ, 'The Place of Plotinus in the History of Thought', introduction to The Enneads (trans. MacKenna), p. xliii.

> essence. No 'name' can apply to it; it eludes all definition, all knowledge; it can neither be perceived nor thought. It is not in movement, nor is it at rest. It is infinite, without limits, and since it has no parts, it is without structure and without form. (ibid., p. xlv)

Here Henry alludes to the connection between the One in Plotinus and the various kinds of 'negative theology' in the Christian tradition which see God as completely transcendent, unknowable, and therefore capable of being referred to only in terms of negative attributes. Although Bonnefoy refers to 'théologie négative' at a number of points - most notably in the eighth section of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' - it is clear that this bleak and transcendent notion of the One is not entirely what he has in mind in his many references to 'l'Un' or 'l'Unité', as for instance when describing the présence of a salamander he writes, 'Disons - car il faut sauver aussi la parole, et du désir fatal de tout définir - que son essence s'est répandue dans l'essence des autres êtres, comme le flux d'une analogie par laquelle je perçois tout dans la continuité et la suffisance d'un lieu, et dans la transparence de l'unité', and goes on to remark that 'c'est l'Un la grande révélation de cet instant sans limites, où tout se donne à moi pour que je comprenne et je lie' (I^2, p. 248).

What Bonnefoy means here by 'l'Un' does, however, connect with the Plotinian system; and his less than rigorous use of the terminology of that system may indeed be explained by his wish to 'sauver . . . la parole . . . du désir fatal de tout définir'. We may see a closer parallel to the notion which Bonnefoy has borrowed under the title of 'l'Un' in Plotinus's description, quoted in part by Bonnefoy and applied to 'l'Un' in the epigraph to L'Arrière-pays, of the 'higher Heaven' of his treatise on intellectual beauty:

> For all There is heaven; earth is heaven, and sea heaven; and animal and plant and man; all is in the heavenly content of that heaven: and the gods in it, despising neither men nor anything else that is there where all is of the heavenly order, traverse all that country and all space in peace . . .
>
> Each There walks upon no alien soil; its place is its essential self; and, as each moves, so to speak, towards what is Above, it is attended by the very ground from which it starts: there is no distinguishing between the Being and the Place; all is Intellect, the principle and the ground on which it stands, alike.(6)

The distance between the philosopher and the poet may indeed be seen most clearly in L'Arrière-pays, where the kind of spiritual validation of reality which Plotinus seems to offer is evoked, but is never accepted as a permanently valid dogma. The habit of abstraction which Bonnefoy sees as inherent in the Western intellectual tradition will always intervene to set man yearning for something beyond reality - and this, of course, is not always to be deplored, for in the Western intellectual tradition such yearning is almost part of human nature itself. If, in Bonnefoy's view, 'l'équivoque profonde de l'idée platonicienne est de prendre sur soi le plus vif, le plus pur de l'apparence sensible' (H, p. 238), this equivocation must always, for Bonnefoy, be formulated through an anguished dialectic. Even when some form of spiritually valid contact with reality has been achieved, the happy acceptance of physical substance may itself lead to a desire for transcendence, as is seen in Bonnefoy's meditation on 'the road not taken' at the beginning of L'Arrière-pays:

> Ce n'est pas mon goût de rêver de couleurs ou de formes inconnues, ni d'un dépassement de la beauté de ce monde. J'aime la terre, ce que je vois me comble . . . Cette harmonie

(6) Plotinus, Enneads, V.8.3-4, op.cit. p. 425.

> a un sens, ces paysages et ces espèces sont, figés encore, enchantés peut-être, une parole, il ne s'agit que de regarder et d'écouter avec force pour que l'absolu se déclare, au bout de nos errements. Ici, dans cette promesse, est donc le lieu.
>
> Et pourtant, c'est quand j'en suis venu à cette sorte de foi que l'idée de l'autre pays peut s'emparer de moi le plus violemment, et me priver de tout bonheur à la terre. Car plus je suis convaincu qu'elle est une phrase ou plutôt une musique - à la fois signe et substance - et plus cruellement je ressens qu'une clef manque, parmi celles qui permettraient de l'entendre. Nous sommes désunis, dans cette unité, et ce que pressent l'intuition, l'action ne peut s'y porter ou s'y résoudre. (AP, pp. 10-11)

Bonnefoy is searching here for something which is 'à la fois signe et substance', both itself and a pointer beyond itself: and this of its very nature is, in his view, impossible to incorporate in a philosophical system, however sympathetic a philosopher may be to the quest (and Plotinus is indeed very sympathetic to it). The kind of certain but still dynamic unity which Bonnefoy seeks could perhaps only be expressed by a Christian mystic like St John of the Cross, whose experience of oneness with 'le soleil . . . la lune et les étoiles . . . la mère de Dieu' Bonnefoy quotes elsewhere (I^2, p. 248).

It is indeed a measure of the development shown in Bonnefoy's more recent work that, in such passages as that from L'Arrière-pays quoted above or in the identification of the poet with, and his consent to, 'les pierres du soir . . . le feu . . . la nuée . . . le départ/Des maçons attardés vers les villages . . . le bruit de la fourgonnette qui se perd' in 'La Terre' from Dans le leurre du seuil (P, pp. 286-7), he expresses his yearning for, and achievement

of, contact with physical substance through an evocation of his own human experience rather than through reference to philosophy. I will expand somewhat on this once I have considered in more detail Bonnefoy's view of poetic language. At the period of his work with which I am primarily concerned, however, he would have looked first to philosophy, and would probably have considered Plotinus as one of the philosophers who came closest to defining a true contact between the mind and reality. Such a contact however would in Bonnefoy's view be well-nigh impossible for Western man because Western man is caught in the net of conceptual thought; the only hope might be to reinvent some similar experience through a transcended form of that thought itself.

Such a process may again be seen in Bonnefoy's acceptance, and simultaneous violent rejection, of Hegel's refutation of the naïve sense-certainty which points to the particular, the Here and Now, as an immediate object of consciousness. Bonnefoy's references to the Here and Now may indeed be compared, as an example of the somewhat free use he makes of philosophy in his writing, to his references to 'l'Un' or 'l'Unité' in a context of implicit reference to Plotinus. The Here and Now will best be dealt with later, in connection with Bonnefoy's ideas on poetic language: but some mention of his general attitude to Hegel as a system-builder may be appropriate at this point.

Although not as attractive in its content as the thought of Plato or Plotinus, Hegel's system presents, in Bonnefoy's terms, a more insidious temptation than do conceptual systems built up by what I have called linear logic, precisely because it claims to transcend such systems while constituting what is in fact merely a more elaborate version of them. At the beginning of his Phänomenologie des Geistes Hegel

insists, firstly, on the inclusion of previously fixed systems as mere moments in a dynamic mode of thought which will then attain authoritative status through this very inclusiveness; and secondly, on the importance of the whole dialectical process being worked through, rather than its conclusions being merely stated as empty universals. Hegel is therefore asserting that philosophy must include and transcend the history of philosophy, and that this process will lead, not simply to another interpretation of truth, but, through its dynamic character, to truth itself. The passage is worth quoting at some length:

> D'autant plus rigidement la manière commune de penser conçoit l'opposition mutuelle du vrai et du faux, d'autant plus elle a coutume d'attendre dans une prise de position à l'égard d'un système philosophique donné, ou une concordance, ou une contradiction, et dans une telle prise de position elle sait seulement voir l'une ou l'autre. Elle ne conçoit pas la diversité des systèmes philosophiques comme le développement progressif de la vérité: elle voit plutôt seulement la contradiction dans cette diversité. Le bouton disparaît dans l'éclatement de la floraison, et on pourrait dire que le bouton est réfuté par la fleur: à l'apparition du fruit, également, la fleur est dénoncée comme un faux être-là de la plante, et le fruit s'introduit à la place de la fleur comme sa vérité. Ces formes ne sont pas seulement distinctes, mais encore chacune refoule l'autre, parce qu'elles sont mutuellement incompatibles. Mais en même temps leur nature fluide en fait des moments de l'unité organique dans laquelle elles ne se repoussent pas seulement, mais dans laquelle l'une est aussi nécessaire que l'autre, et cette égale nécessité constitue seule la vie du tout . . .
> La chose, en effet, n'est pas épuisée dans son <u>but</u>, mais dans son <u>actualisation</u>; le <u>résultat</u> non plus n'est pas le tout <u>effectivement réel</u>; il l'est seulement avec son devenir; pour soi le but est l'universel sans vie, de même que la tendance est seulement l'élan qui manque encore de sa réalité effective, et le résultat nu est le cadavre que la tendance a laissé derrière soi.(7)

(7) Hegel, <u>La Phénoménologie de l'esprit</u>, trans. J. Hyppolite (Paris, 2 vols., 1939 and 1941), vol. 1, pp. 6-7.

The dynamism of this approach could be taken to be, potentially at least, congenial to Bonnefoy's mode of thought. Indeed, in 1953 Bonnefoy took Hegel seriously enough to place his remark that 'la vie de l'esprit ne s'effraie point devant la mort et n'est pas celle qui s'en garde pure. Elle est la vie qui la supporte et se maintient en elle'[8] as epigraph to his first important book of poems. Bonnefoy has since claimed,[9] however, that this epigraph is ironical, not because it does not represent, in his view, a valuable and indeed essential insight, but because its original context is a book in which the dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is used to escape death by building up a complex conceptual theory in which the reality of death has no place. In this system in fact, Bonnefoy sees death as being reduced to the status of a concept. When Bonnefoy writes in 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne': 'on sait depuis Hegel quelle est la force de sommeil, quelle est l'insinuation d'un système'(I^2, p. 12), he means not that Hegel ignores death - or at least the concept of death - but that Hegel's thought is all the more subtly dangerous because it goes half-way towards a rejection of fixed systems, only to integrate them into an overall philosophical mechanism which is itself the most gargantuan system of all. If death is reduced to a

(8) P. p. 21: cf Hegel, La Phénoménologie de l'esprit, vol.1, p. 29 (though Bonnefoy does not use Hyppolite's translation).

(9) In conversation, Nice, 14 May 1975; subsequently confirmed in the interview with John E. Jackson (L'Arc 66, (October 1976), p. 90), where Bonnefoy mentions having used the quotation from Hegel 'non sans ironie, en raison du contexte d'origine'. It is interesting also that in writing of the substantive existence of the tombs of Ravenna at the end of his essay on them Bonnefoy says 'Voici la vie qui ne s'effraie pas de la mort (ici je parodie Hegel) et qui se ressaisit dans la mort même' (I^2, p. 28). The 'parody' here does not consist of intentional misquotation but of accurate quotation out of the context of the system which Hegel proposes.

concept, so is existence itself. The only way to grasp phenomenal existence is to move out of the comforting realm of the concept, and to face the risk, and danger, of reality and death: 'Y a-t-il un concept d'un pas venant dans la nuit, d'un cri, de l'éboulement d'une pierre dans les broussailles? De l'impression que fait une maison vide? Mais non, rien n'a été gardé du réel que ce qui convient à notre repos' (I^2, p. 13).

We may also look in passing at the case of Kierkegaard, a philosopher who seems to make criticisms of Hegel very similar to those implied by Bonnefoy himself. In his Journals he writes, 'If Hegel had written his whole logic and had written in the preface that it was only a thought-experiment, in which at many points he still steered clear of some things, he undoubtedly would have been the greatest thinker who has ever lived. As it is he is comic.'(10) This seems to agree with Bonnefoy's implied view that Hegel left the reality of some issues, and among them the most important, out of his so-called comprehensive theory, although he did not lack valuable insights. Another remark of Kierkegaard's echoes Bonnefoy's view of the ponderous uselessness of systematic thought's pretensions to dynamism, as compared with the spontaneity of existential reality:

> The System 'goes forward by necessity', so it is said. And look, it never for a moment is able to advance as much as half an inch ahead of existence, which goes forward in freedom.
>
> This was the fraud. It was just as if an actor would say: It is I who speak, these are my words - and then has not a single word to say the second the prompter is silent.(11)

(10) Kierkegaard, Journals V A 73 (1844), ed. and trans. Hong (Bloomington, 1970), vol.2, p. 217.

(11) op.cit X^3 A 786 (1851), vol.2, p. 225.

But even Kierkegaard, according to Bonnefoy, was a prisoner of the concept, though he went a stage beyond Hegel in awareness of its dangers, and of the necessity of escape. He could only try to escape, however, through the occasional 'jaillissements . . . de la joie la moins prévue' which his idiosyncratic Christianity granted him: 'Si jamais coeur fut privé des biens terrestres, et séparé de l'objet sensible par un détour infini, c'est bien celui très anxieux de Kierkegaard, qui savait qu'il n'obtenait que l'essence, et restait enclos dans le général. Il combattait le système. Mais le système est la fatalité du concept, seul bien que Kierkegaard eût' (I^2 p. 18). Such outbursts of joy can only be exceptional for 'l'homme conceptuel /chez qui il y a/ un délaissement, une apostasie sans fin de ce qui est' (I^2, pp. 18-19).

Before concluding this summary of Bonnefoy's attitude to philosophy, we must look at the one thinker to whose influence he pays unstinting tribute, and to whom he has devoted an entire essay. In his interview with John E. Jackson published in L'Arc in 1976 Bonnefoy speaks of 'la rencontre peu prévisible sans doute pour un jeune surréaliste, mais que le hasard me valut très tôt, d'un théologien, si le mot a du sens pour lui, le russe Léon Chestov' (L'Arc 66 (1976), p. 88). Shestov (1866-1938) (I adopt the more usual English transliteration) is a prolific and sometimes repetitious writer whose ideas are difficult to summarise without distorting their directness into banality. His essays show deadly seriousness curiously coupled with a sardonic irony of tone - a combination which is necessary to express in some degree the truth which he sees as both simple and inexpressible through the mechanisms of ordinary language and thought, whose complexities can only serve to distort it. Even a cursory examination of Shestov's writings, however, will throw up similarities with Bonnefoy's ideas. He has the same contempt for philosophical systems, and the same confidence in the ability of reality (and its concomitant,

death) to confound them:

> In these anxious days, when positivism seems to fall short, one cannot do better than turn to metaphysics. Then the young man need not any more envy Alexander the Macedonian. With the assistance of a few books not only earthly states are conquered, but the whole mysterious universe. Metaphysics is the great art of swerving round dangerous experience.(12)

The irony here is typical of Shestov, and brings to mind Bonnefoy's 'Oui, l'idéalisme est vainqueur dans toute pensée qui s'organise. Mieux vaut refaire le monde, y est-il dit obscurément, que d'y vivre dans le danger' from 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne' (I^2, pp. 12-13). Shestov's attack on rational thought goes hand in hand with an assertion of the unique and mysterious quality of individual phenomena and individual human experience, and of what we are accustomed to consider the world of the imagination, though Shestov would no doubt insist that this is no less real than the 'real' world as delineated - perhaps as constructed - by mechanistic science and rational thought. This is the context in which Shestov goes so far as to question the immutability of historical fact, if that fact does not concur with imaginative reality. Bonnefoy draws attention to this in his essay on Shestov: 'Chestov estime en effet qu'on peut anéantir l'événement détestable dans son essence d'événement. Quoi, nous dit-il à peu près, Socrate est mort, et encore par injustice, et on supporte que cela dure?' (I^2, p. 274).

Here the moral force of what should be is seen as capable of overcoming what is. Shestov hankers after the faith which can move mountains; and an idea closely related to this is his questioning of the value

(12) Shestov, All Things Are Possible, trans. S. S. Koteliansky (London, 1920), pp. 146-7.

of rational understanding itself, often expressed through meditation on the 'certum quia impossibile' of Tertullian:

> Mankind, which is haunted by the idée fixe of rational comprehension, on rising every morning should repeat the words of Tertullian: Crucifixus est Dei filius; non pudet, quia pudendum est. Et mortuus est Dei filius; prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est. Et sepultus resurrexit; certum est quia impossibile est.
>
> Tertullian wishes to know, and that is why he does not wish to understand, feeling clearly at that moment (but at that moment only) that understanding is hostile to knowledge and that this hostility will never end; that it is enough to 'understand', i.e., to pluck the fruit of the tree of knowledge and taste it, immediately to lose all possibility of access to the other marvelous trees which grew so abundantly in the garden of Eden. The knowledge of good and evil has no positive value, as we have always been taught, but rather a negative one.(13)

A thinker like Shestov who refuses to subscribe either to the tenets of any conventional and fixed religious faith or to any theory setting up either science or art as an alternative absolute, but who nevertheless doggedly pursues his philosophical quest along every possible intellectual path, even when he knows in advance that any form of certainty must almost by definition elude him, is a quixotic figure, but a very attractive one for Bonnefoy; but the difference between the two is that through the writing of poetry Bonnefoy has at least the possibility of a different kind of contact with reality than that offered by a line of thought which must be fettered by having to use, in ordinary language, the very conceptual tools which it sets out to reject. A criticism of Shestov based on the mere assertion of the primacy of factual over imaginative truth would

(13) Shestov, from Potestas Clavium, quoted in Bernard Martin, A Shestov Anthology (Athens, Ohio, 1970), p. 172.

miss the point, since Shestov's whole endeavour rests on the assertion of the equal or greater reality of imaginative truth. It might however be validly argued that Shestov can only frustrate his own aims by pursuing them through the kind of discursive reasoning to which they are intrinsically alien. Bonnefoy adopts a somewhat more relaxed attitude in suggesting that Western man must work through his analytic philosophical tradition and attempt to transcend it rather than simply to bypass it: 'nous avons mangé de l'arbre de science, et cela ne se renie pas . . . c'est dans notre intellectualité définitive qu'il faut réinventer la présence, qui est salut' (I^2, p. 40).

Bonnefoy would indeed claim in any case that Shestov is, to some degree at least, tainted by conceptual thought, and would see the gap that separates his own thought from that of Shestov in terms of the difference between their views of the place of time in the achievement - or possible achievement - of contact with reality. Whereas Bonnefoy relies on a development of his idiosyncratic view of the possibility of expressing, in non-rational and non-discursive terms, the instantaneous Here and Now,[14] he sees Shestov as being - no less idiosyncratically, perhaps - bound to a notion of temporal continuity which comes dangerously close to being a fixed dogma:

> /la philosophie de Chestov/ s'obstine à penser l'absolu dont elle est hantée, légitimement, sous la forme certes naïve de l'éternité temporelle. Chestov lui-même a peur du temps, il reste forclos de l'instant dont il ne sent pas la valeur. Qu'on ne retienne que ses valorisations, - la présence contre l'essence, ce qu'on aime contre ce qui est, ou passe pour être - et on pourra aboutir à une négation de l'absence, une résurrection de ce qui se perd, à mon avis mieux fondées en

(14) see below, pp. 50-58.

> comprenant que l'absolu que nous désirons gît dans la plénitude d'une seconde où intensité vaut éternité. (L'Arc 66, p. 89)

Evocation of 'la plénitude d'une seconde où intensité vaut éternité' may indeed be a means of avoiding the elaboration of a philosophical system with claims to permanent validity, as we have seen in the analogous case of Bonnefoy's hesitation over the expression of belief in 'l'autre pays' (AP, p. 10). Thus we see that Bonnefoy rejects clearly, though in some cases regretfully, any kind of coherent elaboration of thought, even if such an elaboration leads to a rejection of system-building or indeed organised thought itself, because conceptual thought is, by its very nature, associated with the project of making sense of the world - that is, of systematising it. The thinker who thinks non-systematically must turn elsewhere, and it is, for instance, in Kierkegaard's 'éclats . . . de joie' that Bonnefoy sees some gleam of possible salvation, even if Kierkegaard was himself not fully aware of their irrationality, bound up as he was in a more strictly philosophical enterprise:

> Il y a dans l'homme conceptuel un délaissement, une apostasie sans fin de ce qui est. Cet abandon est ennui, angoisse, désespoir. Mais parfois le monde se dresse, quelque sortilège est rompu, voici que comme par grâce tout le vif et le pur de l'être dans un instant est donné. De telles joies sont une percée que l'esprit a faite, vers le difficile réel. (I^2, pp. 18-19)

That such an illumination might come '<u>comme</u> par grâce' is a typical example of Bonnefoy's apparently casual use of the vocabulary of a mode of thought which is not his own, however tempting he may find it. Another example occurs in his essay on Balthus, where he writes: 'En termes de théologie on dirait que c'est au lieu du péché que surabonde la grâce' (I^2, p. 41). In the same way, he habitually uses the terms 'ici' and 'maintenant' with reference to a piece of Hegelian reasoning

whose conclusions he nevertheless feels bound to reject; and, as we have seen, his use of 'l'Un' and 'l'Unité' does not seem to be an entirely accurate reflection of the way in which Plotinus uses these terms. This is, in fact, his general attitude to philosophy and to the more analytical areas of theology. While in no sense denying the seriousness of their concerns, he nevertheless feels able to borrow notions from various thinkers and to use them, negatively or positively, in his own reflexion. One should not assume from this, however, that Bonnefoy is simply using such notions as a kind of metaphor. It might be more accurate to talk of his giving these ideas, seen as ideas, his provisional and temporary assent, while always retaining, on a different level, his own independence of mind.

More important than Bonnefoy's rejection of the concept, and all that it implies in terms of fixed philosophical systems, is his complementary affirmation of the importance of <u>présence</u>, at once the true mode of being of phenomenal reality and the possibility of the expression in art of that mode of being. <u>Présence</u> is not a state or a notion, but an <u>act</u> of being. As Bonnefoy says, 'l'objet sensible est <u>présence</u>. Il se distingue du conceptuel avant tout par un acte, c'est la présence' (I^2, p. 23). And this act springs from the apprehension of physical substance as such, a reality deeper and more durable than the concept:

> Mais je défends une vérité tenacement présente sous la vérité du concept, tenacement combattue. Et il est de l'essence de cette vérité que toute ville où l'on pourrait vivre, et par exemple Ravenne, vaille un principe et soit aussi apte que lui à fonder l'universel. Que les chemins et les pierres de Ravenne vaillent la déduction conceptuelle et puissent s'y substituer. (I^2, p. 19)

This is a difficult notion to grasp, precisely because it cannot be

expressed in conceptual terms: any formulation which takes it into the realm of the concept, as ordinary intellectual discussion must do, inevitably falsifies it. It is nevertheless - as one might say - the corner-stone of Bonnefoy's thinking. Much of the difficulty of his writing in the essays may be seen as stemming from the inevitable falsification attendant on any coherent discussion of such notions at all.

III Perception: simple classification, mauvaise présence, présence

Most of the quotations from Bonnefoy I have given so far come from 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne', an essay which sets out more clearly than any other Bonnefoy's distrustful attitude towards philosophy, and his attachment to the substance of phenomenal reality as such. In order to see how this attachment is developed into something approaching an overall aesthetic theory, however, we must look at other essays where the relevance of these ideas to art is more explicitly brought out. Présence is most coherently discussed in the much later 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité': and while the very coherence of the discussion may to some extent, as I have just suggested, over-simplify and falsify its object, it is from this account that we must start if we are to make any real progress in understanding Bonnefoy's overall aesthetic. Présence is here seen as a mode of perception: for the moment, for the sake of simplicity of exposition, I shall leave out of account its close relationship with language, with which it stands in 'continuité naturelle' (I^2, p. 249).

The three stages of perception of a salamander which Bonnefoy describes in the fourth section of 'La Poésie française et le principe

d'identité' may be called 'simple classification', 'mauvaise présence' and '(vraie) présence'. Although in this context these three stages are presented as a progression, in other contexts they appear separately: it is only for convenience of exposition that I discuss them here as a triadic development, since présence is by no means an inevitable or straightforward continuation of mauvaise présence, which conversely does not necessarily precede a true apprehension of présence.

The first mode of perception, which we may call simple classification, occurs when the observer looks at the salamander and labels it in his mind 'a salamander': 'Je puis analyser ce que m'apporte ma perception, et ainsi, profitant de l'expérience des autres êtres, séparer en esprit cette petite vie des autres données du monde, et la classer, comme ferait le mot de la prose, et me dire: "Une salamandre", puis poursuivre ma promenade, toujours distrait, demeuré comme à la surface de la rencontre' (I^2, pp. 246-7). The element of analysis in this mode of perception is very small: the observer passes over the object of his attention without pondering on its nature, contenting himself merely with assigning it to an already established conceptual and linguistic category. We may say that the object is a classified, but basically unanalysed, particular. Bonnefoy's mention of 'le mot de la prose' here may however raise one or two questions. It seems to be related to his preceding implied criticism of any kind of linguistic analysis based purely on the classificatory function of words: 'Que serait-ce que "le cheval", sinon un concept? Un cheval, oui, devant moi, et "le cheval" comme sa notion, quelle que soit la façon dont cette notion se détermine. - J'admets que ce point de vue permet de décrire correctement la façon dont la langue est disponible pour la plupart des usages' (I^2, p. 245). The

implication here of a sharp dividing line between the 'normal' or 'prose' use of words, and their function in poetry, is unfortunate, since the general trend of Bonnefoy's thought stands against any such rigid dichotomy: however, this point will be dealt with later, when I come to consider specifically linguistic questions.

So far, then, all is clear, but superficial. The next mode of perception (or failure of perception), mauvaise présence, results from an attempt to understand its object through analysis - an attempt which fails because of the shortcomings inherent in the analytic process itself, and leaves the observer face to face with a conceptual emptiness:

> je puis garder les yeux sur la salamandre, m'attacher aux détails qui m'avaient suffi pour la reconnaître, croire continuer l'analyse qui en fait de plus en plus une salamandre, c'est-à-dire un objet de science, une réalité structurée par ma raison et pénétrée de langage - mais tout cela, bientôt, pour ne plus rien percevoir, dans ces aspects brusquement comme dissociés l'un de l'autre, dans ce contour d'une patte absolu, irréfutable, désert, qu'un faisceau effrayant d'énigmes (I^2, p. 247).

The particular, subjected to an attempt at analysis, loses its true particularity and becomes a jumble of fragmented aspects, mere hollow universals - concepts, in fact: for here we see a concrete example of what, according to Bonnefoy, conceptual thought does to the contemplation of reality. The aspects of the salamander separated out by the analytic process can each, at this point, be considered on the level of simple classification, or labelling. However, because the analytic mind is not considering them as themselves, but as parts of something else (the salamander), perception has lost something which existed, albeit without much

true validity, in simple classification. It is this loss which marks the dissociation characteristic of analytic thought, and leads to the apprehension of the object as a 'faisceau effrayant d'énigmes'. Bonnefoy makes clear the intimate relationship between this process and language by adding that 'ces choses ont un nom, mais se sont faites d'un coup comme étrangères au nom' (I^2, p. 247). Simple classification, in other words, gives things a tentative link with the names it assigns to them, but only on condition that no attempt is made to investigate further the nature of that link. As soon as such an attempt is made in analytic terms, the weakness of the link becomes apparent, and it disappears, giving the condition of mauvaise présence, where the word is separated from the thing it is being used to label, and exists in a state of independence which Bonnefoy calls 'l'angoissante tautologie des langues, dont les mots ne disent qu'eux-mêmes, sans prise vraie sur les choses - qui peuvent donc se détacher d'eux, s'absenter' (I^2, p. 247). In ordinary language as perceived by the analytical consciousness, words have no automatically valid link with the existence of the objects to which they refer. This is a reflection of the distance between subject and object imposed by conceptual thought, which in Bonnefoy's terms takes on the positively evil quality of an abyss opening up before the observer - though in the 1980 edition of the essay Bonnefoy has deleted his earlier, rather melodramatic, reference here to 'un gouffre, au fond duquel résonne la chute inutile du temps' (RFM, p. 96).

The attempt to analyse the experience, then, fails. But in a paradoxical way the full awareness of this failure, which in the observer's mind takes on, beyond its futility, a positively evil quality, can lead to the third mode of perception, in which the second is comprehended

and overtaken. This is the realisation of présence itself - which can of course be attained as a 'given' insight, without reference to mauvaise présence, but which here is seen as following on from it. Here the object of perception regains in full measure the particularity it possessed in simple classification, while at the same time retaining the universality of mauvaise présence - a universality, however, which both transfigures and is transfigured by the particularity in which it fully participates:

> /La salamandre/ s'est dévoilée, devenue ou redevenue la salamandre - ainsi dit-on la fée - dans un acte pur d'exister où son 'essence' est comprise. (I^2, p. 248)

> Il n'y a plus une salamandre par opposition à cet âtre ou une ou cent hirondelles, mais la salamandre, présente au coeur des autres présences. (I^2, p. 249)

The universality of mauvaise présence has gone beyond its state of separation and abstraction to be re-embodied, consciously, in the particular object from which it started. At the same time, this embodiment of universality in a particular includes also the particularity of other objects and of the observer, with the result that the distinction between subject and object is abolished. This notion implies a rejection of the logically-conceived spatial context in which objects are normally supposed to exist. The feeling behind it is similar to that experienced by the mystics, but the thought behind it is Bonnefoy's deeply ambiguous attitude towards the ineffable nature of the Here and Now, as formulated, for instance, by Hegel. We will investigate this further in connection with Bonnefoy's views on poetic language: for the moment we may simply draw attention to the fact, not only that the experience of présence abolishes the distinction between particularity and universality,

and therefore breaks the normal spatial mould of human consciousness, but also that it breaks the normal temporal mould as well, and takes place, as we have seen,as an act outside the ordinary flow of time. The distinction between instantaneity and eternity is abolished, no less than that between subject and object: 'c'est l'Un la grande révélation de cet instant sans limites, où tout se donne à moi pour que je comprenne et je lie' (I^2, p. 248).

Bonnefoy's description of présence at this point has definitely essentialist overtones. This notion of unity implies a separation from reality which in other contexts he would see as potentially dangerous. After talking of 'la salamandre, présente au coeur des autres présences' (and the possible generalising force of the definite article is never absent from Bonnefoy's own poetic practice)(1) he goes on to say: 'L'idée d'un être, sur cette voie - illusoire ou non, peu importe - implique son existence, et cela vainc le concept, qui doit abolir celle-ci pour que les formules prospèrent' (I^2, p. 249). This recalls Bonnefoy's exposition of Plotinus, in 'Le Temps et l'intemporel dans la peinture du Quattrocento':

> Plotin . . . condamne l'idée, si profondément établie dans le monde antique, selon laquelle la beauté est συμμετρία, harmonie, correspondance réciproque entre les parties et le tout. L'harmonie, dit Plotin, suppose des parties, c'est-à-dire du divisé. Or, c'est l'Un, c'est la participation à l'Un, directe, qui est le beau. Voici que l'art est requis de prendre pour objet, pour impossible objet, une réalité transcendante. (I^2, p. 67)

Présence, as described in this part of 'La Poésie française et le

(1) for a discussion of a concrete example of this see, for instance, my article on 'Movement and Immobility in a poem by Yves Bonnefoy', Modern Language Review 72, 3 (July 1977), p. 568

principe d'identité', is like the One (though we have seen that Bonnefoy's use of this term is not always faithful to Plotinus), as against the aspects which would be seized upon by conceptual analysis; and it seems too perfect a notion to be attainable - hence, one imagines, the suggestion that it is of little importance whether or not it is illusory, though this could also imply that in présence even the categories of illusion and reality are transcended. But this essentialist notion must still be a reality, albeit perhaps a reality which cannot be attained, rather than any of the kinds of abstraction which may be associated with conceptual analysis. The aesthetic implied is something like that which Bonnefoy sees in Racine:

> Le monde est remplacé par un monde plus resserré d'essences intelligibles. Et celui-ci n'est pas pour autant un monde abstrait - puisque l'équivoque profonde de l'idée platonicienne est de prendre sur soi le plus vif, le plus pur de l'apparence sensible - mais c'est un lieu séparé où l'on peut oublier la diversité du réel et l'existence du temps, de la vie quotidienne, de la mort. (H, p. 238)

Since Bonnefoy insists repeatedly on the importance of capturing 'la diversité du réel', the idea that présence should be simply equated with a transcendent form of reality, however far removed that might be from abstraction, must be rejected: and it is, precisely, only when présence is described in abstract terms that it may seem to take on an abstraction which is basically foreign to its nature. The all-embracing and universal quality of présence can only be seen in its manifestation through particulars. Furthermore, the exposition which I have given above - and, to a lesser extent, the exposition in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité' on which it is based - fails to convey the fact that présence cannot

be attained, or even described, by a process of logical reasoning. The experience of présence has a random, 'given' quality, and a highly-charged emotional content, which can be seen in the use, in Bonnefoy's account, of the terms 'démon . . . je suis pris et sauvé . . . l'amour . . . l'ange', and in his final quotation from St. John of the Cross (I^2, p. 247-8). Although we may postulate a philosophical framework for présence, Bonnefoy deals with it with neither the rigour nor the aridity which a philosophical statement would demand: he is more likely to use the language of mysticism.

(IV) The concept and meaning: signification and sens

It may now be worth going over again the ground I have so far rather sketchily covered, in order to reach a fuller understanding of what présence actually involves. Through its very intractability to analysis, the notion of simple classification cannot be developed to any extent, although I shall have something to say later about its implicit connection with the notion of the linguistic sign as posited by modern linguistic analysis. Simple classification, when subjected to analysis, inevitably turns into mauvaise présence. This is par excellence the domain of the concept, or rather of the concept pushed to extremes in analytic thought, which leads to a perception of anguished emptiness. We may situate 'concept' here in a specialised area of vocabulary of which one must be aware when reading Bonnefoy. In his description of mauvaise présence, he says: 'Et ces concepts, ces définitions, ces aspects, tout cela ne m'est plus qu'une cohérence vide, sans réponse à nulle question' (I^2, p. 247). The 'cohérence vide' is the same as that of a philosophical system, and its agents are obviously 'concepts, définitions,

aspects'. On the other hand, the word 'idée', at least in certain contexts and at certain points in Bonnefoy's oscillating love-hate relationship with Platonic thought, takes on the opposite meaning, that of the universal particular realised in <u>présence</u>, with which I have already dealt. In the 'idée', reality, far from being forgotten, comes into its own: 'Si rien n'est moins réel que le concept, rien ne l'est plus que cette alliance d'une forme et d'une pierre, de l'exemplaire et d'un corps: rien ne l'est plus que l'Idée' (I, p. 19). Typically enough, Bonnefoy had second thoughts on his use here of the term 'idée', and changed it, in later editions of the essay, to 'l'Idée <u>risquée</u>' (NRF, p. 27, I^2, p. 17), implying that the Idea, too, in order to attain a true mode of being, cannot take refuge in a stable, spiritually validated realm of essences, but has to be perceived in the dangerous, random and ephemeral illumination of <u>présence</u>. The hierarchy of vocabulary, however, is clear enough in outline, and a further element may be seen in Bonnefoy's summary description of <u>présence</u>, of which I have already quoted the first sentence: 'L'idée d'un être, sur cette voie - illusoire ou non, peu importe - implique son existence, et cela vainc le concept, qui doit abolir celle-ci pour que ses formules prospèrent. Dans l'espérance de la présence, on ne "signifie" pas, on laisse une lumière se désenchevêtrer des significations qui l'occultent' (I^2, p. 249). The use of 'signification' here to designate something analogous to 'concept' may at first seem puzzling: but it is easily enough explained if we consider 'signification' as the communicative function of the one-to-one labelling process which I have called 'simple classification'. This process takes no account of any possible valid link between a word and the true existence of the thing which it names. Bonnefoy is not, in this

context, an enemy of meaning, but only of meaning in the very restricted sense of 'conceptual reference'. In his essay on Jouve and elsewhere he makes a clear distinction between 'signification' and 'sens', and asserts that it is with the latter that poetry is concerned:

> En vérité, il y a dans la création un autre pôle que celui où s'engendrent à l'infini, hors du temps, désintéressées du destin, les métonymies et les métaphores. Un pôle qui oriente non les significations mais le sens, lequel a sa beauté lui aussi, bien qu'aux limites de l'invisible . . . Né d'un désir qu'aucune richesse de proportions ou d'images ne peut combler, parce qu'il est mémoire de la présence, on peut dire ce pôle - ce désir encore -, la poésie. (NR, p. 236)

'Le sens' - it is no coincidence that this singular is opposed to the plural 'les significations' - is not restricted to the series of connections which we may call 'les significations', and represents something more than, and of a different order from, their sum total. In the case of a poem, one could say that 'le sens' is what Bonnefoy later in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité' calls 'une intention de salut, qui est le seul souci du poème' (I^2, p. 250), rather than the poem's referential meaning: but the notion cannot be said to apply to poetry alone, and indeed has close affinities with the participation in existence which Bonnefoy sees as characteristic of the Plotinian One.

On a rather more mundane level, we can take 'aspect', 'concept' and 'signification' as terms marking an abstraction from, and therefore a falsification of, the true existence of things: 'aspect' being the detail of a being seized on by analytic thought, 'concept' the mental image of this detail, and 'signification' the relationship

between the object and its verbal equivalent, the value of a word used purely to label it. 'Idée', on the other hand, is the perceptual element in an experience of présence, and 'sens' that experience seen in terms of the communication - through the abolition of the distinctions between subject and object, instantaneity and eternity - that it represents.

All of this carries many essentialist overtones. But there is a world of difference between an essence endowed with inner spiritual validity and one which is mere abstraction. This is a notion running through all Bonnefoy's work: one can see it in the contrasts between 'concept' and 'idée', and between 'signification' and 'sens'. It is also present in the vocabulary Bonnefoy uses to criticise the fin-de-siècle interpretation of Byzantium:

> Tous les signes de l'idéal - plutôt que de l'absolu -, de l'aristocratie - plutôt que de la noblesse -, mais une immobilité pernicieuse, comme d'un coeur qui ne voudrait pas des joies et des souffrances de vivre et se déroberait au réel, quitte à subir l'instinct comme une brusquerie inintelligible et fatale, dans l'attente passive de la mort. Alors l'affirmation du Beau ne se distingua plus d'une haine de l'existence. (I^2, p. 173)

(We may see here, incidentally, Bonnefoy's profoundly equivocal attitude to 'l'Idée' hovering behind his use of the word 'idéal'.) As soon as an essence loses touch with reality, it atrophies: and Bonnefoy's attachment to reality is no less strong than his yearning for something beyond. The Idea must be embodied in 'la substantielle immortalité' (I^2, p. 26) - we find this notion everywhere in Bonnefoy's work, from 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne' to his warning against '/le/ mauvais désir de l'infini' in Dans le leurre du seuil (P, p. 264), or this confessional moment in his essay on Jouve:

> Et là peut-être y a-t-il coupure entre l'oeuvre de Jouve et le souci que j'en ai, car je dois marquer maintenant à quel point cette pensée de la nature souillée m'est étrangère. Quels qu'aient pu être mes doutes et mes contradictions, je n'ai jamais mis l'évidence terrestre en cause, elle me semble porter le vrai, et je ne vois rien de coupable dans ses incitations, ses événements et ses fins. (NR, p. 241)

In going on to look more closely at présence itself, it may be profitable to consider it from an existentialist, rather than from an essentialist, point of view, if we can at least partially divorce the word 'existentialist' from its standard referent in modern philosophy. (1)

V L'éphémère

At this point we may well turn back to 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne', where Bonnefoy's line of argument following on from his condemnation of the concept is itself interesting. He does not try to establish a direct logical continuation, but instead proceeds by the doubly indirect route of a false analogy, between the concept and the 'ornement' of the monuments of Ravenna. Thus he avoids the empty directness of ordinary conceptual analysis - what I have called linear logic -, and by bringing in the idea of 'ornement' in this context moves both inwards - away from abstract considerations and towards a meditation on the concrete (in every sense of the word)

(1) This must be a thorny point of vocabulary. Given that one needs a couple of adjectives meaning 'pertaining to existence' and 'pertaining to essence', where 'existence' and 'essence' are used in a fairly wide-ranging, non-technical sense, 'existentialist' and 'essentialist' are unsatisfactory because of the former's inevitable overtones of Sartre and his school, whereas 'existential' and 'essential' are impossible because of the latter's much wider range of ordinary meaning. At the same time, consistency of style would demand a pair having a similar morphological form. In general, I have preferred to use 'existentialist' and 'essentialist' where a direct comparison is being made, but I also use 'existential' on its own from time to time.

reality of the main subject of his essay - and outwards, by introducing a theme which he develops elsewhere, both directly, in his essays on Baroque architecture, and more generally, through the notion which for convenience I will call 'l'éphémère': the idea that something incidental - the ornamentation of a Baroque church, or a fragment of ivy-leaf, or some quite inconsequential, random event - can, through the very quality of its apparent unimportance, become the centre of an aesthetic experience. This idea should become clearer as I develop it.

The false analogy in 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne' depends on the notion that both concept and ornamentation are closed systems, pursuing a kind of game within themselves which excludes and ignores awkward or mysterious sides of reality, and in particular death. But this theory, in which ornamentation is considered, like the concept, as a kind of narcotic, shielding the analytical mind from reality, fails to explain the 'allégresse' which Bonnefoy feels when meditating on the tombs of Ravenna, or the 'pouvoir d'apaisement' (I^2, pp. 14-15) which their ornamentation has over him. This, he suggests, is because the theory fails to take into account the substantive existence of the ornamentation: 'Mais c'était compter sans la pierre, qui appartient à l'être même de l'ornement, et retient dans le monde sensible ses étranges universaux' (I^2, p. 16).

Here we find again the idea of an abstraction losing its abstraction and becoming actual physical substance - an idea which, by its very nature, resists formulation in abstract terms, but which is central to the understanding of the difference between analytical perception and the apprehension of <u>présence</u>. This must be considered a mystical

notion, to be fully grasped only through participation in, rather than intellectual contemplation of reality, as indeed Bonnefoy implies when he accuses Valéry of not having appreciated 'le mystère de la substance' (I, p. 138) (significantly varied in the 1980 reprint to 'le mystère de la présence' (I^2, p. 98)): but its mysticism is not that of a remote Beyond, but rather that of a transcendental Here and Now. Postponing for the moment any philosophical elaboration of this idea, we may quote Bonnefoy on 'l'universel', a little later in 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne': 'l'universel, cette notion la plus utile au bonheur possible de l'homme, est entièrement à réinventer. L'universel n'est pas une loi, qui pour être partout la même ne vaut vraiment nulle part. L'universel a son lieu' (I^2, p. 19).

This fairly dense statement enacts by indirect allusion both the poetic and the emotional content of <u>présence</u>. With the echoes from Rimbaud (L'amour est à réinventer')(1) and Baudelaire ('Singulière fortune où le but se déplace,/Et, n'étant nulle part, peut être n'importe où!')(2), Bonnefoy invokes the tutelary presence of the two French poets he admires above all others: but further, the actual content of the echoes hints at the wideness of range he wants to give 'l'universel', no matter how particular its incarnation may be. For love must form part of the emotional content of <u>présence</u> ('je suis passé de la perception maudite à l'amour, qui est prescience de l'invisible' (I^2, p. 248)), and travel, 'le voyage' itself, is more than a metaphor for the quest for <u>présence</u>, but rather one of the supreme initiatory enterprises by which it can be attained:

(1) Rimbaud, 'Délires I' (<u>Une Saison en enfer</u>), <u>Oeuvres</u>, ed. Bernard (Paris, 1960), p. 224.

(2) Baudelaire, 'Le Voyage', <u>Les Fleurs du mal</u>, ed. Adam (Paris, 1961), p. 156.

'Poésie et voyage sont d'une même substance, d'un même sang, je le redis après Baudelaire, et de toutes les actions qui sont possibles à l'homme, les seules peut-être utiles, les seules qui ont un but' (I^2, p. 20).

But what is the 'lieu' where the universal becomes particular, where présence is actually embodied in physical substance endowed with spiritual aspiration at the highest level? It is not situated in some form of ideal perfection. On the contrary, it must be seen as necessarily imperfect, insignificant and everyday. In Ravenna, it is precisely the ornamentation of the monuments - perceived as physical substance, as stone - which bears the spiritual force of true présence. And, as in the poem 'L'Imperfection est la cime' (P, p. 117), perfection must be denied:

> Je dirai par allégorie: /l'acte de la présence/ est ce fragment de l'arbre sombre, cette feuille cassée du lierre. La feuille entière, bâtissant son essence immuable de toutes ses nervures, serait déjà le concept. Mais cette feuille brisée, verte et noire, salie, cette feuille qui montre dans sa blessure toute la profondeur de ce qui est, cette feuille infinie est présence pure, et par conséquent mon salut. (I^2, p. 24)

The object in question - the actual site of présence - does not matter, in the sense that it might be anything, anywhere, as one may see from the list of 'vrais lieux' Bonnefoy gives in 'Dévotion' (I^2, pp. 133-5). Some of these references recur in other contexts - Saint-Yves de la Sagesse and Sainte-Marthe d'Aglié are mentioned in 'La Seconde Simplicité' (I^2, p. 187), Galla Placidia is associated with Ravenna, and the Brancacci chapel and Delphi are the subjects of poems (P, pp. 86 and 149) -, while others are obviously of a more private nature, and the whole series is dominated by the reminiscence

of Rimbaud's 'Dévotion' from Les Illuminations:[3] but the factor of central importance in the naming, and sanctifying, process of the poem is the reciprocal nature of the experience of présence, involving as it does the observing, articulate subject equally with the (often unremarkable) object observed. In the quotation on 'l'universel' which I began earlier, Bonnefoy goes on: 'L'universel est en chaque lieu dans le regard qu'on en prend, l'usage qu'on en peut faire' (I^2, p. 19). It is through a true realisation of its inner being that the undistinguished particular becomes a site for présence, 'le seuil unique de l'absolu qui est la chose quelconque, vraiment aimée comme telle' (I^2, p. 251): and if this realisation could happen anywhere, the realisation, once achieved, transcends the random triviality of the particular object in and through which it is experienced. 'Le vrai lieu est donné par le hasard, mais au vrai lieu le hasard perdra son caractère d'énigme' (I^2, p. 128).

VI The Here and Now : Hegel and poetic articulacy. The notion of seuil

The 'vrai lieu', the site for présence, is not to be considered as falling into the categories of space and time, as these are ordinarily conceived. This notion needs clarification, for it is one which Bonnefoy does not make totally explicit: he often uses the terms 'ici' and 'maintenant', but it is not always clear that these refer to the Here and Now as discussed by Hegel in a piece of reasoning which Bonnefoy explicitly rejects, but obviously finds convenient as a reference. The specific context is Hegel's refutation of the naïve sense-certainty which points to the particular as an immediate

(3) Rimbaud, Oeuvres, p. 306

object of consciousness, and his denial of the possibility of giving utterance to that particular. Bonnefoy's main concern is with the linguistic aspect of the argument: for the moment, however, we may deal with its more strictly philosophical side.

In 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' Bonnefoy says of Hegel: 'Hegel l'a montré, avec soulagement croirait-on, la parole ne peut rien retenir de ce qui est l'immédiat. Maintenant, c'est la nuit, si par ces mots je prétends exprimer mon expérience sensible, ce n'est plus aussitôt qu'un cadre où la présence s'efface' (I^2, p. 114). In his Phänomenologie des Geistes Hegel divides the 'This' - the particular object as perceived by naïve sense-certainty - into its temporal and spatial elements, the 'Now' and the 'Here', and shows that each of these is a universal, existing as itself only through a denial of any immediate instance of its application. Of the Now he says:

> A la question: qu'est-ce que le maintenant? nous répondrons, par exemple: le maintenant est la nuit. Pour éprouver la vérité de cette certitude sensible une simple expérience sera suffisante. Nous notons par écrit cette vérité; une vérité ne perd rien à être écrite et aussi peu à être conservée. Revoyons maintenant à midi cette vérité écrite, nous devrons dire alors qu'elle s'est éventée . . .
>
> Sans doute le maintenant lui-même se conserve bien, mais comme un maintenant tel qu'il n'est pas la nuit; de même à l'égard du jour qu'il est actuellement, le maintenant se maintient, mais comme un maintenant tel qu'il n'est pas le jour, ou comme un négatif en général.(1)

And a little later, he says of the Here:

> Le même cas se produit pour l'autre forme du ceci, c'est-à-dire pour l'ici. L'ici est, par exemple, l'arbre. Je me retourne,

(1) Hegel, La Phénoménologie de l'esprit, vol.1, pp. 83-4

> cette vérité a disparu et s'est changée en vérité opposée: l'ici n'est pas un arbre, mais plutôt une maison. L'ici lui-même ne disparaît pas, mais il est et demeure dans la disparition de la maison, de l'arbre, etc.; il est de plus indifférent à être maison ou arbre. De nouveau le ceci se montre comme simplicité médiatisée, ou comme universalité.(2)

Furthermore, language is a reflection of this failure of immediate perception in that when we use the word, say, horse, we are no doubt thinking of a particular horse, and may indeed be pointing one out: but what we actually say is a universal, a term with no particular referent, applicable to an indefinite number of quadrupeds:

> C'est aussi comme un universel que nous prononçons le sensible. Ce que nous disons, c'est ceci, c'est-à-dire le ceci universel, ou encore il est, c'est-à-dire l'être, en général. Nous ne nous représentons pas assurément le ceci universel ou l'être en général, mais nous prononçons l'universel. En d'autres termes, nous ne parlons absolument pas de la même façon que nous visons dans cette certitude sensible. Mais comme nous le voyons, c'est le langage qui est le plus vrai: en lui, nous allons jusqu'à réfuter immédiatement notre avis; et puisque l'universel est le vrai de la certitude sensible, et que le langage exprime seulement ce vrai, alors il n'est certes pas possible que nous puissions dire un être sensible que nous visons.(3)

Bonnefoy accepts these arguments, at least within their own terms of reference. But his 'Hegel l'a montré, avec soulagement croirait-on . . . ' shows his true attitude: the 'soulagement' is that of a conceptual flight from reality, in contrast to the 'allégresse' which he feels in Ravenna, or the 'amour' which must enter into the experience of présence. The only mode of refutation for such

(2) ibid, pp. 84-5
(3) ibid, p. 84

arguments is a kind of passionate and irrational assertion of the contrary, rather than any attempt at conceptual reasoning:

> Et je suis prêt quant à moi, dans le devenir poétique, dans la parole en tant qu'invention ou retour, et pour aller sur la voie qui se découvre la seule, à affirmer follement cet ici et ce maintenant qui sont déjà, c'est vrai, un là-bas et un autrefois, qui ne sont plus, qu'on nous a volés, mais qui, éternellement dans leur finitude temporelle, universellement dans leur infirmité spatiale, sont le seul bien concevable, le seul lieu qui mérite le nom de lieu. (I^2, p. 123)

In his essay on Valéry he makes the same magnificent assertion in less personal terms: 'La poésie . . . doit se vouer à cet Ici et ce Maintenant que Hegel orgueilleusement avait révoqués au nom du langage, et faire de ses mots qui, en effet, quittent l'être, un profond et paradoxal retour vers lui' (I^2, pp. 98-9).

I will elaborate on the linguistic side of this question when dealing with Bonnefoy's ideas on language in poetry. For the moment we may note his ambiguous attitude to Hegel, and - another example of his adaptation of given philosophical notions for his own ends - his tendency to use the terms 'ici' and 'maintenant' in a sense, or at least with certain implications, diametrically opposed to Hegel's - though Hegel's argument is always in the background, so that the words carry a much greater weight of philosophical content than they do in normal use.

Inasmuch, then, as the 'vrai lieu' is an absolute Here, the act of présence is an absolute Now, and as such it stands in suspension outside the continuity of time and makes the experience of présence a polarity in which death, as timeless instant, and substance, as timeless eternity, are set against each other, and at the same time identified with each other.

The introduction of the notion of death at this point needs some explanation. We have already seen that Bonnefoy's central criticism of conceptual thought relates to its inability to take account of death, or rather to its flight from the reality of death, and its replacement of death by coherent but spiritually empty systems:

> Pour autant qu'elle fut pensée, depuis les Grecs, la mort n'est qu'une idée qui se fait la complice d'autres, dans un règne éternel où justement rien ne meurt. Telle est bien notre vérité: elle ose définir la mort, mais pour la remplacer par du défini. Or le défini est incorruptible, il assure malgré la mort et pourvu qu'on oublie les apparences brutales une étrange immortalité.
>
> Provisoire immortalité, mais suffisante. (I^2, p. 12)

We may readily accept that death is necessarily the most important of human concerns. But when it becomes a <u>concern</u>, when we reflect on it, we immediately confront the danger represented by conceptual thought: that we should forget death as death, and instead integrate it into a system, and thus escape from 'les apparences brutales'. Ironically, as we have seen, Hegel, whose insight into the nature of death Bonnefoy esteems highly enough - as an insight - to quote as epigraph to <u>Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve</u>, invalidated that very insight by incorporating it into an all-embracing philosophical system. Hegel's immediate context, however,is relevant to Bonnefoy's thought:

> Le cercle qui repose en soi fermé sur soi, et qui, comme substance, tient tous ses moments, est la relation immédiate qui ne suscite ainsi aucun étonnement. Mais que l'accidentel comme tel, séparé de son pourtour, ce qui est lié et effectivement réel seulement dans sa connexion à autre chose, obtienne un être-là propre et une liberté distincte, c'est là la puissance prodigieuse du négatif, l'énergie de la pensée, du pur moi. La

> mort, si nous voulons nommer ainsi cette irréalité, est la chose la plus redoutable, et tenir fermement ce qui est mort, est ce qui exige la plus grande force. La beauté sans force hait l'entendement, parce que l'entendement attend d'elle ce qu'elle n'est pas en mesure d'accomplir. Ce n'est pas cette vie qui recule d'horreur devant la mort et se préserve pure de la destruction, mais la vie qui porte la mort, et se maintient dans la mort même, qui est la vie de l'esprit. L'esprit conquiert sa vérité seulement à condition de se retrouver soi-même dans l'absolu déchirement. L'esprit est cette puissance en n'étant pas semblable au positif qui se détourne du négatif, (comme quand nous disons d'une chose qu'elle n'est rien, ou qu'elle est fausse, et que, débarrassé alors d'elle, nous passons sans plus à quelque chose d'autre), mais l'esprit est cette puissance seulement en sachant regarder le négatif en face, et en sachant séjourner auprès de lui. Ce séjour est le pouvoir magique qui convertit le négatif en être.(4)

Hegel is in fact attempting to integrate death, which he sees almost casually, in abstract terms - 'si nous voulons nommer ainsi cette irréalité' -, into a kind of conceptual spiral which, Bonnefoy would suggest, is just as much a flight from reality as the conceptual circle which Hegel sees death as breaking up. Taken as a simple insight, however, and meditated on in a quite different way, Hegel's perception that death must be seen as the essential opposite side of the coin to life, that life must explore and investigate the full reality of death, and that death, thus explored, is a force which can transform nothingness into being, is of the utmost value. Death in this context must be seen, neither simply as an abstract idea, nor as merely the physical fact of death, although that fact is always central to a full apprehension of death. The emotional content of such an apprehension, rather, is like that of mauvaise

(4) Hegel, La Phénoménologie de l'esprit, vol.1, p. 29

présence: and it is only, for instance, after full exploration of the desolation and hopelessness of possible poetic utterance that a miracle may take place, as happened, Bonnefoy believes, in Baudelaire's case:

> Le néant consume l'objet, nous sommes pris dans le vent de cette flamme sans ombre. Et nulle foi ne nous soutient plus, nulle formule, nul mythe, le plus intense regard s'achève désespéré. Restons pourtant devant cet horizon sans figure, vidé de soi. Tenons, si je puis dire, le pas gagné. Car il est vrai que déjà un changement se produit. L'astre morne de ce qui est, l'élémentaire Janus, tournant avec lenteur - mais dans l'instant - sur lui-même, nous découvre son autre face. Un possible apparaît sur la ruine de tout possible. (I^2, pp. 121-2)

It may seem ironical that, after the affirmation that '/nul mythe/ ne nous soutient plus', we have the invocation of Janus. But one of the features of présence can be the revalidation of myth: and the miracle itself must come about 'avec lenteur', because of the force of introspection needed (in this case, at least) to accomplish it, but also 'dans l'instant', because the experience must take place outside the prison of the Now considered as an abstract universal and in the freedom of the affirmed, but ineffable, present moment. At the same time, this only indicates part of the richness of présence: the other essential element in its incarnation is substance, representing a similar liberation from the abstract Here, as seen in a widespread ornamental motif in Ravenna: 'Il représente deux paons. Dressés, affrontés, savants et simples comme des hyperboles, ils boivent dans un même calice ou mordent la même vigne. Dans un entrelacs de l'esprit qui reprend et achève celui du marbre, ils signifient la mort et l'immortalité' (I^2, p. 16).

In présence, then, spirit and substance, death and immortality, are combined. But as soon as we reach any such formulation, we have already, perhaps, fallen into the trap of conceptualisation. The danger of the fixed system is ever-present, and inevitable: it is a fault inherent in the very stuff of ordinary discursive prose, the language of essays and theses. Before explaining this further, then, and tackling the relationship of language to the whole complex of ideas I have been discussing, it may be well to sound yet again a note of warning. Bonnefoy's affirmations of the power of the poetic word, full of strength and inspiration though they are, are nevertheless rare and fleeting, and confront, within Bonnefoy's own thought, a great weight of rational argument against the over-facile formulation of the notion of an absolute Here and Now to which access might be possible, through language or by any other means. The experience of présence is mystical in the sense that it cannot be attained by a rational process of even non-linear thought. When Bonnefoy talks of 'la chose quelconque, vraiment aimée comme telle' (I^2, p. 251), this is not an absolute, but merely 'le seuil unique de l'absolu'.

The notion referred to now and then in Bonnefoy's criticism in terms of 'seuil' is of great importance, and can very easily be overlooked. He may use it in a sense which implies that no progress can be made beyond it: but this does not mean that he is proposing an aesthetic of total defeat. On the contrary, the poet must cross the threshold: but the threshold is the place where articulacy, in the sense of discursive reasoning, stops. Bonnefoy could take over Wittgenstein's 'what we cannot speak about we must consign to silence',(5) but as a positive doctrine, adding perhaps, as a rider, 'but name it'. In terms of logic, and even in terms of ordinary uses of language, Bonnefoy often deals with a world of 'as if's': and this is reflected,

(5) Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. Pears and McGuiness (London, 1961), p. 151

as I have pointed out, in his fondness for qualifications and parentheses. In 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', immediately after the triumphant affirmation of présence in the quotation from St John of the Cross, he retreats and seems to qualify his vision in rather more sober language: 'J'appellerai cette unité rétablie, ou tout au moins qui affleure, la présence' (I^2, p. 249). But it would be a mistake to take 'ou tout au moins qui affleure' as anything more than a definition of the limits beyond which discursive language cannot go. It is in no sense a qualification of the reality of présence, but rather an acknowledgement of its existence outside normal human conceptual processes.

In this context we may see the apparent questioning in the title of Dans le leurre du seuil of even the limited certainty of the notion of 'seuil' as, in fact, ambiguous: 'le seuil' could be a 'leurre' in that, in conceptual terms, even such a tentative degree of certainty is unsound; but it could also be a 'leurre' in the sense that poetic endeavour cannot rely on a neat assertion of conceptual uncertainty but must plunge into the attempt to name, grasp, and consent to reality, thus hoping to enact présence. The ironical ambiguity of the title is no doubt intentional.

This does not mean, however, that the kind of reservations with which Bonnefoy hedges round the assertions in his essays are not valid on their own terms: and their own terms are, by definition, the only ones we have to work with, for we are limited to conceptual discourse. As we go on to deal with Bonnefoy's ideas on language and poetry, we would do well to heed his remark in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie': 'La parole peut bien, comme je le fais maintenant, célébrer la présence, chanter son acte, nous préparer en esprit à sa rencontre, mais non pas nous permettre de l'accomplir' (I^2, pp. 123-4). It is only with this notion firmly fixed in our minds that we may now consider the possibilities and conditions of its validity being suspended.

B. LANGUAGE AND POETRY

VII Nommer: the case of the proper name

As I have implied throughout this study so far, Bonnefoy postulates a close parallel between language and experience: '[le langage] est en continuité naturelle avec l'expérience que j'ai décrite - et dans l'un comme l'autre de ses aspects' (I^2, p. 249). That is, the communicative powers of language can be analogous either to mauvaise présence or to présence. He goes on to develop this idea by saying 'La langue - et c'est pourquoi on a parlé de logos, de "Verbe" - semble promettre au-delà de son moment conceptuel la même unité que celle que propose la vie au-delà des aspects qui ont fragmenté sa présence. Elle semble nous inviter à porter dans sa profondeur la parole qui fera être ce qu'elle nomme'(I^2 pp. 249-50).

Here, typically, the qualifications are essential. If, on the level of experience, one can only attain - or at least, only conceive rationally of attaining - the 'seuil de la possession de l'être' (I^2, p. 2 which is the 'vrai lieu', language, for its part, can only hold a tentative promise of absolute communication, which may itself be illusory ('semble promettre . . . semble nous inviter'): and the mention of logos, of language as the complete expression of divine creation (as act and as substance), must be consigned to a parenthesis. But the fact that these things can be mentioned at all is itself significant. As we have seen, Bonnefoy is ready in certain circumstances to assert that somehow, beyond all rational argument, and without - and I shall return to this point later - the kind of guarantee that a settled religious faith might appear to provide, poetic language can in fact conjure into being the things which it names.

I have already discussed the background of Hegelian reasoning against which Bonnefoy asserts the sporadic but none the less glorious power of the poetic word. It may be relevant here to discuss a special category of words to which neither Bonnefoy nor, apparently, Hegel gives a great deal of explicit attention, but which nevertheless raises a number of interesting points in this context. This is the category of proper names. Bonnefoy remarks, in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité': 'Pour tous les linguistes . . . le mot cheval . . . a pour contenu une quiddité, rien d'autre, et ainsi n'est-il nullement dans sa fatalité d'évoquer, comme peut le faire un nom propre quand on le crie, l'existence effective, ici, devant moi, du "cheval"' (I^2, p. 245).

It is clear what Bonnefoy is referring to. Proper names are, in fact, different from other words, in that they do not express universals, in Hegel's sense (see pp.51-2 above). According to Ivan Soll, Hegel in his Logic denies proper names any meaning at all, because 'individual names can be assumed, bestowed or even changed arbitrarily'. Soll adds:

> In assigning proper names one cannot be mistaken in the same straightforward sense as one can be in describing something. To name one's son 'Jane' is merely peculiar, but to describe a window as 'a horse' is mistaken. The complete interchangeability of proper names might be accounted for by arguing that all proper names have the same meaning - no meaning.(1)

We may criticise Soll for failing to point out that the difference between assigning a proper name, or 'naming', and assigning a common noun, or 'describing (something) as' is itself a reflection of the

(1) Ivan Soll, An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics (Chicago, 1969), p.98.

difference between the two kinds of word. I shall develop this notion presently. The behaviour of the category of 'proper names' itself, however, is more complicated than Soll implies. We may admit, as Graham Martin points out, that 'the claim that proper names can be arbitrarily applied to anything you like, is at best a half-truth'. (2) Proper names can, and frequently do, gather connotations in uses like 'He's a Scrooge': and in their ordinary use, they take up the connotations of the individual to whom they refer, and thus connote a greater number of attributes than do common nouns. (3)

There is, however, a difference between common nouns and proper names, beyond Martin's admission of the latter's lack of a 'generalising function', because of the ways in which the two categories are assigned. If I see on the horizon a red-haired, kilted figure standing beside an object, I may assume 'Ah! there is my friend Alexander standing beside a tree'. On closer inspection, however, I may turn out to be wrong on both counts, and this is where the difference comes in. As I approach, the 'tree' may turn out to be a bush, or a shrub, or (if I am very blind) a flag-pole or lamp-post: but I will not usually be at a loss in categorizing the object according to my more accurate observation, because its connotations will assign it to a linguistic category with whose use I am familiar. Even if I do not know what it is called, I can still describe it in terms of its attributes, and someone better acquainted than I with the class of objects to which it belongs could, from my description, enlighten me.

If I am mistaken about the red-haired, kilted figure, however, I cannot have recourse to the same criteria for correcting myself, nor have I

(2) Graham Dunstan Martin, Language, Truth and Poetry (Edinburgh, 1975), p. 37.
(3) Otto Jespersen, quoted in Martin, op.cit., p. 36.

any particular interest in doing so. It may turn out that the figure's name is more likely to be Dorothy or Sheila: but that is about as far as the connotations of proper names themselves will take me. If the person in question is not Alexander, then it is of little consequence to me whether he is John or Marmaduke, if I do not know these people. The proper name, once assigned, possesses a quality of unique and immediate reference which is quite different from the reference of common nouns, and which implies some relationship between its user, its referent and the context in which it is being used - the person its user is addressing, for instance. For this reason, when it is being used in ordinary discourse, it carries a much greater weight of connotative content than do common nouns. On the other hand, when it is not assigned to a single individual, it has relatively little connotative content: and if we have a change in assignation, the connotative content changes too. The hero of Orwell's 1984 is called Winston Smith, a name presumably bestowed upon the hapless infant because of its Churchillian connotations, and used by Orwell with ironical effect, because of the very different path which he makes his fictional Winston tread. But in real life, such irony would be barely perceptible. The name Winston, within the circle of the individual's acquaintances, would simply take on the connotations of the person to whom it applied.

I am postulating, therefore, two categories of use for proper names: connotative, where the name itself carries connotations as common nouns do, and where it may indeed carry a certain generalizing function, as in phrases like 'the Jeremiahs of this world'; and assigned, where the name carries a unique weight of reference to a single individual. This reference may, and usually does, include the more usual connotations of the first category (for instance, Anguses are practically always

male and quite often Scottish), but there is nothing to stop the assigned usage from completely overturning these connotations, which are in any case basically irrelevant to it. What is relevant is that the assigned proper name implies a human relationship (or, in the case of animals or inanimate objects, a pseudo-human relationship) between its user and its referent. We might say that the difference between common nouns and proper names is one of degree rather than of kind, in that, if the object beside which Alexander is standing turns out to be a hitherto unknown piece of celestial machinery newly arrived from Mars, he and I will assign a name to it, in a way similar to that by which proper names are assigned: but such a name would immediately begin to be generalised, and become applicable to other similar objects by virtue of their connotations. Proper names in their normal usage, however, always remain fairly definitely fixed at the 'assigned' end of the assigned/connotative spectrum.

It is this uniqueness of reference of the assigned proper name which Bonnefoy is referring to when he talks of a name evoking its object's 'existence effective, ici, devant moi' (I^2, p. 245). And this, it appears, is what the words of poetry may do also. One is reminded of the question of the assignation of proper names by Bonnefoy's remark that 'le vrai lieu est donné par le hasard, mais au vrai lieu le hasard perdra son caractère d'énigme' (I^2, p. 128). The ways in which ordinary language as a whole may be transformed, and may participate in a mode of reference analogous to that enjoyed in ordinary discourse only by proper names, are difficult to pin down, the very action of pinning down being against the spirit of Bonnefoy's thought. We may, however, discuss one or two questions which provide pointers towards the better understanding of the issues involved.

VIII Les mots profonds and le principe d'identité

Bonnefoy admits, first of all, that the view of language as a simple labelling process 'permet de décrire correctement la façon dont la langue est disponible pour la plupart des usages': 'Que serait-ce que "le cheval", sinon un concept? Un cheval, oui, devant moi, et "le cheval" comme sa notion, quelle que soit la façon dont cette notion se détermine' (I^2, p. 245). Contrasting this with poetic language, he goes on to present a positive statement of what poetic discourse may involve:

> Voici ce qui, je crois, commence la poésie. Que je dise 'le feu' (oui, je change d'exemple, et cela déjà signifie) et, poétiquement, ce que ce mot évoque pour moi, ce n'est pas seulement le feu dans sa nature de feu - ce que, du feu, peut proposer son concept: c'est la présence du feu, dans l'horizon de ma vie, et non certes comme un objet, analysable et utilisable (et, par conséquent, fini, remplaçable), mais comme un dieu, actif, doué de pouvoirs. (I^2, p. 246)

This calls for one or two comments. Bonnefoy's insistence that the présence of fire should come within 'l'horizon de ma vie' may recall the point I make above about the proper name implying a human, or pseudo-human, relationship between its user and its referent. Further, the first parenthesis in the above quotation is, characteristically, crucial: the notion that there should be some kind of intrinsic difference between a word like 'cheval' and one like 'feu' raises the whole question of 'les mots profonds' (I^2, p. 252). I shall return to this issue presently. First, however, it may be worth considering the terms in which Bonnefoy talks of the poetic evocation of 'feu', for these clarify his attitude to the object as such. It is clear that statements like

'la poésie française . . . commence "en Dieu", quand elle peut, pour finir par l'amour de la chose la plus quelconque' (I^2, p. 267) do not, in fact, imply a unique concern for the object as object, but as a catalyst for <u>présence</u>, in which the distinction between subject and object is abolished, although the full particularity of the object is retained. This makes <u>présence</u> a difficult concept to grasp: but <u>présence</u> is, precisely, not a concept for Bonnefoy.

Bonnefoy's approach to objects in the world seeks to grasp their full particularity - we may recall his reference to 'le seuil unique de l'absolu qui est la chose quelconque, vraiment aimée comme telle' (I^2, p. 251) -, but neither through the conceptual approach which considers the object as 'analysable et utilisable (et, par conséquent, fini, remplaçable)' (I^2, p. 246) nor through any other approach which starts from linguistic investigation of the <u>aspects</u> of the object.

Here we may draw a comparison in passing with the work of Francis Ponge, whose interest in objects leads him to seek to define them by reference to their contexts - whether physical, historical, linguistic or mythological - but specifically not to attempt to evoke through language the mysterious inner kernel of their being, and with it the being of the whole world around them, which is closer to Bonnefoy's project. I make the comparison not in order to call into question the achievement of Ponge (which, in its very different way, is as valid as Bonnefoy's) but to point up the contrast between two poets whose work starts from similar preoccupations. Ponge, in his theoretical writings and in his poems - and the inter-penetration of the two modes of writing is even more noticeable in his case than

in Bonnefoy's, embracing as it does the form of his work as well as its substance - is much concerned with the inadequacy of language, and its inability to express reality. This is shown, for instance, in a striking passage from 'Les écuries d'Augias':

> Hélas, pour comble d'horreur, à l'intérieur de nous-mêmes, le même ordre sordide parle, parce que nous n'avons pas à notre disposition d'autres mots ni d'autres grands mots (ou phrases, c'est-à-dire d'autres idées) que ceux qu'un usage journalier dans ce monde grossier depuis l'éternité prostitue. Tout se passe pour nous comme pour des peintres qui n'auraient à leur disposition pour y tremper leurs pinceaux qu'un même immense pot où depuis la nuit des temps tous auraient eu à délayer leurs couleurs. (1)

This dissatisfaction with the expressive qualities of language is not far removed from Bonnefoy's discovery, in the context of the linguistic equivalent of mauvaise présence, of 'l'angoissante tautologie des langues, dont les mots ne disent qu'eux-mêmes, sans prise vraie sur les choses' (I^2, p. 247). But it is significant that in order to convey his dissatisfaction to the reader Ponge uses a comparison between language and another aspect of the world, rather than seeking a way in which language could achieve the power, whose absence he deplores, to evoke the whole of the world through any one of its particulars. Ponge's approach to the object accepts therefore that language cannot evoke things; instead, he uses language to explore the world through the aspects of the world which he takes language to refer to, and in some degree to create. In contrast to Bonnefoy, he always sees the world, and language, as diffuse and aspectual. In one of the early drafts of 'La Figue' published in Comment une figue de paroles et pourquoi he writes of the creative

(1) Francis Ponge, from Proêmes, in Le Parti pris des choses (Paris, 1967), pp. 155-6.

process, 'nous aboutissons par négation (négativité) au mystère de l'objet, à la preuve de l'existence indescriptible, à la qualité différentielle de l'objet (ici, de chaque fruit)'. (2) Bonnefoy would no doubt applaud the aim of art reaching out for 'le mystère de l'objet', and would insist on the particularity of the experience which constitutes présence, but would not see the attempt to express présence as a descriptive process addressing itself to 'la qualité différentielle de l'objet (ici, de chaque fruit)', because this would result in a view of the object from outside (inevitably involved with the concept of the object) rather than a true evocation of its existence. When Bonnefoy speaks of the aim of art as being 'd'évoquer dans une saveur celle plus profonde de l'unité que l'on cherche. De convoquer ce suprême fruit dans le fruit sensible' (I^2, p. 266) the emphasis must be on 'le fruit sensible', but not on its aspects nor - a point that is made clearer elsewhere - on any kind of abstract Idea lying behind it. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that this is one of the few passages which Bonnefoy has revised in a way which appears to tend more towards an essentialist view than was expressed in its first appearance in Un Rêve fait à Mantoue - 'd'évoquer dans une saveur la saveur de l'unité que l'on cherche. De conjurer le vrai fruit dans le fruit sensible' (RFM, p. 120).

If Bonnefoy then is not interested (as Ponge is) in the details and aspects of objects - or the details and aspects of language which is in 'continuité naturelle' with the world of objects (I^2, p. 249) - we must ask how he sees language in poetry as in some way evoking présence, and how his own poetry may attempt this. When Bonnefoy

(2) Ponge, Comment une figue de paroles et pourquoi (Paris, 1977), p. 16.

talks of 'la présence du feu' (I^2, p. 246) he is claiming, as we have seen, that he is not interested even in the object as such, 'le feu dans sa nature de feu', because that too is a concept, something separate from the observer, whereas présence must bring about the transformation of the observer, and of the whole phenomenal world, through the object.

This is reasonable enough, both from the point of view of Bonnefoy's theory and from that of his poetic practice. As we have seen, he explicitly, and repeatedly, affirms the ineffable nature of the particular, and holds out only the hope of the possible expression of présence, which is, among other things, something like Bonnefoy's interpretation of the Plotinian One. We might contrast Ponge's 'galet' with the whole series of poems in Pierre écrite entitled 'Une Pierre', which encompass, individually and collectively, a vast range of phenomenal reference. For example:

O dite à demi-voix parmi les branches,
O murmurée, ô tue,
Porteuse d'éternel, lune, entrouvre les grilles
Et penche-toi pour nous qui n'avons plus de jour. (P, p. 194)

Without embarking on a complete explication, we may say that this poem is about an experience of présence triggered off by the sight of the moon shining through trees; about the ineffable nature of the experience, with the suggestion that silence is its most valuable quality; and about the possible, though not achieved, involvement of poet and reader, now locked in a state of hopelessness, with the possible non-temporal and non-spatial quality of the experience. The wider context of the poem, however, is of paramount importance. It is called 'Une Pierre', and it takes its place with other poems of the same title in a volume called Pierre écrite, a name in which

is encapsulated the identification of substance and poetic articulacy which Bonnefoy wishes to assert. He enacts this assertion by building up, through all the poems called 'Une Pierre', an image of the whole of phenomenal reality seen both as substance and as articulacy - a series of approaches to présence which together make up an overall poetic exploration of what présence might be. In reading the book as a whole, we may hope to participate in this exploration, which is grounded in the single, particular image of stone: and this, I think, is what Bonnefoy means when he talks of poetry evoking substance 'comme un dieu, actif, doué de pouvoirs'. He does not mean that the word pierre by itself can somehow make the reader feel all the sensuous properties of stone, for language cannot work in quite this way, or at least, not in this way as expressed in such simplistic terms. Still less does he consider that an enumeration of the aspects of any particular stone can evoke it, immediately, for the reader. There is nevertheless something incantatory in Bonnefoy's repeated use of the title 'Une Pierre', for there is nothing in the precise imagery of these poems which could be said to explore stone (as Ponge's 'galet' certainly does). Rather, they depend on the title - which, because it is a title, has affinities with a proper name rather than with a description - to evoke in some sense not simply substance in the abstract but a particular substance.

The above is a very general exposition of what the relationship between poetry and présence may involve. We may now attempt further clarification through an examination of what Bonnefoy means by 'les mots profonds'. In 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité' he writes:

> Une première remarque semblera peut-être évidente: c'est que tous les mots d'une langue ne se prêtent pas au même degré à l'intention poétique.

> Le vent, la pierre, le feu, ou les 'mazagrans' de Rimbaud, les 'wagons' et le 'gaz' de Baudelaire et n'importe quel nom des réalités les plus quotidiennes peuvent s'emplir de lumière: il aura suffi que nous ayons tant soit peu vécu avec ces réalités notre attachement à la terre. (I^2, p. 253)

If we take it that the assigned proper name depends for its force, at least in part, on the relationship it implies between its user and its referent, this emphasis on the involvement of the poet with the reality he seeks to evoke provides support for the theory that Bonnefoy wants words in poetry to have a force similar to that of proper names: for assigned proper names, as we have seen, have an almost infinite number of connotations, and might therefore be said to 's'emplir de lumière'. But a problem is raised by the way in which Bonnefoy makes his point. It is not clear whether a relatively small number of words ('vent', 'pierre', 'feu' ...) are to be considered as possessing intrinsically greater poetic possibilities than the other words of the language - as the change of example from 'cheval' to 'feu' I have mentioned would imply -, or whether, on the other hand, <u>any</u> word ('mazagran', 'wagon', 'gaz', 'chaleil', 'mascaret', 'safre' ... these last three from <u>Pierre écrite</u> and <u>Dans le beurre du seuil</u>) can be invested with this 'lumière' when it is used by a poet of the stature of Baudelaire, Rimbaud or Bonnefoy. It is a pity that in this context Bonnefoy appears to draw a fairly rigid distinction between words denoting essences and words denoting aspects, but fails to develop this distinction.

The problem, however, can probably be resolved if we say that 'les mots profonds' have more connotations than other words, because of their reference to a wide range of human experience, but that the fundamental words in an individual poet's vocabulary have just as

deep referential power within the poet's own experience. Bonnefoy has indicated in conversation (3) that he now considers his emphasis in this part of the essay to have been misplaced: while 'les mots profonds' do have a special status, the poet himself must take the ultimate responsibility for ordering a hierarchy in his own poetic world, and for communicating this hierarchy to the reader. This is true, in the case of the individual poet, for 'les mots profonds' no less than for what we might call 'les mots dénotant l'aspect', for the potential suitability of 'les mots profonds' for poetic usage makes them all the more liable to misuse in over-facile rhetoric:

> s'il y a donc dans les mots que nous employons cette virtualité de présence, ce grand espoir, - il en découlera qu'on parlera sous ce signe, comme enivrés, sans avoir critiqué, comme il se doit, notre pratique des choses. Or, nommer l'arbre trop aisément, c'est risquer de rester captif d'une image pauvre de l'arbre . . . Et voici que la Présence . . . n'est plus qu'un décor, dont le Je aussi est absent, et bientôt une convention et le reformement d'une rhétorique. (I^2, pp. 269-70)

The poet runs just as many risks in using 'les mots profonds' as he does in using 'les mots dénotant l'aspect', though in this latter case the danger is not that of rhetoric, but of the words themselves having connotations which are too narrow in scope to evoke anything more than aspects:

> ces mots /brique, silicate, grimacer, ricaner/ prennent trop clairement par le dehors l'acte humain, ne font que le décrire, n'ont pour signifié qu'un <u>aspect</u>, difficilement perpétuable dans l'intériorisation que la poésie se donne pour tâche d'effectuer . . . si je veux sauver le mot <u>siroter</u>, par exemple, j'aurai à peiner longtemps sous le vent de l'extériorité: tandis que <u>boire</u>, qui exprime un acte essentiel, ne pourra que garder, au plus désabusé d'une vie, sa capacité d'absolu. (I^2, p. 254)

(3) Nice, 14 May 1975

Bonnefoy would now consider, I think, that he places too great an emphasis, in this essay, on the difference between the two kinds of words he talks of (perhaps because of the distinction he goes on to draw between French and English, which I shall deal with presently), and not enough emphasis on the poet's function of validating the vocabulary, whether 'essential' or 'aspectual', that he uses: 'de nombreux mots qui semblent dire l'aspect pourront être repris, rachetés par le souci poétique: on aura découvert qu'ils peuvent nommer quelque chose qui"est", au-delà de cette enveloppe' (I^2, p. 254). Bonnefoy would probably consider it, in fact, the poet's duty to 'racheter' such aspectual words as are especially relevant to his own experience. Indeed, such cases can be found in Bonnefoy's own work, as I have noted above.

At the same time, however, a poet should never seek artificially to extend his vocabulary outside the words which 'peuvent nommer notre présence au monde', merely out of a concern for the picturesque: a poet may quite genuinely write within a very restricted range of validated vocabulary. In my interview with Bonnefoy, he remarked (I think I quote exactly), 'Il y a des poètes qui vivent entre un arbre, le soleil, la mer'. This would apply, for instance, to Racine, and perhaps to a lesser extent to Valéry or Bonnefoy himself. The overall argument, accepted on its own terms, would certainly pre-empt criticism of Bonnefoy's work on the grounds that it hones down experience too far, leaving too few 'essences' to bear too great a weight of poetic intensity.

In his point of view as given in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', however, Bonnefoy does seem to attach too much importance to words denoting essences, even if he admits the possibility of the

redemption of aspectual words. His remarks imply that there is something intrinsically preferable in 'essential' words, as when he says of Rimbaud: 'Rimbaud boira, non sirotera, parce qu'étant poète il demeure dans la gravité du destin' (I^2, p. 254). The remark as it stands is simply untrue in relation to Rimbaud's work (though there may be an ironic reference here to Rimbaud the man): Rimbaud must have one of the largest effective vocabularies of any French poet. Furthermore, the assertion contradicts Bonnefoy's reference on the preceding page to 'les "mazagrans" de Rimbaud', which certainly do not represent an 'essence' of the same type as 'le vent, la pierre, le feu'. Bonnefoy may mean that such aspectual words, in Rimbaud's work, take on the essential quality of words like 'boire', through the force of Rimbaud's poetic genius, but this is not what he says.

Bonnefoy's rather exaggerated emphasis on 'les mots profonds' may, indeed, come from a desire to defend his own poetic practice. More importantly, however, it leads on to his notion of 'le principe d'identité', as it applies in French. He suggests that one can discover, in any given language, a certain ratio of essential words to aspectual words: 'De la proportion relative de la part d'extériorité en somme imposée par une langue [i.e. les mots dénotant l'aspect] et de l'intériorité que, malgré l'emploi déchu habituel, cette dernière consent [i.e. les mots essentiels], on pourra dégager une sorte de coefficient poétique qui a influencé sûrement d'une façon signifiante le devenir de la poésie' (I^2, p. 254). This is an interesting suggestion, but unfortunately Bonnefoy does not follow it up. Instead, he asserts that French words are intrinsically more 'essential' than words of other languages, and particularly than English words, and that there is an immediate link between French words and the essences of the things they name. With this non sequitur he leaves the question of

'les mots profonds' and turns to the no less interesting question of the relative suitability of French and English for poetic discourse. That it is a non sequitur can be proved by the reductio ad absurdum which would suggest, as content of a logical continuation, the question of where, given that 'feu' and 'fire' are presumably essential words, and 'ricaner' and 'snigger' aspectual ones, one is to draw the line. One might well have to admit an area where, for example, 'orage' would be an essential word and 'storm' an aspectual one. Bonnefoy does not discuss this problem. He implies, indeed, that practically all French words are essential, or rather, that the essential words in French must constitute a much greater proportion of the language's intrinsic poetic vocabulary than is the case in English. There seems to be a confusion here between three ideas: that of the existence of entities which one may take to be essential archetypes of human experience, and which will therefore be designated by 'mots profonds' in any language; that of the poet's own intensity of experience validating all the words of his vocabulary; and that of the principe d'identité, the peculiarly essentialist character of French as Bonnefoy sees it. This confusion is regrettable, but this does not mean that the notion of the principe d'identité is any the less interesting and important.

In French, Bonnefoy says:

> /les mots/ connotent pour la plupart, non des aspects empiriquement définis, mais des entités qui ont l'air d'exister en soi, comme supports d'attributs qu'auront à déterminer et différencier les diverses sortes de connaissances. A moins . . . que ces attributs ne soient déjà révélés dans la notion de la chose . . . /Pour le mot chat/ il y a un en-soi bien défini, une autonomie, une permanence, du chat dans un réel de ce fait intelligible, et intelligible sans trop de peine. (I^2, pp. 257-8)

The fact that an autonomous cat sounds rather ridiculous in English

may, indeed, prove Bonnefoy's point. But we must immediately dispel a possible misapprehension about the principe d'identité. It does not, in itself, carry any guarantee of metaphysical validity for language: it is the simple assertion of a direct link between language and reality, which may or may not, according to the uses made of language, take on some degree of metaphysical validity. It is with the variations in this validity that Bonnefoy is concerned: '/le principe d'identité/ a dû varier dans son appréhension des essences, et changer de métaphysique, depuis les débuts du français' (I^2, p. 260).

IX Le principe d'identité in English and French

I will deal with these variations later. For the moment, I wish to consider the difference, from the point of view of the principe d'identité, between the English and French languages. On investigation, I would suggest that the difference, though real, is one of degree rather than of kind. The contrast between English and French has, indeed, often been remarked on. We may quote Saint-John Perse, reporting a conversation with Gide:

> Il voulut alors parler de littérature anglaise . . . Je lui dénonçai, pour ma part, l'opacité d'une langue aussi concrète, la richesse excessive de son vocabulaire et sa complaisance à vouloir réincarner la chose elle-même, comme dans l'écriture idéographique, au lieu que le français, langue plus abstraite, et qui cherchait à signifier bien plus qu'à figurer, n'engageait le signe fiduciaire du mot que comme valeur d'échange monétaire. L'anglais, pour moi, en était encore au troc.(1)

Here the 'opacité' of English is obviously the same as that on which Bonnefoy comments when talking of English words: 'Souvent aussi voisins

(1) Saint-John Perse, Oeuvres complètes (Paris, 1972), p. 479.

par la forme qu'ils le sont déjà par le sens, sans visible dérivation, sans étymologie qu'on pourra juger signifiante, ils se pressent l'un contre l'autre en continuité opaque, comme les cristallisations d'une superbe matière - en fait, comme des éclats d'intelligibilité arrachés d'un réel délibérément abordé d'une manière empirique' (I^2, p.255).

And it seems that the 'principe d'identité' which Bonnefoy sees in French is something like Perse's 'signe fiduciaire du mot' - with the important difference that Bonnefoy would immediately want to delve deeper into the justification for the word's being accepted as 'fiduciaire', and to relate this to its 'indice métaphysique'. But both Bonnefoy and Perse seem to imply a radical division between English and French usage in this respect, whereas it might be more prudent, while recognising the considerable difference in feel and texture between the two languages, to limit oneself to the assertion that English has only a tendency towards greater concreteness of usage.

In a series of images like Norman MacCaig's

> A wildcat, furfire in a bracken bush,
> Twitches his club-tail, rounds his amber eyes
> At rockabye rabbits humped on the world,(2)

we see 'un réel délibérément abordé d'une manière empirique', in that the effectiveness of the first image depends primarily on the fortuitous phonetic coincidence of 'fur' and 'fire', which mirrors the visual juxtaposition of the two notions forming the image's conceptual content: but by throwing the emphasis on outward aspects of reality in this way, because of their similarity on one level of conceptualisation, the poet deliberately excludes, or at least plays down, any wider connotations

(2) Norman MacCaig, 'Mutual Life', in A Round of Applause (London, 1962), p. 42.

of 'fire', and in particular any of its possible mythological or religious connotations,- an echo of Blake's 'Tyger' could, for instance, become important if the poem developed differently - and passes on to another image - 'club-tail' - in which a very similar conceptualising process is at work. The metaphysical content of the poem, and of many other poems in English where the poet takes the sensual aspects of reality as a starting-point, stands on a level quite separate from the operation of the sensuous imagination in the substance of language, which merely provides the building-blocks for that metaphysical content.

But although much poetry written in English operates in this way, it would be unduly restrictive to suggest that this is the only, or even the dominating, mode of English poetic discourse. We may take another kind of poem - by Edwin Muir:

> One foot in Eden still, I stand
> And look across the other land.
> The world's great day is growing late,
> Yet strange these fields that we have planted
> So long with crops of love and hate.
> Time's handiworks by time are haunted,
> And nothing now can separate
> The corn and tares compactly grown.(3)

Here, there is little or no concern with the aspects of the immediate, sensuously observed particular. Instead of being tied to the physical existence of their referents - or, indeed, to their own physical existence, as in the case of 'furfire' - the words seem to open out, and make their poetic effect by other means: 'corn and tares' takes its value from a precise biblical reference,(4) while 'the other land'

(3) Edwin Muir, 'One Foot in Eden', in Collected Poems (London, 1963), p. 227.
(4) cf Matthew, ch.13, vv. 24-30.

'the world's great day' and 'time's handiworks' refer to wider and vaguer notions. The language, freed from the necessity of enacting the sensuous particular, can suggest broader horizons, which need not necessarily be analysable in conceptual terms. In fact, Muir seems here to be using words as 'signes fiduciaires' - though again, all depends on the validity of the fiduciary guarantee, on the extent to which, in the wider context of the poem, the whole of the poet's work, and the social and religious perspective in which he is writing, the words succeed in evoking a spiritual reality, which alone can justify their use in this way.

In any case - to return to my immediate point - these two poems demonstrate the variety of poetic uses to which English can be put. They do not, of course, represent an irreconcilable binary opposition: I would rather suggest that the extent to which something like the principe d'identité may be said to operate in English depends very much on the individual poet, although English tends towards greater concreteness of usage, as French tends towards greater abstraction. France has few poets as solidly anchored in the concrete as Ted Hughes, while Britain cannot claim any poet of essences as pure as Racine (though no comparative value-judgement is implied by these examples). The type of language-use exemplified by MacCaig's image is rarer in French than it is in English, but we can find something very similar in Ponge's juxtaposition 'le gui la glu',(5) and various types of onomatopoeia (of which this example is at least partly an instance) are fairly frequent in French - for example, Verlaine's 'Les sanglots longs / Des violons / De l'automne', (6) Baudelaire's 'un coffret venu

(5) Ponge, 'Le Gui', in Pièces (Paris, 1971), p. 59.
(6) Paul Verlaine, 'Chanson d'automne', in Oeuvres poétiques, ed. Robichez (Paris, 1969), p.39.

de l'Orient / Dont la serrure grince et rechigne en criant',(7) or Valéry's 'Les cris aigus des filles chatouillées'.(8)

All this does not invalidate Bonnefoy's notion of the principe d'identité: it merely suggests that it may not be exclusively the property of French, as he implies when he contrasts French and English usage, and that conversely the poetic uses of French are not to be exclusively explained by reference to it. When he says, in talking of Hamlet, 'Je conclurai en disant que le mot anglais est ouverture (ou surface) et le mot français fermeture (ou profondeur)' (H, p. 239), we may agree that the distinction is valid, but over-crude as here formulated. Indeed, depending on how we want to arrange our spatial metaphors, we might interchange 'ouverture' and 'fermeture' in this context.

In spite of the criticisms one can make of the notion of le principe d'identité (which concern mainly the way in which it is presented in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité'), Bonnefoy's account of the variations in its metaphysical validity will repay careful study. This might best be combined, however, with consideration of Bonnefoy's overall views on his great predecessors. Before passing on to this, and thereafter attempting to draw general conclusions on the whole range of Bonnefoy's poetic theory, we may further consider one or two more theoretical aspects of the possibility of poetry naming the ephemeral object.

(X) The poetic symbol: religious and metaphysical validation

Let us consider first the possibility of a specifically religious

(7) Baudelaire, 'Le Flacon', in Les Fleurs du mal, ed. Adam (Paris, 1961), p. 52.

(8) Paul Valéry, 'Le Cimetière marin', in Oeuvres, ed. Hytier (Paris, 1957), vol.1, p. 150.

guarantee for the poetic word, by which I mean the possibility that language, under the protection of a settled and generally-accepted religious faith, should participate in, and articulate the existence of, a world in some sense delivered by that faith from the hazards of change and death. This, Bonnefoy admits, may have been possible in the past. At the beginning of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' he talks of the apparent power of the word to incarnate, even to replace, its object, so that language becomes a true defence against death: 'Le mot est l'âme de ce qu'il nomme, nous semble-t-il, son âme toujours intacte. Et s'il dissipe dans son objet le temps, l'espace, ces catégories de notre dépossession, s'il l'allège de sa matière, c'est sans porter atteinte à son essence précieuse et pour le rendre à notre désir' (I^2, p. 105). The danger here is, of course, that of a flight from reality; and Bonnefoy cannot accept any identification on these terms of language with the essence of reality. Such an identification is an illusion, as we see from the parenthesis 'nous semble-t-il', but Bonnefoy admits its possible validity in an age of unquestioned religious faith:

> Dans le château de la poésie de l'essence, quand l'infirmité s'y avoue, c'est de façon si archétypale, si pure qu'elle n'est plus un désir qui accepte de se perdre, mais l'âme qui se dégage de ses entraves terrestres et veut ainsi se sauver.
>
> Cette poésie oublie la mort. Aussi dit-on volontiers que la poésie est divine.
>
> Et certes quand il y a des dieux et que l'homme croit à ses dieux, ce mouvement de l'esprit ne va pas sans quelque bonheur. Ce que nous aimions et qui meurt a sa place dans le sacré . . . Il est aisé d'être poète parmi les dieux. Mais nous autres venons après les dieux. Nous n'avons plus le recours d'un ciel pour garantir la transmutation poétique, et il faut bien que nous demandions quel est le sérieux de celle-ci.(I^2, pp. 106-7)

In Bonnefoy's view, any kind of stable, undifferentiated spiritual guarantee is an escape from the world, from death and from reality - at least in an age when, whatever individual religious positions may be tenable, no single faith is accepted by the whole audience for whom the poet is writing.

I will return later to the ways in which Bonnefoy considers that such a guarantee may have been valid in other ages. Christianity in particular, however, holds out the promise of something more relevant, in Bonnefoy's view, than the notion of a world whose essences alone have spiritual validity: the guarantee, through the transubstantiation of the bread and the wine at the culminating point of the Mass, of a precise moment of contact between human existence and the divine - a guarantee, in fact, of the Here and Now, as Bonnefoy uses these terms. This is somewhat different from, and more comprehensible for modern man than, the notion of a simple spiritual realm beyond and outside the world of chance and death. One of the most important connotations of the word 'présence' is, of course, the Real Presence of Christ at the culminating moment of the Mass. But this belief, too, must be generally accepted if it is to be in any simple way available for artistic reference. Bonnefoy singles out the age of the Baroque as the first in which such a general belief could not be taken for granted, and in which artistic endeavour therefore addressed itself first and foremost to the things of this world without being able to assume a link between them and the divine:

> Le baroque est un réalisme passionnel. Le désir emporté, déraisonnable, aveuglé, que l'existence terrestre accède aux droits du divin, et ce n'est pas un hasard, sûrement, si cet art a grandi quand on a commencé à douter de la présence réelle, quand on n'a plus compris ce pain et ce vin qui

> sacralisaient toutes choses, et d'abord le lieu où nous sommes et notre instant. (I^2, p. 185)

There is a distinction here between 'toutes choses' and 'le lieu où nous sommes et notre instant'. While I do not wish to venture into theological speculation, I would suggest that Christianity would in fact see the two as being indistinguishable, the transubstantiation of the bread and wine at a particular moment and place carrying an automatically valid guarantee of the sacred nature of the whole of phenomenal reality at all times. Bonnefoy's notion of a spiritually validated Here and Now would, on the other hand, be primary, taking upon itself the symbolic validation of the rest of reality - which validation is thus necessarily precarious and uncertain. The dangers and difficulties of such a procedure are obvious, and consideration of them is relevant to many different spheres of modern art. It is in his essay on Kafka, for instance, that Erich Heller remarks:

> The predicament of the symbol in our age is caused by a split between 'reality' and what it signifies. There is no more any commonly accepted symbolic or transcendent order of things. What the modern mind perceives as order is established through the tidy relationship between things themselves. In one word: the only conceivable order is positivist-scientific. If there still is a - no doubt, diminishing - demand for the fuller reality of the symbol, then it must be provided for by the unsolicited gifts of art. But in the sphere of art the symbolic substance, dismissed from its disciplined commitments to 'reality', dissolves into incoherence, ready to attach itself to any fragment of experience, invading it with irresistible power, so that a pair of boots, or a chair in the painter's attic, or a single tree on a slope which the poet passes, or an obscure inscription in a Venetian church, may suddenly become the precariously unstable centre of an otherwise unfocused universe. Since 'the great words, from the time when what <u>really</u> happened was still visible, are no

> longer for us' (as Rilke once put it in a Requiem for a young poet), the 'little words' have to carry an excessive freight of symbolic significance. No wonder that they are slow in delivering it.(1)

The similarities here to the notion of l'éphémère are striking. Bonnefoy, however, is always careful to affirm contact with substance itself, rather than the representation of this contact in art, as the only even remotely possible absolute. Poetic creation cannot in itself provide a substitute for reality, as seems to be implied for instance, by Rilke's

> Are we, perhaps, here just for saying: House,
> Bridge, Fountain, Gate, Jug, Fruit tree, Window, -
> possibly: Pillar, Tower? . . . but for saying, remember,
> oh, for such saying as never the things themselves
> hoped so intensely to be.(2)

This point - that poetry must be a means, not an end - is central to Bonnefoy's theory. Before considering this, however, we may look again at his ambiguous attitude to the Christian revelation, as expressed in a passage of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' where, in a slightly different context to that quoted above, he accepts its validation of the Here and Now, but sees even this guarantee, in the long term, as being banished to a realm of distant, shadowy idealism:

> La difficulté de la poésie moderne, c'est qu'elle a à se définir, dans un même instant, par le christianisme et contre lui. Car l'invention baudelairienne . . . de tel être ou de telle chose est bien chrétienne pour autant que Jésus a souffert sous Ponce Pilate, donnant une dignité à un lieu et à une heure, une réalité à chaque être. Mais le christianisme n'affirme qu'un court instant l'existence singulière. Chose créée, il la reconduit à Dieu dans les voies de la Providence et voici ce qui est privé une fois encore de sa valeur absolue. (I^2, pp. 119-20)

(1) Erich Heller, The Disinherited Mind (London, 1961), p. 184.

(2) R. M. Rilke, Duino Elegies, trans. Leishman and Spender (London, 1948), p. 85.

This is not to imply, of course, that poetic creation can be any more successful than Christianity in grasping and expressing as an absolute, outside time, 'ce qui est'. The mention of Baudelaire here is important, however, for Bonnefoy sees Baudelaire as having achieved a 'vrai discours' by which he can name the ephemeral object through himself partaking fully of the experience of death, the essential corollary of substance. But if Baudelaire succeeded in such a project, at the cost of almost super-human poetic effort, many other poets writing 'après les dieux' have failed. Indeed, the lack of any religious guarantee for the existence of reality could provide an excuse for deserting reality altogether: 'Et s'il est vrai qu'aucun dieu ne sanctifie plus la chose créée, qu'elle est pure matière, pur hasard, pourquoi, bien sûr, ne pas chercher à la fuir?' (I^2, pp. 117-8).

Between these last two quotations, we may see the dilemma in which Bonnefoy sees the modern poet as standing: any religious guarantee of phenomenal reality must turn to empty idealism, but any denial of a religious guarantee for reality leads to a no less empty affirmation of absurdity. There is every chance that reality will evade the poet's vigilance. The possibilities for flight are endless. We will consider some of them in dealing with Bonnefoy's criticism of other poets. But all such possibilities must be avoided. No matter at what cost, the attempt must be made to affirm substance and not some shadow of substance or escape from it:

> Ainsi la poésie revient-elle aujourd'hui à un réalisme profond. . . . Quand il n'y a plus de désirs, d'errements ou de passions, même le vent et le feu ne sont plus réels, la demeure d'absence est grandie aux proportions de ce monde. Et c'est la conséquence dernière de la Providence brisée, mais aussi la contradiction dangereuse de l'athéisme, s'il est vrai qu'on n'aurait abattu la

> machinerie divine que pour ne plus vouloir que dans l'événement ou les choses batte le sang subjectif. (I^2, p. 119)

The tightrope between a debased orthodoxy on the one hand, with its manifold possibilities for empty rhetoric, and on the other hand a simple atheistic positivism which denies reality any spiritual dimension at all - far less any specifically religious dimension -, is a difficult one to tread. The achievement of a 'réalisme profond' must come about through striving towards a kind of unattainable and, in rational terms, nonsensical identity of metaphor in which, blindly and with no true religious guarantee, words will somehow enact the existence to things they name. This hope applies to art in general, to painting no less than to poetry: 'Le romantisme tragique de la séparation d'avec la nature ou la société, l'angélisme de la poésie fin de siècle, le souci obsédant de l'écriture ont fait ou font ou feront la preuve de leur faiblesse: on représentait au lieu d'être, alors qu'il faut, disons, être la pierre par le mot pierre, le gris instaurateur par la couleur grise' (I^2, p. 291).

I must repeat that there is no simple relation of literal equivalence, in Bonnefoy's theory, between word and object, but rather a transformation of both, so that both participate in the ineffable experience of <u>présence</u>. Earlier in the short but dense essay on Gaston-Louis Roux, from which I have just quoted, Bonnefoy talks of <u>présence</u> in painting:

> Voici que deux données de la perception, en elles-mêmes insignifiantes, font à deux comme un bruissement, comme un ange; cependant que la chose qui a prêté ses aspects, offert ce jaune et ce rouge, est effacée comme objet mais se reforme en tant qu'âme, connue de l'intérieur désormais par ce projet d'harmonie qui était en elle, et n'y était que pour nous. Et c'est ainsi

> que notre horizon autant que la qualité se resserre, pour des rencontres plus décisives, où le hasard, ce 'creux néant' déjà tout sonore, pourra se faire musique. En vérité, la nuance exacte est comme le symbole ou la métaphore: non une énonciation, mais un seuil. (I^2, pp. 289-90)

We are here reminded that présence is an experience of participation in which the distinction between subject and object is abolished, and that présence is ineffable; in ordinary discursive language it can be expressed only as 'comme un bruissement, comme un ange'. As far as it can be described, it can only be thought of as carrying the suggestion of an absolute of 'rencontres plus décisives', and this is true also of language in poetry seen in theoretical terms, 'le symbole ou la métaphore'. Articulacy, we see again, must stop at the 'seuil'. The importance of the abolition of the object as separated object, and of the resurrection of its interior spiritual reality, is reiterated in the statement made anonymously in the publicity leaflet for L'Ephémère to which I have already referred: 'L'éphémère est ce qui demeure, dès lors que sa figure visible est sans cesse réeffacée.'(3) In 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', too, Bonnefoy describes présence in terms of this liberation of the invisible from the prison-house of outward, objective reality. In the experience of unity, he says, love is 'prescience de l'invisible': 'Cet invisible, ce n'est pas un nouvel aspect qui va se révéler sous d'autres insuffisants; c'est plutôt que tous les aspects, coagulations du visible, se sont dissous en tant que figures particulières, sont tombés comme les écailles d'une mue dans la connaissance, ont découvert le corps de l'indissociable' (I^2, p. 248). Language, too, participates in this liberation: 'L'invisible, il faut le dire à nouveau de ce point

(3) distributed with L'Ephémère 1 (1966)

de vue de la parole, ce n'est pas la disparition, mais la délivrance du visible' (I^2, p. 250).

Here again, one cannot avoid being reminded of Rilke; a case could be made (which would take too long to develop here, and would not be immediately relevant to this study) that there are striking similarities between the poetic and theoretical concerns of the two writers, although the conclusions which one might reach about their poetic theories would show a number of important differences. Although Bonnefoy never explicitly mentions Rilke's work, what he has to say about 'l'invisible' and its relationship to reality bears a strong resemblance to the well-known image in a letter from Rilke to his Polish translator:

> Therefore, not only must all that is here not be vilified or degraded, but, just because of that very provisionality they share with us, all these appearances and things /of Nature/ should be, in the most fervent sense, comprehended by us and transformed. Transformed? Yes, for our task is to stamp this provisional, perishing earth into ourselves so deeply, so painfully and passionately, that its being may rise again, 'invisibly', in us. We are the bees of the Invisible. Nous butinons éperdument le miel du visible, pour l'accumuler dans la grande ruche d'or de l'Invisible.(4)

This yearning is expressed again, in poetic terms, in the ninth Duino Elegy:

> Earth, is it not just this that you want: to arise
> invisibly in us? Is not your dream
> to be one day invisible? Earth! invisible!
> What is your urgent command, if not transformation?(5)

It may be thought that the very intensity of Rilke's attachment to reality as poetically transformed defeats its own purpose. There

(4) R. M. Rilke, letter to Witold von Hulewicz, 13 November 1925; quoted in Duino Elegies, trans. Leishman and Spender (London, 1948), p. 157.
(5) ibid, p. 87

certainly seems to be little in Rilke of Bonnefoy's necessarily incidental, and yet central, concern with 'l'éphémère'. For Rilke, as we have seen, poetic creation must be an absolute, transcending and transforming the things of the world. It must represent 'such saying as never the things themselves / hoped so intensely to be'.(6) In Bonnefoy, however - and particularly in Dans le leurre du seuil - we find a kind of naming of objects which comes close to achieving his ambition to evoke their présence without explicitly raising either the objects themselves, or the act of naming them itself, to the status of an absolute, as in the series of affirmations at the beginning of 'L'Epars, l'indivisible':

> Par les flammes, partout,
> Et les voix, chaque soir,
> Du mariage du ciel et de la terre
>
> (Tard, quand l'éponge pousse sur la table
> Qui brille un peu
> Les débris du pain et du vin.) (P, p. 315)

Here, the danger of overblown rhetoric inherent in the mention of 'le mariage du ciel et de la terre' is avoided, and the phrase itself magnificently justified, by the addition (significantly, in parentheses) of an image which encapsulates almost casually the most incidental of everyday realities and the most mysterious and universal of religious symbols. What Bonnefoy is attempting is an integration of everyday reality with the spiritual reality from which it has been separated by the modern analytic consciousness. Only through such an integration, for Bonnefoy, can art hope to evoke the plenitude of existence which is available through human perception of the world but from which language must ordinarily distance itself; and while at some stages in the search

(6) ibid, p. 85; see above, p. 83.

for the expression of reality the poet must talk of a Rilkean transformation of the visible and contingent into the invisible and eternal, Bonnefoy always comes round in the end to seeing the visible and contingent (though not necessarily thought of in these terms) as primary, and as the true site for présence, from which présence spreads to embrace the existence of the whole world.

XI Language as communication: vérité de parole

There is always the danger, therefore, in the discussion in discursive terms of questions such as that of the nature of présence, that we formulate ideas at too remote a level of conceptual abstraction. Présence, and in particular the participation of art in présence, cannot be talked about simply in terms of the intricacies of dialectical definition - concerns which may have become over-insistent preoccupations of Bonnefoy's theory up to the mid-sixties. In his more recent criticism, he has laid greater emphasis on the involvement of human experience in présence, and this has led to an affirmation of the importance of 'parole' as a relatively simple communicative medium. This notion may shed greater light on the idea of language naming its object. The principal characteristic of the experience of présence is communication - between subject and object, and between artist and audience, if présence is specifically linked with artistic creation (though every experience of présence involves, in a sense, the creativity of its subject).

In his essay on Jouve, Bonnefoy points out how communication, in quite a simple sense, can represent a validation of language:

> Le plus simple dialogue entre deux personnes s'il est vrai, c'est-à-dire anxieux de compréhension réciproque, eh bien, ce rien est un fondement dans la solitude du monde, et à ce

> titre il vaut bien plus que ce que les mots de la poésie retiennent, même si c'est pour y préparer. . . La parole, c'est l'avenir, c'est donc plus que chacun de nous même si, étant l'être, elle est dès à présent tout entière dans qui parvient à s'y maintenir. Et auprès d'elle, bien sûr, toute stabilité de belle écriture n'est que nuée. (NR, p. 238)

The insistence here is on language in a dynamic situation, whether that situation be the striving for the expression of <u>présence</u> through poetic utterance, or the search for comprehension in ordinary human contexts: in comparison with this, the 'stabilité de belle écriture', the poem seen simply as an object, or writing seen simply as the artistic fashioning of such an object, is of little consequence. Bonnefoy's use of 'parole' in the above quotation might seem perilously close to the acceptance of a possible conventional religious guarantee, were it not that the context of the quotation is his careful definition of his position, as an atheist, in relation to the Christian poetry of Jouve. It is nevertheless true that Bonnefoy is willing to use the notion of the Word incarnate for his own purposes, and in this case for the assertion of 'parole' as the ultimate sign of human liberty: 'c'est vrai que la liberté humaine - la parole - tient du miracle' (NR, p. 242).

This leads on to a distinction between 'langue' and 'parole' which is not Saussure's distinction, but rather a distinction similar to that between 'système' and 'idée', assuming that we take 'idée' in its spiritually validated sense. 'Parole' may be said to be dependent on the 'hasard' which 'au vrai lieu . . . perdra son caractère d'énigme' (I^2, p. 128):

> le fait de la langue . . . offre à chacun de nous la capacité de prendre recul, et de se rebâtir en image, de se cacher,

> autant que de commencer le dialogue: . . . Ce pouvoir de nommer . . . extériorise autant qu'il désigne, et donne donc à opter . . . entre les acquisitions du concept, solidaire des constructions de la forme dans l'immobilité, la non-chaleur (mais aussi la beauté, la cohésion) de la langue, - et l'ouvert, au delà, de la parole. Car autant la langue est la faute, autant la parole est la délivrance . . . Si la distinction faite par Saussure . . . a eu le retentissement que l'on sait, c'est parce qu'elle rappelle et dissimule à la fois la bifurcation apparue avec le premier parler, et reformée dans chaque situation, devant chaque objet, par notre incessant libre-arbitre. Cette liberté inquiète . . . Beaucoup veulent se délivrer de la responsabilité qu'elle implique, niveler langue et parole, - et voici justement avec cette opposition toute conceptuelle chez Saussure la grande occasion de traiter la parole comme un objet, de l'innerver d'une langue, d'en nier l'antériorité par rapport à toute langue. (NR, pp. 251-2)

I have quoted this at some length, because it seems to confirm what is implicit in earlier essays: that the 'réalisme profond' which Bonnefoy is seeking must come from the participation of language - parole rather than langue, if that distinction is to be maintained - in a special form of experience, in which reality is fully apprehended in the context of the observer's articulate involvement in it. Language, in this experience, may take on the mode of being of the proper name, through man's relationship with the objects to which it refers, no longer, however, seen as objects: 'il aura suffi que nous ayons tant soit peu vécu avec ces réalités notre attachement à la terre' (I^2, p. 253).

Within this realism, however, questions still remain to be asked about the specific place, and the pretentions, of poetry. For poetry itself cannot replace religious certainty, even if it must become the central concern of the unbelieving poet who is still torn by religious yearning: 'Que [la poésie], en effet, représente pour nous, qui sommes "sans

religion", quelque chose comme l'ultime ressource, ne signifie nullement qu'elle soit . . . notre suprême valeur' (NR, p. 238). And if language can be justified by its function as an agent for human communication, it does not necessarily follow that poetry will participate in this justification, particularly if poetry restricts itself to the 'stabilité de belle écriture', to its status as a separated object. Let us return to Bonnefoy's more specifically philosophical quest of the late fifties. After evoking, in the seventh section of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', the Grail legends to suggest that contact with <u>présence</u> would depend on the sudden formulation of the correct question, like that which would have cured the Maimed King, and comparing this, in linguistic terms, with the true naming of 'les objets les plus vifs de cette terre' (I^2, p. 123), Bonnefoy goes on to deny that language can have contact with such a transcendent, extra-temporal and extra-spatial reality, and to call into question the validity of poetry itself: 'La parole est déjà l'oubli, il se peut bien qu'elle ait été notre chute, la voici en tout cas privée de la rencontre de l'être, ne faut-il pas condamner, une fois de plus, la prétention de la poésie?' (I^2, p. 124).

The answer must be that poetry should abandon any pretention to be an end in itself: we must forget 'les prestiges de l'oeuvre élaborée, prise comme fin - l'éternel mallarméisme' (NR, p. 235) and, if I may be forgiven for once again mixing quotations from essays thirteen years apart, which nevertheless seem to have some preoccupations in common, we must 'prendre /la poésie/ seulement pour le moyen d'une approche, ce qui, dans nos perspectives tronquées, n'est vraiment pas loin d'être l'essentiel' (I^2, p. 124).

Bonnefoy goes on to develop, in the last two sections of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', the notion that poetry is a discourse which accompanies

présence, and forms part of it: and just as présence represents a continual hesitation, or even struggle, between the essentialist and the existentialist insights, the function of poetically validated language is to make this struggle articulate: 'Je voudrais que la poésie soit d'abord une incessante bataille, un théâtre où l'être et l'essence, la forme et le non-formel se combattront durement' (I^2, p. 124). This is, in fact, the context in which he sees the whole of post-Renaissance art in action, a dynamic process in which any formulated entity is called into question by its polar opposite: 'Du combat du médiat et de l'immédiat, du langage et de l'être, de la civilisation et de l'existence, le grand espace changeant inventé à l'orée des temps modernes est à la fois le théâtre et la métaphore' (I^2, p. 40). This kind of dynamic poetic discourse is not, of course, identical with ordinary language. It must evoke the inner existence of the spiritual world of which it is a part, along with human consciousness and the generally-accepted world of phenomenal reality, all of which together make up an approach to unity:

> les mots peuvent être avant tout notre acte. Leur pouvoir-être, leur avenir infini d'associations prétendues verbales, dites gratuites, nous retrouverons qu'il n'est que la métaphore de notre rapport infini avec la moindre chose réelle, de la nature subjective de toute chose profonde - et, dans un moment d'irréalité, de libre décision quant à la chose physique, nous pourrons arracher ce qui est au sommeil de ses formes stables, qui est le triomphe du néant. (I^2, pp. 124-5)

This kind of articulacy which Bonnefoy is talking of here depends on a validity of experience which is itself very precarious: if Bonnefoy evokes the possibility of poetic discourse in confident and positive terms, he never forgets that the metaphysical foundations for this

discourse, 'l'hypothèse du sens', are the denial of all fixed certainties, and the assertion of a kind of absolute subjectivity, the 'intelligible subjectif' of which he talks later in the essay (I^2, p. 129). The poet cannot take any validity of language for granted: the myths, or mythic constructs, which will form his language must be ceaselessly re-created out of their own impossibility, and represent simply a form of unjustified, but nevertheless necessarily asserted, hope: 'Et cette poésie qui ne peut saisir la présence, dessaisie de tout autre bien sera du grand acte clos la proximité angoissée, la théologie négative . . . /les mots/ apparaissent aux confins de la négativité du langage comme des anges parlant d'un dieu encore inconnu' (I^2, pp. 125-6).

This modest claim for a dynamic 'vérité de parole', however, cannot stand as definitive: for poetry is not in quite such an extreme situation as this would suggest. The hope that poetry represents must, in the end, outweigh the legions of conceptual certainty ranged against it, because of its importance for the existence of reality itself. Articulacy is essential to an experience of unity - as essential as its timeless moment, the Now, or its spaceless location, the Here or the 'vrai lieu' - because in this moment which, through the process of annihilation on which it is founded, contains nothing, words are the only possible and valid force capable of calling up the 'choses perdues': '/l'amant des choses perdues/ peut rencontrer les mots. Eux aussi sont ce qui demeure de ce qui a disparu. Tenons-les pour une trace du bien et non plus de la quiddité' (I^2, p. 127). But if this sounds suspiciously like the identification of word and object under a simple religious guarantee already rejected at the beginning of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', there is an important difference. The hope which Bonnefoy talked of for poetry at that point has indeed only been affirmed 'par quelque

détour' (I^2, p. 105). For not only has the justification for poetry been seen to be based on an absence of metaphysical foundation, defined in very metaphysical terms, but also the value of poetry is seen to depend on its function as a human activity, and as a guarantee for a specifically human quality of life: 'comprenons que /les mots/ sont, comme le passé, notre épreuve, puisque eu égard à la répétition qui va être ils nous demandent d'agir au lieu simplement de rêver' (I^2, p. 127). This demand for action leads to the invocation of all human endeavours, of 'le voyage, l'amour, l'architecture', as 'des cérémonies pour accueillir la présence', and to a call to treat them as such, 'à les ranimer jusque sur le seuil même de ce pays plus profond' (I^2, p. 127) - for the principle always remains that <u>présence</u> and its site, the 'vrai lieu', are not logically attainable, however necessary the logical effort to attain them may be. They can only be granted by 'le hasard /qui, au vrai lieu,/ perdra son caractère d'énigme' (I^2, p. 128).

We may now be in a position to understand Bonnefoy's notion of poetry as realism - but as some approximation to a '<u>réalisme initiatique</u>' (I^2, p. 130) which does not simply pay homage to the world of appearances, but to the inner world, the '<u>intelligible subjectif</u>' (I^2, p. 129). Poetry, instead of acquiescing in the exile of man from reality, or setting itself up as an absolute against reality, must become an agent, no matter how unreliable, for true contact with reality: 'Ainsi de notre engagement dans l'obscur possible terrestre, de notre rapport avec ce qui est, la parole est-elle l'intelligence' (I^2, p. 129). It remains true, of course, that this is never totally achieved: or rather, that one cannot objectively claim that it is achieved, because it is, and must be, the expression of an ineffable enigma:

> Et si opacité et transparence s'unissent, si un poète sait écrire Le pâle hortensia s'unit au myrte vert, ne doutons pas qu'il soit le plus près qu'il se peut des portes qui se dérobent. De celui-là aussi on dira le plus que son oeuvre est 'hermétique'. Car son seul objet ou seule étoile est au-delà de toute signification dicible, bien que sa recherche requière toute la richesse des mots.
>
> La poésie se poursuit dans l'espace de la parole, mais chaque pas en est vérifiable dans le monde réaffirmé. (I^2, pp. 129-30)

This last assertion must appear questionable, since the world, it might be said, can only be reaffirmed through the power of the poetic word; and therefore the statement is a tautology. We must realise, however, that présence, in Bonnefoy's theory, is an experience of unity much more powerful than the sum of whatever elements conceptual analysis may discern in it: it is beyond expression in poetry, but, through poetry's acceptance of this impossibility, poetry may go some way towards approaching présence. As in the passage I have already quoted from Bonnefoy's essay on Jouve, poetry is the only possible articulate approach, an 'ultime ressource', though not a 'suprême valeur': 'La poésie moderne est loin de sa demeure possible . . . Mais la chance de la poésie à venir, en tant au moins que bonheur (et je puis bien, maintenant, consentir à ce bonheur), est qu'elle est au point de connaître, dans son durable exil, ce que signifie le mot avoir (I, p. 185). Though the exile may be perpetual, there is still some hope that poetry may participate in the experience of total possession and communication which is présence (and Bonnefoy changed the last phrase quoted above, in the 1970 and 1980 editions of the essay, to ' . . . ce que peut ouvrir la présence' (NRF, p. 214, I^2, p. 131)). Finally, Bonnefoy insists on the 'given' nature of the

successful poetic breakthrough, its independence from all attempts at rationalisation: 'Etait-ce donc si difficile? Ne suffisait-il pas d'apercevoir, au flanc de quelque montagne, une vitre au soleil du soir?' (I^2, p. 131).

This final formulation is left as a question which would seem to imply the answer that it would indeed be enough simply to glimpse l'éphémère, apart from any attempt at philosophical definition. This is the case, from a certain point of view: for the poet must, in a sense, simply name the object of his poetic intention. At the same time, it is clear that Bonnefoy does not consider that his effort in formulating the ideas of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' has gone for nothing. The fact that the question has to be put at all, and the possibility of two different answers at least left open, shows once again that Bonnefoy is caught between two extremes: the mystical notion of the poet as seer, and the idea that the conditions in which poetry is possible - or impossible - can, in fact be coherently formulated. Polar oppositions of this type are an important feature of Bonnefoy's thought, and not only on this level: another can be seen in his endless oscillation between a basically essentialist and a basically existentialist point of view, and in his equivocal use of certain terms, such as 'réel', 'idée' or 'essence', which in some contexts take on a metaphysical validity lacking in other contexts. At the same time, Bonnefoy always strives towards a resolution of such oppositions, and the presentation of a unified artistic insight. Thus the 'espoir' which he holds out for poetry in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' must emerge as something relatively simple only after a prolonged and anguished working-out of its metaphysical implications: and the validity of his assertion of 'espoir', no matter how simple

he wants the assertion to be, depends entirely on the previous thorough investigation of the possible nature of that hope, though once the hope is achieved, however fleetingly, the intellectual scaffolding which allowed its achievement becomes, in an important sense, irrelevant. Here, indeed, we see the difference between Bonnefoy's thought and Hegel's insistence on the 'actualisation' of an idea (see above, p.26).

In his more recent criticism, Bonnefoy has largely abandoned the more abstract superstructure of thought which characterised his writing in the fifties and early sixties. My treatment of his thought is therefore incomplete, but the essays I am principally considering are valuable and coherent enough in their own right to be dealt with separately. Bonnefoy's discussion of existence and essence in their relationship to language, for instance, takes on a much less overtly philosophical and much more humanistic colouring in his note to L'Arrière-pays:

> Je cherche à définir la réfraction ontologique: par quoi l'unité, cette lumière, ayant à nous atteindre à travers des mots aujourd'hui extériorisés, dévie dans leur épaisseur au point que son origine apparaît ailleurs qu'en l'existence, sa substance autre que celle des actes quotidiens, sa forme trouble, irrégulière, mouvante - ce brisement, toutefois, étant notre imaginaire, ce glissement sur des crêtes au moins l'incitation au désir. (AP, back cover)

Here, Bonnefoy seems to be leaving behind his exploration in philosophical terms of the dilemma of unity and its possible poetic expression. He instead integrates this expression into a theory of human imagination, which allows him to move with greater freedom between abstract and concrete concerns, and to make his writing - certainly in L'Arrière-pays - an evocation of présence rather than an endless - and by definition, vain - search for the philosophical conditions of its manifestation.

Detailed analysis of these more recent developments in Bonnefoy's thought, which can now justly be termed 'pensée poétique' rather than 'pensée abstraite', would take me beyond the scope of this study: but the earlier period of self-questioning can be seen as an essential preliminary to the later achievement of synthesis.

C. FRENCH POETS AND OTHERS

XII The medieval period: La Chanson de Roland

We may now go on to consider Bonnefoy's ideas on the principe d'identité, with its varying degrees of metaphysical validity, through the history of French poetry, and his judgements on the relationships which the great French poets have succeeded, in the context of their own historical periods, in establishing with the elusive kernel of reality, be it essence or éphémère.

Bonnefoy's scattered remarks on the poetry of the medieval period suggest, as we might expect, that the widely-accepted and stable religious order of that age gives a full metaphysical guarantee of the principe d'identité, leading to an extremely close contact between language and reality. This is the period of 'les dieux', when the word can in fact stand in place of the reality it names: 'Ainsi Dante qui l'a perdue va-t-il nommer Béatrice' (I^2, p. 105). The religious symbol had its full enacting power: the bread of the Mass, for instance, was the body of Christ, but also, and fully, itself, 'une réalité bien identifiée et stable, et non quelque apparition obscure et changeante, indéfiniment susceptible de prendre forme nouvelle. Il reste que ce pain, s'il a ainsi son image claire et distincte, est donc vécu en Dieu et sous le signe de l'Un' (I^2, p. 260). Bonnefoy may thus be seen to be postulating, for the Middle Ages, a kind of identity of metaphor which can, indeed, be quite clearly seen, at least in certain poems of that period. When Dante writes at the beginning of the Inferno,

> Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
> Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,(1)

(1) Dante Alighieri, Inferno I, 1-2, in Le Opere di Dante Alighieri, ed. Moore & Toynbee, 4th Edition, (Oxford, 1924), p. 1.

he is talking about a real pilgrimage along a real path, which is also the path of life - his own life, and human life in general: and the 'selva oscura' could be the poet's personal vicissitudes, or the social and political upheavals of his time, but is first and foremost the physical reality of a dark wood. In other words, the distinction between what in later poetry we would call literal and metaphorical usage is not really operative, because the metaphysical order against the background of which the poem is written is not something arbitrary which has to be established by the poet himself, although it certainly has to be reaffirmed by the poet. It is rather something which is already present in the living consciousness of his age. However, the principe d'identité, as it operates in French, implies an even closer relationship than this between word and referent, and it is in his remarks on the actual substance of the poetic language of the time that Bonnefoy is at his most original and provocative. He sums up his idea of the working of the principe d'identité in medieval literature as follows: 'Je dirai donc qu'en ces premiers temps de la poésie en français, l'identité est à son degré le plus haut de saturation substantielle, et que la poésie est, en sa différence, presque invisible, oeuvre avant tout de simplicité et de gravité' (I^2, p. 262).

This might be taken as implying no greater identification between word and referent than that to which I have drawn attention in Dante. It is easy to confuse the degree of poetic identification inherent in the outlook of a particular historical period with the principe d'identité, which Bonnefoy claims is peculiarly applicable to French - and indeed, Bonnefoy is sometimes guilty of this confusion. Here, however, he makes quite clear the range of the principe d'identité in the French medieval context:

> j'ai toujours éprouvé les mots français dans leur croissance d'alors comme à demi transparents: tant la structure des consonnes semble (héritée du latin qui fera figure de science) garder l'empreinte atténuée d'un radical absolu, tandis que les voyelles apparaissent à travers elle, certaines comme les ombres de l'existence sensible, et d'autres - le e muet par exemple - comme la lumière qui vient de l'Un. (I^2, p. 261)

This is perhaps Bonnefoy's most extreme assertion about the physical substance of language: and while such remarks may be too wilfully personal to be considered as coherent theoretical statements about, far less analyses of, poetic language, they are interesting from two points of view. Firstly, they may serve to remind us that Bonnefoy's concerns are not exclusively theoretical. As a practising poet, his contact with language is inevitably closer than that of the average theorist, and if he seldom discusses the precise words of poetry, and never indulges in such a dubious exercise as an explication de texte, this is simply because he refuses to treat the poem as 'un objet où des significations se structurent', since poetry must be seen, in its essence, as participation in présence, 'une intention de salut, qui est le seul souci du poème' (I^2, p. 250). This is in complete agreement with his overall theoretical viewpoint: any comment on the substance of language has to be related directly to the connection between language and 'l'existence sensible', or what he sometimes calls 'l'Un'.

The second point of interest in Bonnefoy's remarks on linguistic substance is the extent to which they are relevant to his own poetic practice. The mute e, which Bonnefoy calls elsewhere 'cette faille entre les concepts, cette intuition de la substance, cette chance extraordinaire du français' (I^2, p. 103), is an element in versification which

can enact the notion of imperfection as the supreme poetic goal. Near the end of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', Bonnefoy makes this quite explicit:

> De même sera nié le bonheur facile des rythmes. La beauté formelle est le songe au bord d'un monde idéal. Elle s'est exprimée par les mètres pairs, mais c'est là, dans cette abstraction et dans cet oubli, que Rimbaud a porté la blessure inguérissable du nombre impair. Il a permis une lutte et, au-delà, une entente, dont l'e muet est la cheville secrète. (I^2, p. 125)

The advantage of the mute e, for a modern poet, lies in its ambiguity: whereas classical prosody dictated precisely where the vowel must have its full syllabic value, and where it should be elided, the modern poet can take advantage of the relaxation of the old rules to set up a counterpoint between normal speech-rhythm and an underlying regular metre, mirroring imperfection and perfection, or reality and the ideal. Bonnefoy's use of this technique of prosodic ambiguity has been demonstrated by two articles on his versification, examinations of Pierre écrite by Frédéric Deloffre,(2) and of Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve by Richard Vernier.(3) The imperfection of Bonnefoy's own prosody does not directly concern me here, and indeed the mute e is only one of several techniques in this direction analysed by M. Deloffre and M. Vernier. It may be interesting, however, to quote two more passages which show Bonnefoy's awareness of prosodic imperfection as an expression of the wider kind of imperfection which he considers indispensable in poetry if it is to attain contact with accidental and imperfect reality. Of Baudelaire he says:

(2) Frédéric Deloffre, 'Versification traditionnelle et versification libérée d'après un recueil d'Yves Bonnefoy' in Le Vers français au vingtième siècle, actes du colloque de Strasbourg (3-6 mai 1966), ed. Parent (Paris, 1967), pp. 43-55, with discussion, pp. 56-64.

(3) Richard Vernier, 'Prosodie et silence dans un recueil d'Yves Bonnefoy', Studia Neophilologica 45 (1973), pp. 288-97.

> Au moins Baudelaire a-t-il essayé, par ces 'chevilles' qu'on lui a tant reprochées (elles sont pourtant la seule réponse valable à l'ancienne prosodie close), par ces coups sourds contre la paroi de parole, par ce brisement de la perfection formelle et la catastrophe de la Beauté qu'il propose - en dépit de soi, en dépit de nous peut-être - à la poésie à venir, de suggérer le frôlement d'aile de l'existence dans les mots voués à l'universel. (I^2, pp. 114-5)

And in talking of a suitable metre for the translation of Shakespeare, he writes:

> Le vers qui me paraît le plus proche du pentamètre élizabéthain n'a pas de nom et guère d'histoire, c'est le mètre de onze pieds. Quand on le coupe après le sixième, il commence comme une indication de l'idéal, mais c'est pour s'achever, avec ces cinq syllabes qui ramassent et laïcisent, comme un fait ouvert à l'avenir, d'autres faits. Ainsi réel et sacré, par son office, se dialectisent, comme ils le font dans les grandes décisions d'existence, que veut évoquer le théatre, et notamment celui de Shakespeare. Et quand ces décisions atteignent à une véritable intensité spirituelle, eh bien! le onze pieds peut se dépasser dans l'alexandrin. (CTS, p. 350)

We may note again Bonnefoy's insistence on the metaphysical significance of a detail of versification. And this is relevant to his own practice, as M. Deloffre has shown in his remarks on the 'alexandrins déchus' in Pierre écrite - precisely, hendecasyllables with the caesura after the sixth syllable, and decasyllables of the form 6/4.(4)

We may now return to Bonnefoy's views on medieval literature. His remarks on consonants and vowels are indeed relevant to his own experience of that literature, but are too subjective and unsystematic to contribute to our appreciation of it - although we must remember

(4) Deloffre, 'Versification traditionnelle . . .', pp. 52-3

that he has no intention of formulating a prosodic system. In his essay on the Chanson de Roland, on the other hand, we have a carefully worked-out application of general ideas to a particular poem.

Bonnefoy approaches the Chanson de Roland on several levels. He sees in it a complex dialectic of essence, valid or invalid, and existence: and this is as visible in the linguistic substance of the poem as in the way it treats its subject-matter. The decasyllable is itself an enactment of eternity and temporality: 'quatre pieds comme l'éternel, six comme le temps' (NR, p. 180); 'ce vers décasyllabe si "objectif", lui dont les quatre pieds initiaux engagent si fermement la conscience dans la stabilité d'un savoir, cependant que sa deuxième partie, dans son rythme ternaire infus, consent au temps humain par un acte de sympathie, mais pour le reprendre dans l'éternel' (I^2, p. 260). The metre of the poem is thus taken to reflect its central conflict, though we may again feel obliged to reserve judgement on the objective value of Bonnefoy's impressionistic remarks on rhythm, which do not square with his theory of the eleven-syllable line, as quoted above (p.104). The central conflict in the Chanson de Roland to which Bonnefoy refers is between the double stability, or immobility, of Charlemagne's forces and of the Saracens, and the dynamic elements represented by Ganelon's treachery and Roland's redemptory sacrifice. This is further mirrored, on yet another level, by Charlemagne being seen as 'les mots', language which, whatever its original spiritual validity, turns to rhetoric when its user's vigilance is relaxed, and by Roland being seen as the ephemeral 'parole qui se consume pour délivrer' (NR, p. 179).

Bonnefoy therefore sees, in the Chanson de Roland, an almost exact parallel to his own poetic theory. Présence, considered as stability,

is continually haunted by the possibility of mauvaise présence, a kind of evil which takes over the good from the inside, 'quelque chose qui peut grandir en nous' (NR, P. 174), converting the substance of the good into something horribly alien, all the more so because of its close resemblance to the good which it betrays: 'sans que rien ait changé, tout pourra perdre son prix' (NR, p. 174). The agent for this betrayal is Ganelon, who enters into negotiations with the Saracens: and in this dialogue, the linguistic integrity of Charlemagne is lost, because Charlemagne represents language as it is, open to the corruption of involvement with the Saracens, 'le mauvais infini, celui du monde des apparences, des entassements de l'objet' (NR, p. 179).

Medieval literature, Bonnefoy believes, was consciously aware of this danger - as in the Queste del Saint Graal where, as I have already mentioned, 'un . . . souverain . . . est "méhaignié" sur sa terre "gaste", ultime forme de la réification du réel' (NR, p. 177). And this 'réel . . . réalisé, abouti, celui que l'esprit subit sans lui demander du possible' (I^2, p. 121), as Bonnefoy puts it in his remarks on the modern projection of this theme, T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, is reflected in, and indeed a function of, 'la vacance des mots' (NR, p. 177), language used either as empty conceptualisation or as empty rhetoric, with no concern for the interior reality of the objects to which it refers. The spell cast over the Waste Land can be broken only by the correct question uttered by the searching hero, just as Ganelon's treachery can be redeemed only by the individual sacrifice of Roland, who in this context becomes the poetic word in full participation in the experience of death: '/Roland/ sait bien maintenant que ce qui sauve de la mort, c'est l'acceptation de la mort' (NR, p. 179).

This poetic word must be an éphémère, an individual and transcendental act of articulacy: Roland could not sound his horn earlier, because this would simply have opposed two forms of rhetoric, but must instead redeem the spiritual validity of Charlemagne's forces by his own sacrificial acceptance of death.

But this is not the full significance of the Chanson de Roland, for it is written against a background of faith, and the final victory of Charlemagne's forces must depend on divine intervention. This suspension of time - to allow a few more hours for Charlemagne's victory - is nevertheless not absolute. One is reminded of Bonnefoy's criticism of the Christian symbol, to the effect that it may sanctify the Here and Now, but only for an instant, dissolving it thereafter into a realm of separated idealism. Charlemagne retreats to Aix-la-Chapelle, only to be called yet again to new conquests, for which his inner strength will once again have to be renewed: 'L'Empereur pleure de lassitude. Admirable et brutale fin, recommencement éternel' (NR, p. 181). The spiritual validity of any enterprise, and especially of the enterprise of creative language, can never be fully guaranteed: it must always be re-established in the apocalyptic moment of the sacrifice of a Roland. Bonnefoy even suggests that the Chanson de Roland could be interpreted as a kind of hidden Christian allegory: he refers to 'Jésus, préfigure de Roland, . . . qui, par sa mort, institua une communion' (NR, p. 179). Roland's sacrifice might indeed echo Christ's redemption of humanity, and Ganelon's treachery might echo the treachery of Judas. One might prefer to see in this, however, a reflection of the universal Western modes of thought which have been shaped by Christianity, rather than a direct and conscious reference to the Christian revelation itself.

Several questions must be asked about the validity of Bonnefoy's critical approach in this essay. He reads La Chanson de Roland as, among other things, a universal parable of the possibility of poetic articulacy: and, indeed, the correspondances between his own poetic theory and the interpretation he gives of La Chanson de Roland are very striking. However, we may ask how relevant this interpretation is to the observable facts of the poem's structure and moral intention. The answer, from a scholarly point of view, would have to be that the interpretation is, at best, idiosyncratic, and at worst, totally fanciful. The poem is a piece of fictionalised history. Its attraction for its original audience lay in the way in which it told a story, and any interpretation must first of all be based on a sound investigation of the text, of the conditions of its original (generally oral) transmission, of its derivation from previous versions of the same incidents, and of the attitudes and ideas (of feudal society, for instance) to be found in it. This type of approach, however, implies a concern for the poem as separated object, and this, as we have seen, is the reverse of Bonnefoy's approach. He is concerned above all with the way in which the poem enacts présence, with its possible involvement in the poetic experience of the reader: and his essay is a kind of narrative of his own poetic experience of the Chanson, whose validity can only be judged by the extent to which it awakens echoes in his reader's experience of the poem. Particularly relevant is the way in which Bonnefoy sees the poem as language talking about itself, and enacting its own poetic possibilities. Such an interpretation places the poem precisely in the context of the principe d'identité 'à son degré le plus haut de saturation substantielle' (I^2, p. 262). His essay on the poem is a direct record of his experience of it, and to

that extent an excellent example of the way in which his criticism of individual works of art, and his overall view of the nature of art, are combined in a continuing dialectic. In the course of such an overall critical approach, he may commit himself to untenable positions on points of detail: but an exaggerated amount of attention paid to these points would seriously misrepresent their function, which is not primarily that of comment on a detached object, but that of participation in an aesthetic over-view which takes account of, but is not mechanically dependent on, the individual existence of works of art.

We may now consider the change in human consciousness which, according to Bonnefoy, followed the medieval period. This involved the loss of generally-accepted religious faith: as we have seen in the Baroque age 'on a commencé à douter de la présence réelle' (I^2, p. 185). The first literary symptom of this was the change, well before the Baroque period, from anonymous to personal poetry. Needless to say, many other explanations could be postulated for this, but Bonnefoy's idea is itself interesting. When language is guaranteed by a generally-held faith, the poet need not assert himself as an individual. It is only when that guarantee is lost that any possible guarantee must come, at least in part, from the individual poetic consciousness: 'Lorsque la poésie se fait personnelle, c'est que l'individu a dû se dégager pour son propre compte d'un oubli collectif de l'être, qui n'est pas . . . commencé /dans la Chanson de Roland/' (I^2, p. 260). And in his essay on the Chanson, Bonnefoy repeats the assertion of the loss of a collective consciousness of being - which he here associates with the epic form - and its replacement by an order guaranteed only by the individual poetic voice:

> Et il n'y a plus de Roland. Très vite la société des hommes va perdre les instruments spirituels - symboles, mythes:

> vocabulaire et syntaxe de la Présence - qui rendaient le héros possible. Mais au-delà de l'épopée, aussi bien, s'est déjà ébauchée la poésie personnelle. A travers mort et résurrection, un Roland de nouvelle sorte - les grands poètes, Dante, Villon, Shakespeare, puis Baudelaire et Rimbaud - y ranimera le langage. (NR, p. 181)

The historical process is, of course, continuous. There is no sudden qualitative transformation - and certainly Dante, as Bonnefoy himself asserts elsewhere (see p. 100 above), could call upon a reserve of spiritually valid language. We may however grant Bonnefoy's point that the first sign of change was the replacement of anonymous poetry by personal poetry.

Some reservations may be in order, however, when we turn to Bonnefoy's account of the development of the principe d'identité. In the period after the Chanson de Roland, he claims, this lost its metaphysical guarantee because of the lack of religious literature in French, Latin being the language of the Church: 'Perte, donc, d'une énergie créatrice, puisque tous les esprits théologiens ou mystiques durent déserter le français. Manque d'une croyance qui assurerait pour longtemps la valeur sacrée du feuillage et du rossignol. . . Tout cela ne pouvait que rendre infiniment fragile, et privée en tout cas de preuves, cette expérience pourtant directe de l'absolu dans le mot français.' (I^2, pp. 262-3). We may question whether the change in the religious content of language, to which Bonnefoy frequently refers elsewhere, is the consequence of the absence of religious literature in the vernacular, as this implies, rather than its cause. A detailed study of literary history would be necessary in order to attempt to establish or refute the theory, and this Bonnefoy does not undertake, because, as we have already seen in many contexts, he is not concerned with

constructing a theory in the commonly-accepted sense of the term. The further point he makes, however, is of interest - that the French intellectual tradition stemming from the lack of vernacular religious literature was such as to make the spiritual validity of the principe d'identité even more precarious than it might be otherwise:

> Ce principe d'identité qui fut si intensément vécu comme axe de participation, comme évidence de l'être, dans la poésie médiévale, ce principe ne vaut que par une intuition que rien dans nos traditions et savoirs ne justifie ni ne remémore - et il peut donc à tout instant se vider de sa vertu substantielle, et il le fit, en vérité, et très tôt, et pour un très grand nombre de gens. La France put devenir le pays de l'évidence courte et obstinée, du 'bon sens'. (I^2, p. 263)

This process is not traced in any historical detail: but we may assume that it was complete, even where literary language was concerned, by the rationalist eighteenth century, and that writers in previous periods carried a heavy weight of responsibility for the validation of their own language, receiving little help from the language as apprehended by the consciousness of the age. The only French poet of the period between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century whom Bonnefoy deals with in any detail is Racine. We may now go on to examine his ideas on Racinian linguistic usage and the ways in which he draws connections between Racine and later poets.

XIII Essence: Racine, Mallarmé, Valéry

Perhaps the most accurate, but paradoxical way of describing Bonnefoy's attitude to Racine would be to say that Racine accepts the limits of the principe d'identité mentioned above, '/vidé/de sa vertu substantielle', but somehow endows these very limits with spiritual

validity. Bonnefoy's remarks on 'l'évidence courte et obstinée, /le/ "bon sens" ' continue: 'Le regard français put se complaire à un certain tableau de peu d'ombres, aux objets évidents dans leurs relations raisonnables, et aussi peu nombreux (relativement) qu'ils sont bien dessinés dans les contours qui les délimitent' (I^2, p. 263). Bonnefoy may well not have been thinking of Racine when he wrote this passage, but it corresponds remarkably well to his view of Racine's having reduced the world to a few very pure essences - with the crucial reservation that, in Racine's case, the essences, and their expression in language, have a valid mode of existence. Racine, says Bonnefoy, 'conçoit l'unité comme une sphère idéale, infiniment séparée' and, from the point of view of language, 'l'idée racinienne de la parole est . . . de simplifier la conscience, de nous attacher à quelques pensées qui sont bien sûr les plus graves' (I^2, p. 113). This idea of Racine as a dramatic poet dealing with Platonic essences is reiterated in Bonnefoy's essay on 'Shakespeare et le poète français':

> Racine n'accepte sur son théâtre qu'un nombre très restreint de situations ou de sentiments. Et, les dépouillant de tout ce que l'existence réelle peut leur ajouter d'éléments hasardeux ou accidentels, il semble les élever à la dignité de l'idée platonicienne et vouloir réduire son théâtre aux pures relations qui unissent ou opposent les Idées. Le monde est remplacé par un monde plus resserré d'essences intelligibles. (H, pp. 237-8)

In considering Bonnefoy's view of Racine, we must lay equal stress on the importance of 'essences' and that of 'intelligibles': for essences, seen as something abstract, have no spiritual validity at all, as we have already noted many times over - it is only when the poetic force of a great writer gives them coherence that they become 'intelligibles'. At the same time, although 'l'équivoque profonde de l'idée platonicienne est de prendre sur soi le plus vif, le plus pur de l'apparence sensible' (H p. 238), Bonnefoy is at pains, in this essay on Shakespeare, to cite

Racine as an almost purely essentialist writer - the Idea is still 'un lieu séparé où l'on peut oublier la diversité du réel et l'existence du temps, de la vie quotidienne, de la mort' (ibid.). Poetic articulacy, in this case, implies the reader's being drawn into a 'participation illusoire' in the sacred realm set up by the work of art.

In 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', however, Bonnefoy sees Racine as being a great writer almost in spite of his subscription to the validity of Platonic essences, because he cannot help taking into account, in however oblique a way, 'l'existence du temps, de la vie quotidienne, de la mort'. There is, in fact, under the play of essences, a hidden contact with reality through the inescapable reality of death. Asserting that 'la cérémonie de l'obscur est la fatalité de toute oeuvre' (I^2, p. 110), Bonnefoy compares the work of art to a temple: no matter how symétrically imposing a formal structure it may present, it must always enshrine some mysterious reality - 'au secret du temple, sur l'autel ou dans une crypte, l'imprévisible est présent' (I^2, p. 110). This is the case even in Racine's work, where death, the most intractable of awkward realities, may seem to have been assimilated into the realm of essences: 'Ici la mort n'est plus que la ponctuation des grands actes. . . Le héros racinien meurt, semble-t-il, pour simplifier l'univers, pour aggraver l'être, pour sacrifier à une conception aulique du sacré qui n'ordonne qu'aussi peu que possible de figures dans l'éclat glorieux du soleil' (I^2, p. 111). We may note, incidentally, the allusive range of Bonnefoy's criticism, for the 'conception aulique du sacré . . . dans l'éclat glorieux du soleil' is, of course, the valid political order embodied in the court of the Sun King: the world of Racine's plays is a reflection of the world in which he lived. Racine's desire for perfection, however, is bound to be flawed, for death cannot possibly be thus assimilated.

Death comes to dominate his world, because it cannot be fitted into it as a simple element among others: 'de quelle affreuse importance est cette mort si abstraite!' (I^2, p. 111). And with the reality of death having to be faced in this context, the whole world of essences is called into question and held in a precarious balance between existence and non-existence: 'comme si . . . la dimension temporelle ne pouvait que trahir l'existence d'une matière là où la poésie croit rejoindre l'inaccessible empyrée. Dans la transparence du beau cristal Racine aperçoit une ombre et ne parvient plus à ne pas la voir' (I^2, p. 111). The shadow which lies over Racine's plays, the presence of death, is nevertheless not death as it is experienced in reality, as something inextricably bound up with reality. It is simply the negative side of the world of essences which Racine evokes in his writing: '/Racine/ conduit presque au jour de la parole ce qui serait dans ce jour une lucidité sans égale, s'il n'était vrai pourtant que cette mort qu'il médite n'est formulable par lui que de façon négative, une inconséquence de l'être, une privation dissociée de son éternel et profond objet, qui est l'homme qui meurt sous notre ciel' (I^2, p. 112).

The immediate expression of death, the central concern of humanity, not as the simple gateway to an immortal but remote realm, but as a limiting barrier to all human enterprise, the final delimitation of reality - and therefore, the definitive formulation of the attitude of the modern consciousness, as such anonymous writing as La Chanson de Roland had been of the medieval attitude, - would have to wait till Baudelaire. Death within reality exists in Racine's work only as a shadow. His work itself is 'ce moi vacant, la poésie classique elle-même, qui se connaît presque mais sans agir' (I^2, p. 112): and the failure which this phrase implies reminds us that poetry must participate in a dynamic process which may approach présence. It must be 'du grand acte clos la proximité angoissée, la théologie négative' (I^2, p. 125).

Bonnefoy sees in Racine, then, an attempt to set up a realm of essences. Although he does not explicitly connect this with the principe d'identité, we may say that, while medieval literature can name the true existence of things through reference to a spiritually-validated real world, the principe d'identité, as it operates in Racine's work, identifies words no less closely with the essences the poet is dealing with. However, although these essences have true being as essences, and therefore the principe d'identité can genuinely guarantee the words used to evoke them, Racine fails to integrate the post-medieval reality of death, and with it phenomenal reality, into his poetic universe as anything more than an uneasy spectre, and this may be seen as a limitation on his art. It is doubtless superfluous to point out that Bonnefoy is seeking to situate Racine within the philosophical framework of dialectic between existence and essence which we find in his criticism of medieval literature: my remarks on the validity, or otherwise, of his precise interpretation of detail will apply equally to his ideas on Racine.

It may now be useful, in dealing with what one might call the essentialist end of Bonnefoy's critical spectrum, to consider his views on Mallarmé and Valéry, both of whom occupy situations within this general area.

Bonnefoy's attitude to Mallarmé is deeply ambiguous. At the beginning of his essay on Jouve, he refers to 'l'art, les prestiges de l'oeuvre élaborée, prise comme fin - l'éternel mallarméisme'. He immediately goes on to develop the idea: 'Faire oeuvre, perfectionner sa langue particulière, la préférer, dissiper le moi quotidien dans cette écriture voulue, "mourir" comme le propose l'auteur de L'Action restreinte, que c'est facile, en fin de compte, et d'autant que cette abolition n'a jamais lieu de la façon absolue qu'a tentée, ce

fut sa grandeur, Mallarmé' (NR, P. 235). All of Bonnefoy's remarks on Mallarmé aim at exploring the ways in which, in Bonnefoy's view, Mallarmé turned his back on reality in an attempt to establish - or to investigate the possibility of establishing - language itself as an absolute; and Bonnefoy's criticisms of Mallarmé's poetic project, while amounting in the end to a rejection of its validity, nevertheless always recognise its seriousness and its magnificence, the hope that it might have represented for poetry. As Bonnefoy makes clear in his 1976 essay on 'La Poétique de Mallarmé' (though this is less clear in his earlier treatment of Mallarmé in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' and 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité' where, as with other subjects he deals with in his earlier essays, he seems more concerned with fitting Mallarmé into a preconceived theoretical mould than with concentrating on his individuality), Mallarmé's rejection of reality as a basis for his poetic endeavour was not motivated by a distaste for reality as such, but by a realisation of the incongruence of reality as a basis for poetic creation at all. Referring to the 'frustrations' evident in Mallarmé's work, Bonnefoy imputes to Mallarmé the yearning for simple contact with reality as it is - 'que ce serait beau, la terre, comme facilement, simplement, cela pourrait nous suffire!' (NR, p. 183) - and goes on to remark:

> Comme /Mallarmé/ l'a dit, explicitement: 'La Nature a lieu, on n'y ajoutera pas.' Ou encore: 'Rien ne transgresse les figures du val, du pré, de l'arbre.'
>
> Mais autant Mallarmé est ouvert à l'expérience des sens et prêt, nativement, à s'y établir avec joie, autant il va éprouver - et ce sera là sa première déception - qu'à peine se risque-t-il parmi les choses comme elles sont leur qualité, leur présence même, se dissipent. (NR, p. 184)

This imperfection of the real world, from the poet's point of view, is

of course a function of its lack of any acknowledged spiritual dimension. In response to this, Bonnefoy sees Mallarmé as seeking to throw the responsibility for the spiritual validation of the world onto language itself: and in this process language must aspire - inevitably, without success - to the status of an absolute, and abandon the world altogether. This, Bonnefoy claims, is a departure from the less extreme view of language which writers had previously adhered to: 'Le texte poétique a eu pour Mallarmé le caractère d'une évidence dernière, inentamable, donc sacrée, alors que pour les poètes d'auparavant, il n'était que la réponse diffuse à une présence éprouvée en son dehors' (NR, pp. 188-9). Again, alluding in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' to Mallarmé's famous statement about the poetic word which calls up the 'notion pure' of its object, 'sans la gêne d'un proche ou concret rappel', the word which '/transpose/ un fait de nature en sa presque disparition vibratoire',(1) Bonnefoy remarks:

> Mallarmé ne veut plus sauver que l'amande même de l'être, mais, puisque le mot paraît ne faire qu'un avec elle, il croit vraiment qu'il le peut. . . . /La parole essaiera/... de faire de ces essences qui n'étaient plus que les épaves du grand navire l'Idée enfin immanente, et du Livre le lieu divin qui la retiendra parmi nous. La poésie doit sauver l'être, à lui ensuite de nous sauver. (I^2, p. 108)

The danger inherent in any such programme is obvious: poetic language which has in effect cut itself off from reality must rely only on itself for the assertion of whatever reality it claims to express, and such reality may well simply turn out an abstraction, with even

(1) Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Crise de vers', in Oeuvres complètes, ed. Mondor and Jean-Aubry (Paris, 1945), p. 368.

less validity than the unsatisfactory, spiritually deprived world which the poet has rejected. This danger is expressed in general terms at the end of 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité':

> Or, nommer l'arbre trop aisément, c'est risquer de rester captif d'une image pauvre de l'arbre; ou en tout cas, abstraite, et qui ne pourra grandir dans l'espace de l'absolu qu'à partir d'un des aspects, seul retenu - par distraction - , de l'objet. Et voici que la Présence n'est plus conçue que comme un déploiement fabuleux de cet aspect, comme une profusion de ce marbre. Elle n'est plus qu'un décor, dont le Je aussi est absent, et bientôt une convention et le reformement d'une rhétorique. (I^2, pp. 269-70)

Bonnefoy goes on to make it clear that Mallarmé is among the French poets who may have failed in this way. Regretting that the French language - unlike Romeo in Shakespeare's play - has no Mercutio to remind the poet of the danger of abstract idealism and 'pour le rappeler au devoir de "trivialité" ', he continues:

> Dans notre langue c'est au poète seul qu'il revient de se ressaisir dans cette beauté des mots où il n'a mis bien des fois que le fantôme des choses. Et notre poésie a aussi, comme dimension de son histoire et de sa diversité, ces égarements et ces retours. Les uns - les ressaisissements - , c'est le Cygne baudelairien, c'est l'Eternité de Rimbaud. Les autres, que l'orgueil mène, c'est la tragédie de Racine, la 'notion pure' de Mallarmé. (I^2, p. 270)

In his later essay on 'La Poétique de Mallarmé', however, Bonnefoy admits that in some of his work, particularly the Vers de circonstance, Mallarmé may have had a similar notion of 'trivialité' in mind, and this is of course related to what I have called elsewhere 'l'éphémère'. But Mallarmé, in Bonnefoy's view, always adheres too intensely to an underlying 'notion pure' for this concern with the trivial to be taken

as an acceptance of everyday reality as it is. Of the Vers de circonstance, Bonnefoy says:

> On peut beaucoup se tromper sur ces écrits . . . Y discerner un renoncement à l'Idée, une adhésion à la finitude - une incarnation même, au moins par instants - alors qu'ils ne veulent être toujours que la recherche des notions pures, d'autant plus vigilante et exacerbée que portée aux confins du monde cru ennemi. (NR, p. 210)

Bonnefoy goes on to expand this idea:

> La vérité, c'est que Mallarmé aurait bien voulu que la notion pure puisse garder, dans ses structurations intangibles, ces aspects de notre existence qu'a institués notre finitude, et qu'on aime dès qu'on acquiesce aux imperfections de cette dernière. . . . Et venir roder à ce seuil, c'est bien se détourner, en effet, du rêve que l'Idée soit accessible par l'écriture; mais nullement de l'Etre lui-même, qui peut se dire, à plus simples que Mallarmé, dans l'instant où un oiseau, quelque oiseau, s'envole brusquement d'une branche, et révéler dans ce rien sa qualité d'origine et son pouvoir de fonder le sens. (NR, p. 211)

What Bonnefoy sees as lacking in Mallarmé's poetic approach to reality, therefore, is the capacity to achieve a simple contact with reality itself, avoiding the mediation of any aesthetic theory, whether through the postulation of language as an absolute or otherwise. Such a simple contact is, of course, what Bonnefoy himself is seeking, and he would doubtless see himself as one of the 'plus simples que Mallarmé' that he mentions; and he sees the example of Mallarmé, precisely because of its uncompromising integrity, as in some ways dangerous for the French poetic tradition. He considers that Mallarmé's commitment to language as an absolute is doomed to failure: 'Si nous ne voulons que nous sauver du néant, fût-ce au prix de la possession, peut-être les

mots suffisent. Mallarmé l'a pensé, ou plutôt il en a fait l'hypothèse. Mais son honnêteté sans limite a démenti son effort' (I^2, p. 107). The lengths to which Mallarmé took his poetic project can, in Bonnefoy's view , lead to a false aesthetic if his conclusions are simply accepted by later writers who have not themselves gone through the painful intellectual process which led to them:

> En fait, on peut même croire - certaines pages y portent, faut-il dire le Coup de dés? - qu'il a presque voulu fonder, à des heures, sur ce néant en apparence final, percevant dans son jeu d'écume sous les étoiles, dans le rien qui s'écrit et se désécrit, au moins du temps qui passe, du rêve qui se délivre, voire une fête nouvelle pour une société sans espoir. Laisser les mots bouger dans les mots, d'une cristallisation à une autre, comme ils le veulent à travers nous, comme autrefois nous les empêchions de faire. Et en ce sens ce dernier métaphysicien aurait ouvert à ces poétiques de notre temps qui font de l'écriture sa propre fin et l'unique espace, elles n'ayant eu, en somme, qu'à accepter hardiment ce que lui ne consentait qu'à regret, à savoir que la parole est sans référent et notre existence sans être. (NR, pp. 206-7)

There is certainly a difference, of the most radical kind, between Mallarmé's own project and that of the adherents to 'l'éternel mallarméisme', the imitators who copied Mallarmé's example only on the level of rhetoric. Mallarmé demanded an absolute abolition: he did not accept a simple aesthetic which would postulate the presentation of Ideas, in the Platonic sense, through words, but insisted on the word creating the spiritual reality of the Idea. In contrast to Valéry, 'il savait que les Idées ne sont pas, ne sont pas encore, et il demandait au "livre", par sa vertu liante et instauratrice, de fonder un règne où elles seraient. Admirable projet, tout de même si poétique, puisqu'il se propose un salut!' (I^2, p. 98). As we have seen, however, Bonnefoy cannot accept any reliance on poetry

itself as an absolute. The abolition from which Mallarmé starts is not that plunge into death as true apprehension of phenomenal reality which Baudelaire, for instance, practised, and which Bonnefoy sees as the only possible project for the modern poet. It is, instead, the acceptance of death as destroyer of phenomenal reality, beyond which destruction poetry may be written - but this poetry must forget the human concerns of the world, and can therefore only end in sterility:

> La poésie de Mallarmé est l'existence vaincue, élan par élan, désir par désir. 'Heureusement, écrit-il à Cazalis au début de son grand dessein, je suis parfaitement mort.' Voici, certes, l'antique idée baptismale, qu'il faut mourir à ce monde pour renaître plus haut, dans le sacré. Il reste que Mallarmé n'a pu espérer prendre pied au seuil de l'être qu'en faisant taire en lui le désir qui s'était levé le premier pour s'angoisser, pour comprendre. Que vaut ce bien qui ne se donne qu'à celui qui est déjà mort? (I^2, p. 109)

On the level of language, too, Mallarmé's project tends towards an impossible perfection. The apocalyptic Livre would, ideally - in more than one sense of that word - , have abolished the world through the raising of language itself into an incantatory absolute. This implies the total rejection of normal discursive language, 'l'universel reportage'(2) as Mallarmé calls it, or, in Bonnefoy's terms, 'le discours, ce lieu verbal que Mallarmé voulut fuir' (I^2, p. 31), and its replacement by the kind of fractured syntax we find in many of Mallarmé's later poems (not to mention his prose), and ultimately by a simple enactive declaration of language in its purest possible state - a state which would be difficult to conceive of, and which Mallarmé was only groping towards at the end of his life. The note written to his wife and daughter on the eve of his death urges them to burn his

(2) Mallarmé, Oeuvres complètes, p. 368.

papers: 'Dites qu'on n'y distinguerait rien, c'est vrai du reste, et, vous, mes pauvres prostrées, les seuls êtres au monde capables à ce point de respecter toute une vie d'artiste sincère, croyez que ce devait être très beau'.(3)

In 'La Poétique de Mallarmé', in fact, Bonnefoy explicitly describes the manner of Mallarmé's death as a kind of echo of the possible validity of his poetic projects:

> on voit /Mallarmé/ revenir, dans ses dernières années, aux formes les plus extrêmes de ses tentatives passées, comme pour une sorte de quitte ou double. . . il est revenu jusqu'à l'obsession - Paul Valéry en témoigne - au texte inachevé d'Hérodiade, le poème où l'Idée s'est révélée la première fois, et qu'il s'agit de finir. . . N'en doutons pas, le spasme de la glotte qui récusa la parole de Mallarmé, un soir du début de l'automne, ressemble vraiment trop à la décollation du Baptiste, dont on sait le rôle dans le poème, pour que ce soit simple coïncidence. (NR, pp. 204-5)

Such an assertion may sound fanciful, and would of course be impossible to prove or disprove, but it gives an indication of Bonnefoy's judgement of the undoubted integration of Mallarmé's personal life in his poetic project, just as Bonnefoy sees Baudelaire's life being integrated - though in a different and more poetically fruitful way - in his poetic project.

The fact that Mallarmé's unremitting quest may be said to have carried his ideas to such extremes only goes to prove, if proof were needed, that his project is impossible: the ultimate value of his work lies in its very extremity, in the honesty with which he inexorably strove towards an unattainable goal. And his ultimate failure proves - for, on second thoughts, proof is needed - that the goal is indeed unobtainable: 'Stéphane Mallarmé a démontré l'échec de l'ancien mouvement d'espoir.

(3) quoted in Henri Mondor, Vie de Mallarmé (Paris, 1946), p. 801.

Qu'on ne puisse échapper par la parole au néant qui mange les choses, depuis le Coup de Dés qui a célébré cet irrémédiable, on ne peut plus ne pas le savoir.' (I^2, p. 109).

In Mallarmé, therefore, the principe d'identité does not, as in Racine, link word and essence, for the word must create the essence. The word, in fact, must enter into identity with itself, and only thereafter into identity with the essence it has created. 'Je dis: une fleur!', writes Mallarmé, 'et . . . musicalement se lève, idée même et suave, l'absente de tous bouquets'. (4) Bonnefoy can be scathing about Mallarmé's enterprise, as in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité': 'On connait ces projets de Livres. Ils ne sont qu'une des façons de rechercher la présence par le truchement de l'aspect, qui est pourtant le sel qui la dissocie' (I^2, pp. 252-3). But this is unfair. Mallarmé's greatness lies precisely in the totally uncompromising way in which he carries through his project to the limits of possibility. Reality, through no matter how ethereal an essence, cannot be called into being by the poetic word, but the mystery of language must include the distant possibility of some such identification, and this is what Mallarmé has heroically explored. If Bonnefoy must finally reject Mallarmé, it is not without having fully learned the lesson which Mallarmé taught. As we have seen, Bonnefoy must make less absolute, but no less serious and, in their own way, ambitious, claims for poetry: 'Je dis une fleur, et le son du mot, sa figure mystérieuse est le rappel de l'énigme' (I^2, p. 129).

The case of Valéry, one of Mallarmé's most illustrious disciples, is quite different. Here, Bonnefoy's criticism sees yet another variation of the complex dialectic of existence and essence, and of language's

(4) Mallarmé, Oeuvres complètes, p. 368

relationship with that dialectic. It is, however, difficult to pin down the precise nature of what Bonnefoy calls Valéry's 'apostasy'. In his interview with L'Express in 1959 he gave a clear, but over-simplistic, account of the contrast between Mallarmé and Valéry:

> chez Mallarmé il y a, comme chez tous les grands poètes, le très vif sentiment de la tension qui existe entre l'idée, au sens presque platonicien du mot, et l'existence immédiate et comme brute des êtres. La poésie est l'expérience même de cette tension, de cette déchirure irréductible entre l'existence concrète et le monde idéal et intemporel dans lequel on veut essayer de vivre.
>
> Mais Valéry a nié le premier de ces deux termes. C'est une interprétation facile de l'enseignement de Mallarmé.(5)

We should not linger too long over a statement made, perhaps in haste, during an interview: but it may be worth pointing out that, as we have seen, Bonnefoy sees Mallarmé as resolving the tension by abolishing - after much anguished interior debate - immediate existence, whereas Valéry is certainly aware of the differences between the two worlds, the 'maîtresses de l'âme, Idées' and 'ma forêt sensuelle'.(6) Bonnefoy is really reproaching Valéry, it seems, for not appreciating the importance of the 'déchirure irréductible' between the realms of existence and Idea, and for treating the first simply as an intellectual category different from, but on the same level as, the second, instead of seeing them as polar extremes, irreconcilable with each other except in the momentary, articulate mystery of présence. Thus Valéry looks on the poem as a mechanism whose effect can, to a considerable extent, be explained by rational analysis, a notion which is, as we have seen, anathema to Bonnefoy: 'Je me

(5) L'Express, 17 December 1959.
(6) Paul Valéry, 'Aurore', in Oeuvres complètes, vol.1, ed. Hytier (Paris, 1957), p. 112.

méfie . . . de Valéry qui, pour la paix de l'esprit et pouvoir oublier la conscience tragique grecque, se dépense à chercher les lois de fabrication d'un poème' (I^2, p. 118).

Bonnefoy sees in Valéry, in fact, an ultimately mechanistic point of view - he calls him 'le nouveau philosophe des lumières' (I^2, p. 101) - which represents a flight from reality, as against Racine and Mallarmé, who both follow through their poetic projects to honest, if untenable, conclusions. He sees Valéry as subscribing to a certain apprehension of reality which, in the version of the essay on Valéry published in L'Improbable in 1959, is described as being better suited to expression in Italian than in French, but which in the revised edition of L'Improbable published in 1980 is contrasted rather with a true poetic grasp of the world generally:

> la poésie ressent comme une déception, un mensonge, un certain sol, réel ou imaginaire, la Méditerranée de l'esprit. Pays où la sensation est si facile, si élémentaire, si pure, qu'elle semble conduire au coeur des choses: à une mer éternelle, au soleil, au vent. . . Ici venus, nous croyons toucher à l'intelligible, à peine dispersé par une matière, à la voie d'un retour rapide vers la maison de l'Idée. Et telle est bien l'illusion que l'italien par exemple, dans ses mots évidents et clos, ne soupçonne ni ne condamne - (I^2, p. 97)

Bonnefoy is hinting at the large claim that Valéry was unaware of the basic nature of poetic language, a claim which does not so much indicate an intolerable degree of arrogance on Bonnefoy's part, as show the deep seriousness of Bonnefoy's views, and their importance for his own vision, no matter how subjective it may be, of the nature of poetic language, and particularly of the French language in its poetic uses. The above quotation continues:

> - mais il y a un autre chemin. Il y a cette chose extraordinaire: aussi informe et noir qu'il puisse être, un être qui est né, que le temps emporte et qui va mourir. Un être dans ce lieu-ci. . . Valéry a méconnu le mystère de la présence. (I^2, p. 97-98)

We may readily admit, however doubtful we may be about the special suitability of the French language for the expression of this 'autre chemin' (a doubt which appears to be shared by Bonnefoy, since he has changed the emphasis of the essay on this point since its first appearance), that there is here an unbridgeable gulf between Bonnefoy's own, consistent vision of poetry mysteriously expressing the Here and Now, and the aesthetic of debased essentialism which he imputes to Valéry, an aesthetic in which Valéry's eloquence is seen as having only served a spiritually bankrupt, mechanistic relationship between word and illusory essence. Whatever may be our reservations about Bonnefoy's essay as criticism of Valéry, it is unquestionably one of his most concise statements of his own aesthetic position. The ideas of <u>présence</u> and mortality, together, are here seen to stand against no matter how melodiously seductive an abstraction.

We may note, in Valéry's description of his last visit to Mallarmé, something approaching the easy identification of sensation and ideal for which Bonnefoy criticises him:

> Nous sommes allés dans la campagne. . . L'air était feu; la splendeur absolue; le silence plein de vertiges et d'échanges; la mort impossible ou indifférente; tout formidablement beau, brûlant et dormant; et les images du sol tremblaient.
>
> Au soleil, dans l'immense forme du ciel pur, je rêvais d'une enceinte incandescente où rien de distinct ne subsiste, où rien ne dure, mais où rien ne cesse; comme si la destruction elle-même se détruisît à peine accomplie. Je perdais le sentiment de la différence de l'être et du non-être. La

> musique parfois nous impose cette impression, qui est au-delà de toutes les autres. La poésie, pensais-je, n'est-elle point aussi le jeu suprême de la transmutation des idées? . . .(7)

This dream of immobility is obviously a poetic experience. It is also, implicitly, haunted by the spectre of death: for Mallarmé was to die suddenly a few months later. But the delicate grace of Valéry's acknowledgement of death (Quand vint l'automne, il n'était plus' he writes at the end of the essay) is inadequate to the reality of death, and we are left with the evocation of what Bonnefoy calls 'un monde d'essences où rien ne naît ni ne meurt' (I^2, p. 99) - a world which, whatever its superficial attraction, is not the real world but a world of dreams. In such a world, poetry is only a game, albeit 'le jeu suprême de la transmutation des idées'. And this, the outcome of Valéry's development of 'l'éternel mallarméisme', is a function which Bonnefoy cannot acknowledge for poetry. If poetry cannot be raised to the status of a self-sufficient absolute, as Mallarmé craved, neither must it become mere wordplay: 'La vraie malédiction en ce monde est d'y être réduit au jeu. Le vers de Valéry, qui n'a d'être et de recours qu'en ses propres règles, ce mélange de divertissement et de savoir, cette partie d'échecs où l'on n'en finit pas de jouer au plus fin avec l'idée ou l'écho, n'est que précarité et tristesse' (I^2, p. 102).

Bonnefoy does not dismiss out of hand all Valéry's work: in particular, he admits that 'Le Cimetière marin' is Valéry's finest poem, because its play of essence and sensation could have led to a true apprehension of death and reality: 'Ici, dans le midi de l'absence, sur cette rive où sensation pure et pure pensée renvoient sans fin l'une à l'autre, quelque chose d'informe aurait pu surgir. . . Mais . . . Valéry . . . revient à l'éblouissement où l'on s'aveugle, à la sensation comme un

(7) Valéry, Oeuvres complètes, vol.1, p. 633.

sommeil, à ce vent qui n'est pas le vent. . .' (I^2, pp. 102-3). Valéry always fails to appreciate or evoke true existence. The principe d'identité is, indeed, at work in his writing: but the connection it makes between word and essence is of no value because essences have no contact with reality, and no attempt is made, through language, to give them any such contact. In his final rejection of Valéry's poetic enterprise, Bonnefoy returns to the spiritual validation of substantive reality - in his view, the only valid concern for poetry: 'Dans sa langue sans e muet . . . cet intellect identifie la forme à l'épure, au geste maigre de la danseuse, à l'hypothèse spéculative, sans avoir su qu'il n'y a de forme que pour la pierre, c'est-à-dire voûtée sur la rupture et la nuit' (I^2, p. 103).

We have seen how, in Bonnefoy's exploration of the writing of Racine, Mallarmé and Valéry, he rejects any identification of word with essence - whether the validity of the connection depends basically on the essence, as in Racine, on the word, as in Mallarmé, or on neither, as in Valéry. These criticisms of his predecessors, and in particular his criticisms of Valéry, are not to be taken as mere iconoclasm, but as parts of a continuing attempt to define the poetic modes possible in French, and Bonnefoy's own relationship with these modes. We may now go on to consider his criticism of the poets towards whom his attitude is more positive - Baudelaire and Rimbaud.

XIV Existence: Baudelaire, Rimbaud

We may consider Bonnefoy's treatment of Baudelaire in two stages, by exploring first of all the ways in which Baudelaire may be said to have achieved a true realisation of death and with it, of substantive existence, and secondly by dealing with the mode of discourse through

which Baudelaire made this realisation articulate. Bonnefoy calls this mode of discourse 'vrai discours' or 'vérité de parole'.

It will be evident, from my remarks on Bonnefoy's views of Racine, Mallarmé and Valéry, that he sees Baudelaire as having, in contrast to these poets, succeeded in directing his attention to l'éphémère, '/le/ Dieu inconnu, et celui-ci cette passante, ce cygne, cette feuille du lierre tachée de boue' (I^2, p. 101), or, as he says elsewhere in his essay on Valéry, 'un être qui est né, que le temps emporte et qui va mourir' (I^2, p. 98). This concentration on l'éphémère represents the refusal to restrict the poet's concern to the expression of an impossible ideal, and the assertion of existence - or rather, of an existence - instead of essence. Comparing Baudelaire with Racine, Bonnefoy says: 'Simplement, quand /Racine/ conçoit l'unité comme une sphère idéale, infiniment séparée, Baudelaire la porte - ou la cherche - au coeur du pays sensible, hors de la conscience, hors de soi' (I^2, p. 113). We must take careful note of the wording here. Baudelaire is still searching for 'l'unité' - but, as we have seen, Bonnefoy does not consider this notion borrowed, more or less indirectly, from Plotinus as an abstraction, but rather insists that it can only be approached through the particular seen as particular. Furthermore, any such particular must have an objective existence of its own before it can attain the trans-objective existence revealed through participation in présence: and this explains the importance of l'éphémère being found 'hors de la conscience, hors de soi', for the parenthetical half-substitution of 'cherche' for 'porte' - a typical example of Bonnefoy's sleight-of-mind - suggests that the object of Baudelaire's attention must exist in itself, and not primarily through any conceptualising process initiated by the observer. We may note that, while Bonnefoy's commitment to an existential interpretation of Baudelaire seems quite

clear in this context, he expresses a rather more essentialist notion - or, perhaps, the same notion seen from a more essentialist point of view - in his essay on 'Shakespeare et le poète français', where he is at pains to compare French poetry to a Platonic sphere, and English to an Aristotelian mirror:

> Si /Baudelaire/ s'intéresse à tel cygne ou à telle femme, en effet, et non plus au cygne en soi, à la femme en soi, à l'idée du cygne ou de la femme, ce n'est pas pour autant la nature de ces êtres qui l'intéresse, c'est simplement ce mystère qu'une Idée se soit égarée au sein du monde sensible, qu'elle puisse avoir accepté de subir la limitation et la mort, qu'elle puisse être, et avoir valeur absolue, dans ce monde des ténèbres et du hasard. (H, p. 238)

The complexities of idealisation which Bonnefoy evokes here may seem to give quite a different emphasis to his interpretation of Baudelaire's poetic project and may usefully be contrasted with Mallarmé's earnest but unsuccessful early search for an Ideal subsisting within reality. His reference to 'ce mystère qu'une Idée se soit égarée au sein du monde sensible, qu'elle puisse avoir accepté de subir la limitation et la mort' may hint also at an analogy with the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, according to which the Word, the second person of the divine Trinity, was made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, who therefore participates fully in both divine and human nature. This reference is not, however, explicit - Bonnefoy asserts elsewhere, indeed, that 'nulle foi n'est dite ou vraiment éprouvée par Baudelaire' (I^2, p. 30) - and the passage may be read in its context as coming from Bonnefoy's own deep-seated concern with the notion of a valid mode of existence for the Platonic ideal, and from his enthusiasm, in this essay mainly devoted to English, French and the problem of translation, for the idea of French as a Platonic language. His

statements on Baudelaire in 'Les Fleurs du mal' and 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' constitute a more coherent interpretation of Baudelaire's work.

The importance of particularity in Baudelaire's poetry is made manifest in the perspectives which the expression of particularity opens up. Once the particular has been truly grasped in poetic terms, this process, entailing an act of love, leads to the sanctification and redemption of the whole phenomenal world, so that the poet's voice has strength of an entirely different order from the picturesque realism which merely offers a plethora of aspects without illuminating the true meaning of any of them:

> Voici, d'ailleurs, autour de cette femme blessée /Andromaque/ et dans la sympathie qu'elle éveille, que le monde, au lieu de s'annuler comme jadis, ou de proliférer vainement comme dans la poésie pittoresque, ouvre la perspective de tous les êtres perdus, les captifs, les vaincus, écrit Baudelaire . . . /Le cygne/ est l'ici et le maintenant, cette limite . . . Car cet acte attendu de la poésie, et enfin accompli par le poète des Fleurs du Mal, est d'abord un acte d'amour. (I^2, pp. 113-4)

The philosophical background to this assertion is Hegelian: I have already made clear how ambiguous in Bonnefoy's usage, are the terms 'ici' and 'maintenant'. The emphasis in this passage, however, is placed not on the philosophical reference (whose implications can lead only to a denial of the power of language) but on the power of the poetic act to set up a positive and completely un-philosophical refutation of these implications. Here, this poetic power is seen as an expression of love, and in Baudelaire's case, as in the case of any great poet, the love of mortal reality, giving a true and immediate apprehension of substance, must imply a concomitant apprehension of death: 'Ainsi, donnant la valeur suprême à ce qui n'est que mortel, dressant les

êtres dans l'horizon de la mort et par la mort, je puis bien dire, je crois, que Baudelaire invente la mort, ayant compris qu'elle n'est pas cette simple négation de l'Idée qu'aimait en secret Racine, mais un aspect profond de la présence des êtres, en un sens leur seule réalité' (I^2, p. 114).

We may try now to define more closely in what sense Bonnefoy considers that Baudelaire 'invents' death. In the first place, Baudelaire was the first French poet to realise fully the place of death in the modern consciousness, and to attempt to express this in his writing. Baudelaire's involvement with death, however, goes deeper than that: for a mere metaphysical commitment to a certain idea of death would not of itself be sufficient to guarantee the artistic expression towards which Baudelaire is striving. The poet must accept death, and in a real sense participate in its physical reality: 'Je tiens /que Baudelaire/ a choisi de mourir - d'appeler la mort dans son corps et de vivre sous sa menace - pour mieux saisir dans sa poésie la nuée aperçue aux limites de la parole' (I^2, p. 115). I do not claim that I fully understand this notion. It is perhaps beyond rational comprehension, as it is beyond rational, discursive expression, except through 'vrai discours', to which I shall return in a moment. But Baudelaire's periodic obsession with the physical aspects of death - to which one might perhaps assimilate the obsession with physical disintegration to be found in some of Bonnefoy's own poetry, especially for instance in the first section ('Théâtre') of Du Mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve - and Baudelaire's own consciously anguished life, as Bonnefoy makes clear in the later part of his essay on 'Les Fleurs du mal', are by no means simply symptoms of the morbidity of a world-weary decadent. They represent, rather, an integration with

the world: for, in the modern age, death seems to be the only true transcendental experience, the only valid contact with the usually inaccessible and inexpressible Here and Now, and in a sense the only point at which man can truly experience reality directly, rather than some idea or shadow of reality, whether attained through art or otherwise. In the lowest depths of contact with death, Baudelaire, in Bonnefoy's view, sees hope, precisely because of this contact:

> Dans Un voyage à Cythère, dans La Charogne ou Une martyre, il est sûr qu'à propos des choses les plus horribles, des plus cruels manquements de l'être dans l'existence, ce poète fait montre d'une ardente joie sans sadisme, non exclusive de la pitié la plus grave - de l'énergie d'un commencement. . . Baudelaire . . . semble entrevoir une lueur et identifier à un Bien, malgré sa précarité profonde, l'objet mortel. (I^2, p. 115-6)

But how, we may ask, can the poet express the experience of death in truly valid poetic language? - for it would appear that the notion of expressing physical existence in the moment of death, the Here and Now, could lead only to silence or - perhaps the other side of the same coin - to a blind invocation in which the word (or the Word) would bring about an apocalypse: something perilously close, in fact, to Mallarmé's Livre whose possibility, as we have seen, Bonnefoy explicitly rejects. But here, Bonnefoy claims, lies Baudelaire's true achievement. Having fully accepted, and participated in, the reality of death, he can talk from the centre of death itself, and not in the language of remote, separated description, but through a spiritually validated 'vérité de parole', or 'vrai discours': 'Mort, déjà mort, déjà celui qui est mort dans un ici et un maintenant, Baudelaire n'a plus besoin de décrire un ici et un maintenant. Il est en eux, et sa parole les porte' (I^2, p. 115). This is, of course,

an echo of the quotation from Hegel which Bonnefoy uses as an epigraph for Du Mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve and it is interesting that he associates it here with the other Hegelian notion he most frequently evokes, that of the Here and Now. The passage therefore suggests, if it does not explicitly state, that the death through which Baudelaire can become articulate is at the same time the life of the spirit which exists within death itself. Bonnefoy does state this explicitly elsewhere, in connection with poetic articulacy, when he says 'La vérité de parole . . . est la vie de l'esprit, et non plus décrite mais en acte' (I^2, p. 29). If the symbol for this life of the spirit must be something fleeting, l'éphémère, the poet, working within 'vérité de parole' or 'vrai discours', can at least talk about l'éphémère in coherent language, rather than try to conjure it up through some form of incoherent invocation.

It may be worth noting in passing that the notion of the validation of a writer's work through the commitment in some sense of his whole being rather than simply through his devotion to literature as one activity among others, which Bonnefoy sees in different ways in Baudelaire and Mallarmé, may be seen in a wider context as one of the main ways in which the modern artist may achieve integrity in a world without accepted spiritual values. Erich Heller, for instance, draws attention to Kafka's denial that he was 'interested in literature': 'I have no literary interest, but am made of literature, I am nothing else and cannot be anything else.'(1)

Through the idea of 'vrai discours', Bonnefoy seeks to explain why Baudelaire, while expressing a completely new mode of poetic experience, is not one of French poetry's technical innovators: 'Pour l'essentiel de leur forme,

(1) Kafka, letter to Felice Bauer, 14 August 1913. Quoted in Erich Heller, Kafka (London, 1974), p. 62.

Les Fleurs du mal appartiennent au discours. . . Qu'a inventé Baudelaire, dans l'art, qui le distingue de Hugo? . . . Telle est l'énigme de Baudelaire. Le discours, ce lieu verbal que Mallarmé voulut fuir, ce lieu trop fréquenté de notre tradition poétique, reste le sien' (I^2, p. 31). Here 'discours', taken at its face value, bears much the same stigma as 'concept', or, in 'Les tombeaux de Ravenne', 'ornement'. But just as 'ornement' can be redeemed, and participate fully in présence through its identification with the substance of stone, so can 'discours' be redeemed if it comes from a poet who has identified himself with death:

> /Le discours/ est lié au concept, qui cherche dans l'essence des choses qu'elles soient stables et sûres, et purifiées du néant . . . le discours est menteur parce qu'il ôte du monde une chose: la mort, et qu'ainsi il annule tout. . .
>
> S'il n'y a pas de poésie sans discours - et Mallarmé lui-même l'avoue - comment, donc, en sauver la vérité, la grandeur sinon par un appel à la mort? Par l'exigence têtue que la mort soit dite; ou mieux encore, qu'elle parle? Mais pour cela il faut d'abord dénoncer joies ou souffrances reconnues. Puis, que celui qui parle s'identifie à la mort.
>
> Baudelaire a fait ce pas improbable. (I^2, pp. 31-2)

Baudelaire's avoidance of the facile rhetoric normally imposed by discursive language does not, in other words, lead him into a refined and purified form of language whose only coherent development must lead to silence. Instead, he can use discourse, but, because of his personal identification with death, the discourse itself is transfigured. Thus, miraculously, the metaphysical validity of the principe d'identité is not compromised by the poet's articulacy. Bonnefoy develops a similar idea much later, in his essay on Jouve, of whom he says: 'le premier ou presque après Baudelaire et Rimbaud . . . il a su, il a dû,

parler, dans une société d'esprits trop subtils que l'art, les prestiges de l'oeuvre élaborée, prise comme fin - l'éternel mallarméisme - intimident' (NR, p. 235). Later, Bonnefoy talks of the possibility that poetry should 'rompre avec le silence, en bref, approcher, grâce à des mots dûment vérifiés, et pourtant ordinaires, quotidiens, de la présence d'autrui, refuser et non plus vouloir les ambiguïtés, affirmer le simple: c'est tout de même bien plus, cela résonne plus haut que la création de quelque nouvel univers' (NR, p. 236).

We may note that Bonnefoy's later theory, representing a simplification of his earlier entanglement with the labyrinthine ambiguities of existence and essence, finds here a more satisfactory formulation of the possibility of, and necessity for, coherent poetic discourse than is found in the idea of the poet's identification with death, as expressed in 'Les Fleurs du mal' and 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie'. At the same time, as I have pointed out earlier, it was probably necessary for Bonnefoy to work his way through the difficulties of his earlier criticism before he could attain the relative directness of assertion of, for example, his essay on Jouve. This directness, concealing as it does a long process of intellectual self-questioning, makes possible a critical language much more adequate to its object than the earlier criticism which it transcends; and from this point of view Bonnefoy's later work - certainly in L'Arrière-pays, Le Nuage rouge and Dans le leurre du seuil - represents less than ever a rigid division between creative writing and criticism, these being simply different facets of a homogeneous literary enterprise. In his recent work, in fact, Bonnefoy may himself be said to have attained a kind of 'vrai discours' in which many of the dualities which, though always fiercely struggled against, lay behind his earlier writings, have been

reconciled, and what he calls in one of the poems of Pierre écrite 'le sens mystérieux de ce qui n'est que simple' (P, p. 211) can be validly expressed.

Such speculations are not strictly relevant to this study, which relates principally to Bonnefoy's criticism up till 1967. They may, however, serve, in the context of our consideration of his view of Baudelaire to clarify what Bonnefoy means by the idea of 'vrai discours' arising from Baudelaire's identification with death - an idea whose apparent mysticism, as formulated in the essay called 'Les Fleurs du mal', may in fact derive too directly from an attempt to fit too neatly into a conceptual dialectic of existence and essence the insight set out by Hegel which, Bonnefoy elsewhere insists, is, taken on its own, the reverse of conceptual.

We may now go on to consider Bonnefoy's view of Rimbaud, which is less clear-cut than his view of Baudelaire, perhaps because he is less exclusively concerned with situating Rimbaud within the development, as he sees it, of the French poetic tradition. His book on Rimbaud par lui-même seeks primarily to consider Rimbaud's poetic output in relation to his personal experience, and provides an interpretation which explains Rimbaud's abandonment of poetry through the notion that poetry was only one, though certainly one of the most important, of the means by which he sought to transform life - the others being such agents for the exploration and distortion of conscious experience as alcohol, drugs, sexual dissipation and alchemy.

Although the biographical element is predominant in Bonnefoy's treatment of Rimbaud - and indeed Rimbaud is probably farther than any of the other poets Bonnefoy deals with from being in any sense a seeker

after a purely literary absolute - it is clear that Rimbaud represents yet another attempt on the part of the modern consciousness to '/ébaucher/ l'acte vraiment moderne, qui est de vouloir fonder une vie "divine" sans Dieu' (Rbd, p. 114). But this project which, as we have seen, involves some contact with, and expression of, the experience of présence, normally in the guise of l'éphémère, requires also an act of love on the part of whoever undertakes it: and this is the point at which, according to Bonnefoy, biographical considerations particularly affect Rimbaud's case. Rimbaud was deprived of love as a child, and this contributed to the particular form of his inability fully to grasp reality, and at the same time death: 'Rimbaud était moins savant que Baudelaire, moins chimiste, je veux dire moins près du réel et de savoir le jauger dans sa transparence profonde, parce qu'on l'avait au coeur de l'enfance dépossédé de l'amour' (I^2, p. 117). The fault in this case lay with Rimbaud's mother:

> Rimbaud n'a jamais recherché l'amour qu'en pressentant son échec. Il y a enfin, quand l'on a faim et soif, quelqu'un qui vous chasse. Telle est la fin d'une rêverie, dans un poème des Illuminations dont le titre est d'ailleurs Enfance. Elle semble témoigner d'une violence subie, d'une frustration jamais oubliée - et ce sont celles, je crois, que Mme Rimbaud a infligées à son fils. Elle l'a chassé, par le peu d'amour, du pays où vivre. (Rbd, pp. 14-15)

This interpretation of Rimbaud's life leads on to the suggestion that the regeneration, or rediscovery, of love as a valid 'ephemeral' experience lay at the centre of his poetic quest, but that this quest could never be successful: 'Le génie de Rimbaud, cette énergie, cette hâte, aura été avant tout - je l'ai suggéré - d'essayer d'accomplir la réinvention du pouvoir d'aimer avant que, terriblement vite, il ne soit pour toujours trop tard' (Rbd, p. 166). The emphasis on a fairly detailed kind of biographical criticism may seem surprising

in a critic like Bonnefoy who is normally concerned, admittedly in a rather circumlocutory and reluctant way, with philosophical problems. We have seen, however, that in the cases of Mallarmé and Baudelaire Bonnefoy emphasises the importance of their different personal modes of commitment to art: and Bonnefoy's claim that the artist must be concerned with reality, however tortuous may be the approaches to reality forced on him by the modern consciousness, implies that biographical details of an artist's life may be of crucial importance for the work he produces. Given that <u>présence</u> is both an experience of reality and an act of love (among other things), it follows that Rimbaud's inability to accept the experience of love is an obstacle to his poetic project; and inasmuch as that poetic project must, like all others which come 'après les dieux' (I^2, p. 107), seek to attain a true relationship both with reality and with death, that other element in the experience of <u>présence</u>, Rimbaud was deprived of that also: 'Qui est privé, comme Rimbaud, de l'amour est aussi privé de la mort' (Rbd, p. 121). To return to the question of the poet's contact with the real world, in the comparison Bonnefoy draws between Rimbaud and Saint-John Perse as poetic evokers of 'le souvenir chaleureux de leurs premières années' (I^2,p.221), he contrasts Perse's success in maintaining contact with the immediacy and joyfulness of a child's experience of the <u>présence</u>, in the full sense of the word, of the natural world, with Rimbaud's failure: '/Rimbaud/ n'a pas su vivre au gré de cette nature, dont pourtant il se souvenait . . . il ne réussit pas à l'évoquer dans ce qu'elle a d'heureux et de simple, tâtonnant presque toujours en deçà ou au-delà de cette présence proche, intensément pressentie, mais qui ne cessait de se dérober' (NR, p. 222).

We must not conclude from this, however, that Bonnefoy considers

Rimbaud's poetic project to have produced only negative results. On the contrary, his failure, if we have any right to call it that, is immensely valuable in that, like Mallarmé's failure in a different and perhaps less poetically central domain - that of the exploration of the pure possibilities of language - it demonstrates convincingly, through the very intensity with which the project is undertaken, the inevitable limits of any poetic enterprise. Rimbaud himself realised this when he abandoned literature, even if this solution can only be justified, again, by the intensity and extreme seriousness of his attempt to transform life. This confirms Bonnefoy's repeated assertion of the principle that poetry and the poetic quest, of themselves, can never constitute an absolute: 'Nous devons /à Rimbaud/ de savoir, de savoir <u>vraiment</u> que la poésie doit être un moyen et non une fin, nous lui devons l'immensité de l'exigence possible, cette revendication, cette soif qui d'ailleurs ont tant effrayé' (I^2, p. 117).

A project for the transformation of life itself, and particularly one which aims to use poetry as a means for this transformation, must develop a deeply ambiguous attitude towards the perennial problems of existence and essence. Although these poles can never be fully reconciled, and certainly never reconciled by a process of conceptualisation, the poetic consciousness engaged in such a project must strive towards some unsatisfactory double formulation. Rimbaud's ultimate failure to grasp existence in its only truly poetic form, <u>l'éphémère</u> - whether or not this failure can be satisfactorily explained by reference to the poet's having been deprived of love - nevertheless implies a thorough and anguished exploration of what Bonnefoy elsewhere calls 'les surgissements et mutations du regard

premier sur la salamandre' (I^2, p. 263). Bonnefoy attempts a description of this, for Rimbaud's case, in his essay on Rimbaud and Perse:

> En vérité, l'oeuvre de Rimbaud a trait admirablement à l'existence, si par ce mot l'on peut suggérer l'éternel porte-à-faux de la loi dans le monde des appétits, de la valeur dans celui du fait. Elle est aussi une expérience de l'être, puisque l'homme exilé au pays du bien et du mal a pour fatalité de faire de sa personne, unicité de fait, dimension autre que le devenir naturel, le miroir ou l'appel d'une transcendance, et donc de désigner celle-ci, à travers la trame du visible. Mais rien ne ressemble moins que ces grands poèmes à l'objet qu'ils ont tant cherché, tant aimé et jamais saisi, sauf très furtivement dans Larme ou dans Michel et Christine, quand la venue de l'orage en bouleverse l'aspect: l'univers naturel, cette profusion et ce flux dont les religions archaïques avaient su ébaucher le livre sacré. (NR, p. 223)

In Bonnefoy's view, therefore, Rimbaud's poetry reflects existence only through a kind of essence. But, as Bonnefoy points out in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', Rimbaud was nevertheless aware of existence itself in the form of l'éphémère as given, random and insignificant reality, however great his difficulties in finding poetic expression for that awareness. From the encounter with such éphémères as Rimbaud lists in 'Alchimie du verbe' can come 'le surgissement d'une présence, soit faste, soit maléfique, avec en tout cas "l'épouvante" que fait naître dans la conscience la proximité du sacré' (I^2, p. 264). This contact with reality is poetic experience at its most intense, though perhaps also at its most fragmented and inexplicable, without any veil of conceptualisation to mask its power: 'En somme, le texte médiocre ou l'image pauvre ont joué le même rôle que l'objet soudain vu, avant que sa signification ne

l'occulte, ou dès que celle-ci, décomposée, le déserte: et pour un adolescent, perdu ici ou là dans le désert du concept, c'est toute l'identité extérieure, à son plus vide, qui brusquement se transmute (I^2, pp. 264-5).

Here we catch a glimpse, once again, of the ambiguous quality of the principe d'identité: 'l'identité conceptuelle', as Bonnefoy calls it a little later, may suddenly be transformed into 'l'identité absolue' under the pressure of poetic experience. Although Bonnefoy says little here about Rimbaud's language as such, he describes his poetic experience sufficiently completely to make it clear that this experience is of a kind intrinsically capable of poetic expression, even if the poet, being deprived of love, is prevented from ever in fact expressing fully and simply his vision of natural unity. In any case, the intensity and seriousness of his enterprise, both on the level of poetry and on that of human experience, and his rejection of any insufficient realisation of that enterprise - even if this means rejecting poetry itself - put him, among modern French poets, on a level with Baudelaire and with no other. What Bonnefoy says about Rimbaud may sometimes appear awkward and occasionally self-contradictory - perhaps because his main essay on Rimbaud, Rimbaud par lui-même, was written for a more popular market than most of his other criticism, and probably to a pre-set formula to fit the series in which it takes its place - but this in itself is an indication of how uncomfortably Rimbaud's work fits into the categories set out - whether deliberately or not - by Bonnefoy's early criticism, and to that extent of the uniqueness of his vision and the genuineness of its poetic realisation.

XV The moderns: Perse, du Bouchet and others

We have already seen how unequivocal is Bonnefoy's rejection of Valéry.

While it would be an exaggeration to say that his doubts extend to most poetry since Rimbaud, it is nevertheless true that Bonnefoy, for one reason or another, has not considered the work of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors in anything like the same detail, or within the same terms of reference, as he has dealt with the work of earlier poets. His reticence may stem from a certain unwillingness to define his poetic stance too precisely in direct comparison with his contemporaries: and this is not a simple recoil from possibly disagreeable confrontation, but rather a reflection of his distrust of conceptual discussion, which in this case could too easily degenerate into the personalised polemics of literary politics, as a vehicle for saying anything truly meaningful about poetry. It should be clear from what has gone before that Bonnefoy's theory of poetry is in no possible sense an ideology, and that any attempt to make it into one would inevitably betray its central focus. Doubtless, there are contemporary and recently deceased poets of whose work Bonnefoy disapproves just as strongly as he disapproves of Valéry's, and others whom he admires greatly: but his response to direct questions on recent poets who have influenced him tends to be expressed in general terms, as in his interview with Georges Piroué:

> - J'aime Scève et Racine; Baudelaire, Mallarmé.
> - Et plus près de nous?
> - Tous ceux qui s'efforcent de donner à la langue poétique française une obscurité essentielle, appelée de toujours par sa netteté. Il y a une vocation poussinienne de notre langue, et sa rigueur peut la mener loin, pour peu qu'on ait le courage d'aimer cette nuit qui est <u>dans</u> le jour.(1)

This remark is interesting in itself, but still avoids naming any particular contemporaries. To my suggestion that <u>L'Ephémère</u> (of which

(1) 'Yves Bonnefoy ou l'acte de dégager la présence dans l'absence', <u>Mercure de France</u> 333 (June 1958), p. 366.

Bonnefoy was an editor throughout its period of publication from 1966 to 1972) might have been intended in some sense as a reply to a certain prevailing literary and critical orthodoxy, represented par excellence by Tel Quel (published since 1960) and the Tel Quel group of writers, Bonnefoy replied by denying any intention that L'Ephémère should be a polemical instrument (which indeed it is not), but preferred to call it 'un document d'existence'.(2) This would seem to confirm his general attitude of reluctance to enunciate a poetic programme in conceptual terms, and his preference for more indirect methods of indicating the ways in which he considers French poetry should develop; these methods of course include critical studies of, and references to, the works of earlier poets.

He has, however, indicated a general opinion in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie':

> il n'est pas vrai que la poésie qui a succédé à Rimbaud et Baudelaire ait compris leur problème ou perpétué leur esprit. Tout s'est passé, au contraire, comme si elle avait eu peur; . . . il y aura chez les plus brillants poètes de notre époque à la fois un pessimisme et un scepticisme, et le désir d'une discipline pour se retraire de ce qui est. La demeure si vaine, l'abandonnée de Baudelaire, est habitée à nouveau. Mais ce n'est plus cette fois, c'est moins que jamais pour y sauver l'existence, c'est pour se sauver d'elle dans un acte de pure forme, secrètement immobile, ce que je veux nommer la mauvaise mort. (I^2, pp. 117-8)

The 'mauvaise mort' to which Bonnefoy refers here is any kind of approach to reality which tries to account for death, modern man's central preoccupation, by bypassing it, or by accepting any ready-made explanation for it short of seeing it, as Bonnefoy does, as the inevitable and omnipresent corollary of existence itself. The way

(2) in conversation, Nice, 14 May 1975.

in which this 'mauvaise mort' is to be found in Valéry - who, along with Claudel 'cadenassé dans l'orthodoxie avec la liste des choses' (I^2, p. 118), is the only poet whom Bonnefoy refers to by name in this context - is made clear in the essay on Valéry himself, when Bonnefoy says: 'Mais Valéry n'a pas su qu'on avait inventé la mort. . . . Il se complaît dans un monde d'essences où rien ne naît ni ne meurt, où les choses durent sans accident, quitte à ne pas vraiment être, de simples peintures légères sur l'opacité d'une nuit' (I^2, p. 99). And this, as we have seen, is analogous to the faulty view of poetic language to which, in Bonnefoy's opinion, Valéry subscribes.

Bonnefoy's opinion of surrealism, referred to in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' only as 'l'impossible désir surréaliste . . . d'une invention collective' (I^2, p. 118), is developed further in a short essay contributed to Yale French Studies in 1964. He pays tribute to the visionary nature of the surrealist image which, in Eluard at least, seeks 'to give renewed life in /the/ spirit to the profound unity of the world . . . To recreate and multiply the ties existing among things in order that this unity will again become universally conceivable. The surreal then becomes nothing other than the real seen in the perspective of the One'.(3) But Eluard's vision (which as described here is simply another version of what Bonnefoy sees as the modern poetic quest par excellence) is only one facet of surrealism: the other main aspect of the movement, the realisation of which, Bonnefoy states, led to his own separation from it, was a taste for nihilism and the abandonment of any notion of transcendence. 'To the virtual presences of full existence traced in the warlike works of

(3) 'The Feeling of Transcendency', Yale French Studies, 31 (May 1964), p. 135. I have not been able to trace any published French original of this article: the translation is anonymous.

the group was opposed the thick and heavy actuality of a bad presence: a world stripped of sense, abandoned to demons whose appearance was foreign to all our wishes, a world inhabited by nothingness alone.'(4)

A later and different formulation of Bonnefoy's criticism of surrealism, expressed in more personal and positive terms but nevertheless still focussing on the failure of surrealism in Bonnefoy's view, to grasp the unity of the world as against some form of dichotomy induced by an unnecessarily dualistic form of perception, is contained in his interview with John E. Jackson in L'Arc:

> Je dirais maintenant qu'il n'y a pas du réel et du surréel, l'un que structure et surestime la science, et l'autre qui la déborde de ses caractères irrationnels, perceptibles par l'oeil sauvage - cela revient à mépriser la table sur laquelle j'écris, la pierre informe dans les ravins, au profit du ménure-lyre - mais de la présence, parfois, face aux signifiés transitoires de la pensée conceptuelle.(5)

In Bonnefoy's view of surrealism - its great aspiration but its ultimate failure - we may see how narrow, yet real, is the gap, for the modern atheistic consciousness, between présence and mauvaise présence. An orthodox religious consciousness would also, of course, in Bonnefoy's opinion, fall into mauvaise présence, but in a rather different way, through its language losing its original spiritual validity and degenerating into rhetoric. It is therefore not surprising that Bonnefoy's positive judgements on the achievements of other modern poets should be few and far between. In fact, his main essays in this domain published up till 1967 consist of that on Gilbert Lely in L'Improbable ('La Cent vingt et unième journée'), which is concerned with Lely's work on Sade, and relationship to Sade's ideas, rather than with his poetry; of the

(4) ibid., p. 136.
(5) L'Arc 66 (1976), p.87.

essay on Séféris in Un Rêve fait à Mantoue ('Dans la lumière d'octobre'), which is a personal tribute rather than a critical essay; of an essay of 1962 on André du Bouchet, which has not been reprinted; and of the essay on Perse ('L'Illumination et l'éloge') which I have already quoted in connection with Rimbaud, and which was republished in Le Nuage rouge. The later essays on Jouve, Paul Celan and Georges Henein republished in Le Nuage rouge, and that on Jaccottet,(6) were written after 1967 and therefore fall outside the main scope of this study, though, as I have mentioned in connection with Baudelaire, that on Jouve at least - along with the other essays collected in Le Nuage rouge - provides an interesting indication of development in Bonnefoy's critical modes of thought, which I will deal with in a little more detail later.

It may, however, be worth considering briefly at this point Bonnefoy's views on Perse and du Bouchet. In his essay entitled 'L'Illumination et l'éloge', Bonnefoy contrasts Rimbaud's loss of a true consciousness of the primal unity of childhood experience with Perse's retention of that consciousness. This means that Perse's poetry can grasp directly the immediate existence of reality which Rimbaud's always misses: 'c'est soudain comme si l'apparence même des choses, si profondément troublée chez Rimbaud, prenait forme avec netteté sur l'écran de l'intuition poétique. . . Les mots n'enferment plus l'objet dans la fonction d'une chose, ils laissent le flux profond en soulever la figure exactement définie, comme si lui et nous n'étions plus ensemble qu'un vaste corps respirant' (NR, p. 224). Through language linked in this way to simple reality, we can attain the experience of unity which constitutes présence. Perse, in Bonnefoy's view, is the most profound realist in modern French poetry, because of his instinctive

(6) Revue de belles-lettres, Lausanne, 97, 3-4 (1973), pp. 107-9.

attachment to the whole of reality: the linguistic experience which, at a shallower level, might lead to the fragmentation of reality into its mere conceptual aspects, here allows the poet to concentrate his attention on the immense variety of things which, though considered as particulars, nevertheless constitute the unity of Perse's 'toutes choses suffisantes' which Bonnefoy contrasts with Rimbaud's 'nous ne sommes pas au monde' (NR, p. 227). The quotation from Perse comes from 'Ecrit sur la porte', the first poem of Eloges,(7) that from Rimbaud from 'Délires I' of Une Saison en enfer.(8) It may be worth pointing out the (presumably intentional) echo of the quotation from Perse in Bonnefoy's own invocation of 'toutes choses simples/Rétablies/ Ici et là, sur leurs/Piliers de feu' from Dans le leurre du seuil (P, p. 278): Bonnefoy, significantly, sees the simple plenitude of reality as something which must be 'rétabli' and which can only be grasped after a process of intellectual enquiry has been gone through and discarded, rather than as something with which immediate contact can be achieved.

Where then, we may ask, are we to situate Perse in the dialectic of existence and essence which Bonnefoy sees as the context of most modern poetry? The surprising answer is: nowhere. It seems, indeed, that Bonnefoy sees Perse's poetic achievement as standing outside the concerns of poetic modernity, untouched by the philosophical context in which he places the work of the other poets or, on a religious level, by the temptations of Christianity and atheistic mysticism, participating, inasmuch as it has any philosophical background at all, in 'l'intuition "chinoise" d'un infini animé, odorant, gorgé de réalité comme une mer poissonneuse', and benefiting from 'le mystérieux privilège d'un autre

(7) Saint-John Perse, Eloges (Paris, 1960), p. 12.
(8) Rimbaud, Oeuvres, ed. Bernard (Paris, 1960), p. 224.

enseignement que celui, dualiste, révolutionnaire, blessé, qui enclôt notre poésie dans ses échecs et sa foi' (NR, p. 228). We may therefore conclude that Bonnefoy, while fully appreciating Perse's poetic stature, sees him as having happily avoided, almost by accident, the poetic problems to which more or less satisfactory solutions can be found in the works of Racine, Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Rimbaud, and which Bonnefoy considers to be the central problems facing the modern poet. This might explain, too, why, in spite of Bonnefoy's admiration for Perse, he makes no mention of him in his general essays on poetry, but deals with his work only in this single essay whose main thrust is the comparison with Rimbaud. The implication of this rather perfunctory treatment of Perse would, in fact, seem to be that the modern French poet must participate in a conscious and anguished exploration of the dialectic of existence and essence: a poet who bypasses that dialectic, no matter how magnificent his achievement, is to be considered as being outside the mainstream of French poetic development.

We may take this as indicating a limitation in Bonnefoy's critical approach, another complementary facet of which can be seen in his treatment of the quite different case of André du Bouchet. Bonnefoy sees in du Bouchet's work an attempt to grasp l'éphémère through a reduction of experience to a few pure essences which sum up and replace 'la dispersion et l'opacité du réel'.(9) The apparent coldness and impersonality of du Bouchet's poetry are essential to a poetic vision which, in contrast to Eluard's 'vie immédiate', seeks to redeem reality through a true grasp of what lies behind reality: ' "Ta tête se retourne, - le nouvel amour!" écrit Rimbaud dans les Illuminations. André du Bouchet a fait sienne l'idée de cette phrase admirable, "tournant la tête" vers le non-vu, le non-compris, le non-su pour fonder un nouveau

(9) 'La Poésie d'André du Bouchet', Critique 18 (April 1962), p. 296.

savoir sur la présence sauvée.'(10) The asceticism of this concern with, so to speak, the reverse side of reality is reflected in du Bouchet's bleak and windswept typographical arrangements: 'la typographie de ces derniers livres a pour fonction d'atténuer les pouvoirs ordinaires du langage, qui ne sont qu'illusion pour qui recherche la poésie.'(11)

Bonnefoy is careful, however, not to claim that in his search for poetic purity du Bouchet has abandoned all contact with reality. On the contrary, 'il aime le pain et le vin de l'antique intuition rituelle et toutes choses réelles. Je veux dire: dans leur substance, loin de la jouissance moderne des qualités et des débilitants esthétismes.'(12) On the evidence of this essay, du Bouchet emerges as the poet of l'éphémère par excellence. We may, however, wonder whether his poetry does not fit - or whether Bonnefoy does not fit his poetry - rather too easily into these categories: for the possibility of the true expression of 'le bref instant d'une foudre'(13) is rather more problematical than this essay implies, as indeed Bonnefoy consistently makes clear elsewhere. His assertion of du Bouchet's achieved contact with 'toutes choses réelles' does not sit very happily with his description in the rest of the essay of du Bouchet's delimitation of reality.

We may perhaps see in the essay on du Bouchet an example of the exposition of a poet's intention rather than the criticism of his actual achievement. In Bonnefoy's development of the idea of 'vrai discours' in relation to Baudelaire, in his more recent praise of Jouve '/qui/ a su, /qui/ a dû, parler'(NR, p. 235), and indeed in his

(10) ibid., p. 294.
(11) ibid., p. 297.
(12) ibid., p. 298.
(13) ibid., p. 294.

own poetic practice, he recognises that there is a certain contact with the living foundations of ordinary experience and ordinary discourse which the poet must retain, however debased he may consider the medium of language as such. If Bonnefoy's reference to du Bouchet's use of 'le non-vu, le non-compris, le non-su' recalls his invocation in other contexts, perhaps, as I have suggested earlier (pp.87-8), in echo of Rilke, of 'l'invisible', we must remember that 'l'invisible . . . n'est pas la disparition, mais la délivrance du visible' ('I[2], p. 250), and that an over-ascetic concern for a Mallarmean 'notion pure' may lead the poet to lose contact with that reality which, in Bonnefoy's aesthetic, it is his function to communicate, however roundabout the means of any true communication must be.

I would suggest, therefore, that Bonnefoy assimilates du Bouchet rather too easily into certain pre-established categories. He may indeed be dissatisfied with the essay, since he has not reprinted it. In any case, it adds little to what we have already discovered of his overall aesthetic. Before summing up what one may call, for want of a better term, his poetic theory, we may find it worth while to consider his views on Shakespeare, on translation and on literary criticism, a somewhat mixed bag of subjects bound together by their common origin in Bonnefoy's experience as a translator from English into French. This may add something to our understanding of his literary theory, and of his remarks on the differences between the French and English languages on which I have already commented.

XVI Shakespeare and the possibility of translation

We may first of all consider Bonnefoy's approach to a single play of Shakespeare's - Julius Caesar. In his essay entitled 'De la Rome

troublée à la conscience élisabethaine' published in the Cahiers Renaud-Barrault in 1960[1] Bonnefoy rejects the idea that Julius Caesar is primarily a political play, concerned either with the historical concepts of tyranny and republicanism in Rome itself, or with the discussion of the nature of power in more general terms, informed consciously or unconsciously by the Elizabethan world-view. Bonnefoy sees Julius Caesar rather as a confrontation between two philosophical notions of order, which bear a strange resemblance to présence and mauvaise présence, and, later in the play, as the redemption of the less valid of the two through the transformation and self-sacrifice of Brutus, which thus - not unlike Roland in Bonnefoy's interpretation of the Chanson - becomes within the play a kind of redemptory absolute akin, in poetic terms, to the experience of l'éphémère.

This, however, is not a completely adequate formulation of Bonnefoy's view of the play: for the order represented by Caesar himself, which at the beginning of the play at least is more metaphysically valid than the challenge made to it by Brutus, is nevertheless fragile, failing as it does to take account of the dark forces which exist alongside it. Coming as a mysterious, non-conceptual threat, (compare, from 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne', Bonnefoy's questions 'Y a-t-il un concept d'un pas venant dans la nuit, d'un cri, de l'éboulement d'une pierre dans les broussailles? De l'impression que fait une maison vide?' (I^2, p. 13)) 'la voix sacrée du devin décentre brusquement le réel', and, like any representative of a kind of stability which cannot allow for change, Caesar 's'est identifié avec l'ordre, mais la ténèbre est en lui'(RTCE, p.7). This 'ténèbre' is symbolised on stage, on a personal level by Caesar's epilepsy, and on the public

(1) Cahiers Renaud-Barrault 30 (1960), pp. 3-16.

level by the storm. Brutus's challenge to the order represented by Caesar, however, is not that of the existence of individual humanity, which might come to redeem a metaphysically bankrupt stability. It is itself rather an idealised form of order, which would purge the order it challenges of any non-rational elements, and which is therefore even further removed from reality than what Caesar represents. It is 'une vision de l'ordre, identifié à la république, et refusant d'appeler réel ce qui est en dehors de cette loi' (RTCE, p. 8).

Both Caesar and, to a greater extent, Brutus, are therefore unaware of the dark forces surrounding them - 'le néant' which is at the same time substantive existence, beyond the grasp either of any imposed order or of any abstract idea. The murder of Caesar liberates these forces of chaos, for the destruction of a possibly valid order cannot be succeeded by the true establishment of an order which, in its conception (or conceptualisation), is a pure abstraction: 'la violence abstraite de Brutus est le dangereux essai de fonder, par un coup d'état aussi bien métaphysique que politique, le règne de l'intelligible sur ce qui est' (RTCE, p. 10). And the murder itself, the revelation of the existence of death outside any notion of order, makes the murderers, despite themselves, into 'les prêtres d'un épouvantable sacré' (RTCE, p. 11).

From this point onwards the balance of the play changes. The chaos in which the action takes place favours the emergence of Antony, and his victory over the 'rationalist' Brutus:

> Ainsi Antoine, un débauché, aux plaisirs bas, aux compagnons obscurs, l'homme de tous les désordres, de la ruse, mais sans doute aussi de l'amour, comprend immédiatement la nouvelle nécessité, naturelle et non plus civique, et avec une vraie ardeur, confirmant la parenté de la sophistique et de l'être,

> il met sa parole au service de la destruction qu'il avait prédite. (RTCE, p. 11)

We may note the mention of love, and remember its importance as an element in présence: for Antony here is seen as a kind of agent for présence within the chaos of existence itself. But the true message of the play, in Bonnefoy's view, does not lie in this victory of Antony, considered outside any notion of order, but in the transformation wrought in Brutus at the end of the play. In this transformation Caesar's ghost, bringing as it does the echo of a previously-established true order which Brutus has destroyed, forces Brutus into a realisation of existence, and simultaneously into a realisation of the necessity for personal sacrifice as the only possible guarantee for personal existence. Existence is redeemed through essence, rather than essence being redeemed through Antony's simple affirmation of existence. Thus Brutus becomes the true tragic hero: and one is reminded of Roland (although Roland's sacrifice redeems the more valid, rather than the less valid, of the two conceptions of order at work in the Chanson). 'Et, de fait, la fin de Jules César est la dernière et la plus profonde des mutations opérées par le meurtre de César: l'éveil métaphysique d'une âme, la conversion de Brutus' (RTCE, p. 14). At the end of the play, Brutus stands as pre-eminently an individual - a kind of éphémère bearing witness to existence, and to 'la solitude de l'homme dans la misère et la nuit' (RTCE, p. 15).

Bonnefoy's expression of this is not, in fact, very clear, and we may consider his interpretation of Brutus's function in the play as rather mysterious. He illuminates it, however, by adding at the end of the essay a striking comparison between the character of Brutus and Shakespeare's own poetic and dramatic development. Brutus undergoes a transformation similar to that which led Shakespeare to write the

play itself. The passage must be quoted at length:

> Comme /Brutus/ à l'acte premier, Shakespeare a peut-être voulu lutter, par un projet rationnel, contre un trouble à demi conscient. Comme lui, peut-être fut-il l'homme fasciné par une présence obscure et qui croit la conjurer à jamais dans l'acte fatal qui va le placer au contraire en son pouvoir. Au meurtre de César pour Brutus correspond chez Shakespeare l'entreprise et le devenir de la tragédie qui l'évoque. Et Brutus et Shakespeare se voient tous deux condamnés au savoir de la précarité, de la finitude et de la mort. (RTCE, p. 15)

Julius Caesar therefore becomes, in Bonnefoy's view, an allegory, and at the same time an exemplar, of the creative process at work. Shakespeare, like Brutus, must go beyond the mere apprehension of existence represented by Antony, and endow such an apprehension with the kind of individual humanity which alone can lead to artistic communication: 'Antoine "connaît" l'être, nous l'avons vu, et à sa façon il est dans la vérité. Mais en ne lui opposant pas la prétention d'être une personne, qui ait en soi autonomie et valeur, il n'humanise pas cette vérité, il ne la transcrit pas dans notre langage et ainsi elle lui échappe' (RTCE, p. 16).

It would be difficult, particularly for a pragmatic British mind, to assent to everything Bonnefoy says about Julius Caesar: and perhaps Bonnefoy too has doubts, for he has not reprinted the essay. I have dealt with it in some detail, however, because it shows Bonnefoy's critical judgement working in a more concrete context than usual, with specific reference to a particular play, and because it clearly represents a critical approach which is a meditation on art in general through the critic's creative experience of an individual work, rather than the treatment of a work of art as simply an object for analysis. We may also note in this essay an early formulation

of the idea of the work of art as human communication, transcending the intricacies of the problems of existence and essence - an idea which, as we have seen, Bonnefoy develops later, particularly in his essay on Jouve.

Apart from this essay on Julius Caesar, Bonnefoy's writings on Shakespeare are concerned principally with the problems of translation. This leads him to formulate, in slightly different terms from those he uses in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', the differences between French and English as vehicles for poetry. The problems of translation, moreover, are closely linked to the problems of poetry in general. Our consideration of Bonnefoy's views on Shakespeare will therefore be unable to avoid touching on much wider subjects.

Bonnefoy sums up his view of Shakespeare by saying, 'je ne vois pas d'opposition, dans son théâtre, entre l'universel et le singulier' (H, p. 235). He considers that we cannot answer the question of whether, say, Macbeth or Othello are archetypes or uniquely individual characters, because 'Shakespeare s'attache aux actes de l'homme qui ne sont jamais "singuliers" puisqu'ils participent des catégories universelles de la conscience qui les prépare, mais qui n'atteignent jamais - même pas chez Brutus ou Jules César - la plénitude et la netteté de l'universel, ayant à composer avec l'irréductible hasard' (H, pp. 235-6). In Shakespeare, we find 'une observation empirique de l'existence de l'homme, sans préjugé littéraire ou philosophique' (H, p. 236).

Bonnefoy goes on to consider how this empiricism is particularly suited to expression in English, and I will return to this. But it may first

be worth considering what mode of existence he attributes to Shakespeare's characters. In the essay on 'Shakespeare et le poète français', from which I have just quoted, they are seen as a unique blend of the particular and the universal. We have seen, however, that in his essay on Julius Caesar Bonnefoy sees the characters - or at least, Brutus and Antony - as representative of different moments of the poetic sensibility. This notion is developed somewhat in another essay, 'Comment traduire Shakespeare'[2] (whose title, uncharacteristically, carries no subtly ironical question mark). Here, in an essay mainly concerned with translation, we find some interesting insights into the nature of Shakespeare's drama itself. Bonnefoy rejects prose as a medium for the translation of poetry, because poetry is not an object divisible into 'form' and 'content', or the simple expression of objective experience, but rather 'un des actes par quoi une conscience peut essayer de se désentraver des motivations profanes qui la fragmentent, pour s'établir dans ce réseau de significations et de chiffres qui assurent notre unité. Elle est constitution d'un sacré - et c'est le vers qui permet cela' (CTS, p. 344). Shakespeare's characters are truly poetic in the sense that they arise from elements in the poetic consciousness which the poet has to live through and overcome:

> Shakespeare - et je me propose d'y revenir dans une autre étude[3] - est un poète exemplaire en ce sens qu'il a imaginé ses principaux personnages non par l'observation mais par la projection de soi et le risque: il a vécu chacun d'eux comme

(2) Etudes anglaises 17 (1964), pp. 341-351.

(3) I have traced no further essay on this subject published since 'Comment traduire Shakespeare'. Bonnefoy's only published work on Shakespeare since then has been 'La Traduction de Shakespeare' (Revue d'ésthétique 21 (1968), pp. 94-6), which is in fact only a résumé of a lecture given to the Société française d'esthétique on 19 February 1966. In this he does not appear to have added anything of consequence to what he had already written in the two essays published with Hamlet, and in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité'.

> la métaphore autonome, vivante, d'une partie de ce qu'il était lui-même en puissance, et, expulsant de soi Othello, Lear ou Macbeth, tous figures de doute ou de possession, c'est-à-dire de doute encore et par conséquent de néant, il s'est guéri de ses tendances mauvaises. Cet immense théâtre n'est que celui d'un Je aux prises avec tous ses autres. (CTS, pp. 344-5)

This would seem to imply that Shakespeare's work is nothing but an expression of his own universal imagination, which is true in a sense, but which misrepresents the very universality of Shakespeare's mind by suggesting that his characters lack the kind of objective existence which can find an echo in the human experience of the spectator. At the end of the essay, however, Bonnefoy modifies his formulation, claiming that Shakespeare's characters do have a certain autonomous existence in the theatre, and that it is as a dramatist and as a poet, through both elements in his artistic make-up, that he achieves a true representation of universality within particularity. Bonnefoy's main argument at this point stems from his assertion of the impossibility of perfect translation - an assertion which, typically, is not based on the empirical examination of specific linguistic examples, and the conclusion that they cannot be satisfactorily translated because of differing connotations, or because of differing social, artistic or literary contexts. Such a demonstration would imply the treatment of language as an object of scientific dissection, a process whose usefulness in this area, and also, as we have abundantly seen, in the area of the analysis of poetry, Bonnefoy questions. Instead, he considers that the central difficulty of translation lies in the impossibility, for the translator, of re-living the experience which gave rise to the original work - indeed, of which the original work,

in its own linguistic formulation, was a part. He claims, however, that the specifically dramatic context of Shakespeare's poetry does leave certain possibilities open to the translator:

> Même si la traduction poétique n'a pas . . . de fondement assuré, il reste qu'une donnée particulière de la poésie de Shakespeare vient atténuer le dilemme, et c'est que cette poésie a pris forme théâtrale, c'est-à-dire a médiatisé son intention toujours profondément personnelle dans des figures reconnaissables par la conscience commune. . . Florizel, par exemple, . . . est . . . une figure autonome, incarnant un des grands moments de l'expérience de tous les hommes, - c'est une parole, par conséquent, que je puis moi aussi comprendre, et recréer poétiquement. (CTS, p. 351)

We may see, therefore, that Bonnefoy sees universality and particularity merging on two levels in Shakespeare: firstly, the characters themselves represent archetypes, but at the same time individuals; secondly, though the characters are creations coming from Shakespeare's individual poetic sensibility, they are nevertheless relevant, through their functions as objective dramatic entities, to universal human experience. These two levels - which differ in that on one the characters are considered from the outside, almost as objects of analysis, whereas on the other they are considered in the context of observer and creator both participating in their existence, an essential preliminary to any reciprocal manifestation of <u>présence</u> - may nevertheless serve to illuminate each other, and to explain why Shakespeare's work can be considered as 'la diversification aux dimensions presque de l'univers . . . d'une conscience lyrique' (CTS, p. 345).

A further element in Bonnefoy's criticism of Shakespeare is his consideration of the specific poetic quality of the English language, as Shakespeare uses it. Defending Shakespeare against Voltaire's charges

of irregularity and obscurity, Bonnefoy claims that 'Shakespeare est à la fois désireux d'intérioriser le réel (comme La Tempête va être si près d'y réussir) et de sauver la richesse d'une langue qui a des mots si nombreux pour dire l'aspect des choses' (I^2, p. 256). Here we see that English, as used by Shakespeare, is not in fact such an exclusively aspectual language as Bonnefoy sometimes implies elsewhere. It can also express a deep level of ontological validity through the aspects themselves which it most immediately grasps, rather than through the essences to which French must primarily direct its attention. This, as we have seen, is not unlike the poetic function which Bonnefoy, through the idea of what I have called l'éphémère, would like French to accomplish by even more indirect paths: and this itself is relevant to his theory of translation as applied to Shakespeare. But the question of the double nature of English in this respect is worth pursuing a little further. Talking of Donne, whose linguistic usage he sees as equivalent to Shakespeare's, Bonnefoy says:

> On le voit s'attacher - scandale pour Racine, mais presque autant pour Rimbaud - à l'anecdote, cette vision 'extérieure' du fait humain. Mais c'est pour découvrir - ironie secrète de la Présence - que c'est dans notre réaction à l'inessentiel que notre essence se manifeste. C'est aussi dans l'être qu'il faut by indirections find directions out, par des voies détournées découvrir la voie . . . (I^2, p. 257)

This capacity for indirect contact with the essence of things through their aspects is not, however, the only way in which Donne's - or Shakespeare's - English can mediate between the everyday and the sublime. The grammar of the language itself, Bonnefoy points out, implies an acceptance of the everyday - 'les substantifs s'effacent devant la chose qui apparaît à nos yeux tout à découvert, jetée dans son devenir. Les adjectifs invariables saisissent la qualité comme le ferait un photographe,

sans poser, comme l'accord français de l'adjectif et du nom, le problème métaphysique du rapport de la qualité et de la substance' (H, p. 236). The Latin elements in the vocabulary of English, however, allow direct contact with a more distant realm of being. Discussing Cleopatra's 'I have / Immortal longings in me',(4) which he calls a 'moment absolu de la poésie', Bonnefoy says: 'D'une part l'anglais peut saisir le plus concret, le plus immédiat, le plus instinctif de l'acte de l'être; de l'autre il garde la ressource - par immortal, par ce mot qui est pure idée - de découvrir au coeur même de cet élan l'intemporel et l'universel qui sont nos plus pures aspirations' (H, p. 237).

I have pointed out earlier that Bonnefoy's idea of the principe d'identité as a peculiarly French phenomenon tends to over-simplify his discussion of English as a language for poetry - and indeed his discussion of French as well, as when he claims that Baudelaire is not concerned with capturing existence as such, but with meditating on 'ce mystère qu'une Idée se soit égarée au sein du monde sensible' (H, p. 238). Another example of this is his qualification of the statement about English quoted above, when he says:

> L'anglais s'est proposé pour fin l'aspect tangible des choses. . . . Et si ses mots d'origine latine troublent un peu cette décision philosophique, . . . ils permettent simplement de mieux exprimer, par exemple, ces moments de notre existence où l'idéal nous conduit. . . la langue anglaise nous dit que l'immortalité, que cette Idée, en un sens existe bien, qu'il est véridique et noble d'en parler; mais qu'elle n'est que notre pulsion, notre création volontaire. (H, pp. 236-7)

This kind of statement seems to be based on too hasty a presupposition

(4) Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra, ed. M R Ridley (The Arden Shakespeare, 1954), V: ii: 279-80.

about the intrinsic nature of individual languages, when, as I have already pointed out (see above, pp. 78-9) the comparison that Bonnefoy is at pains to make in his essay on 'Shakespeare et le poète français', of English with a mirror and of French with a sphere, holds good only for the poetic tendencies of the two languages. Certainly, in the case of Cleopatra's 'immortal longings', it would be unduly restrictive to deny 'immortal' its full connotations of idealism, although we must recognise that the poetic force of the phrase comes from this idealism's close association with the concrete and human immediacy of 'longings'.

Bonnefoy, in fact, may be inclined to see too great a qualitative difference between English and French - perhaps under the influence of his experience of translating Shakespeare, or of translations into English of his own works. He has said(5) that such translations of his poetry prompted the remarks on French and English in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité': and it is understandable that the impossible quest for exact verbal equivalents between the two languages should support his theories on the irreconcilable nature of their underlying ways of grasping reality. It is certainly true that French can give poetic force to abstractions in a way that English cannot. Talking of Racine, whose use of French shows this feature in the clearest possible way, Bonnefoy remarks: 'Imagine-t-on ce qu'il resterait en anglais, ou dans beaucoup d'autres langues, du Sortez! crié par Roxane dans Bajazet? Cette parole redoutée, par laquelle elle achève de se séparer du monde sensible, cette parole métaphysique serait en grand risque de devenir un vulgaire "coup de théâtre" ' (H, pp. 241-2). On the other hand, even when

(5) In conversation, Nice, 14 May 1975.

Racine names the humblest of objects, the abstraction inherent in French prevents them from compromising the elevated tone of his verse. I am indebted to Bonnefoy for this example from Bérénice:

> Vous seul, seigneur, vous seul, une échelle à la main,
> Vous portâtes la mort jusque sur leurs murailles.(6)

A literal translation into English would make the first line sound ridiculous, and the second stilted and over-literary, because English must present the concrete object with an immediacy lacking in French, while the abstract conception cannot automatically find a place even within poetic discourse in English - although in this particular case the problem is distorted, since seventeenth-century English poetic diction could tolerate such abstract personifications more easily than modern poetic diction.

In the case, however, of a common French word like 'boire', Bonnefoy claims that we are dealing with a 'mot profond' 'qui exprime un acte essentiel, /et qui/ ne pourra que garder, au plus désabusé d'une vie, sa capacité d'absolu' (I^2, p. 254). 'Boire' is an image of considerable importance in Bonnefoy's work, as may be seen, for instance, in the image of acceptance in 'Deux Couleurs' (Dans le leurre du seuil): 'Bois, me dis-tu pourtant, / Au sens qui rêve.// Bois, je suis l'eau, brûlée,/ . . . Bois, en reflet.// . . . J'ai confiance, je bois:' (P. p. 257). The difficulty of translation into English is summed up in Bonnefoy's remark in conversation that with the word 'drink', 'on voit déjà le verre'. We may see the justice of this in, for instance, Anthony Rudolf's translation of 'buvant le noir' in the second poem of 'Le Dialogue d'angoisse et de désir' as

(6) Racine, Bérénice, Act 1 scene 3, in Théâtre complet, ed. Rat, (Paris, 1960), p. 306.

'drinking blackness'.(7)

In translation from English to French, conversely, some degree of particularity may be lost. We may cast a glance at Bonnefoy's own translation of Hamlet. In his first speech Polonius says:

> The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
> Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel,
> But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
> Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade.(8)

Bonnefoy renders this as:

> Les amis que tu as, une fois éprouvés,
> Enclos-les dans ton âme avec des barres de fer,
> Mais n'use pas tes mains à bien accueillir
> Le premier blanc-bec un peu matamore. (H, p. 39)

Here Bonnefoy has lost the precision of 'new-hatch'd, unfledged' in the more straightforward 'blanc-bec'. But this is not any more of a weakening of Shakespeare's effect than is necessary, given the power inherent in English of metaphor-formation by syntactic contraction, while French usually has to express metaphor through the linking devices of ordinary grammar. I do not propose here to deal at length with the discussion between Bonnefoy and Christian Pons on this point of the translation of Shakespeare.(9) Bonnefoy succeeds in demonstrating clearly that Pons's project for teasing out and making explicit the

(7) Bonnefoy, Selected Poems, trans. Anthony Rudolf (London, 1968), p. 113.

(8) Shakespeare, Hamlet, ed. Dowden (The Arden Shakespeare, 1899), I: iii: 62-5.

(9) Christian Pons, 'Les traductions de Hamlet par des écrivains français', Shakespeare en France (special number of Etudes anglaises) (1960), pp. 116-29.
Bonnefoy, 'Transposer ou traduire Hamlet', Preuves 134 (April 1962), pp. 31-4. Reprinted in H, pp. 247-56.
Christian Pons, 'Transposition et traduction: à propos du Hamlet d'Yves Bonnefoy', Etudes anglaises 17 (1964), pp. 536-48.

tangled connotations of Shakespeare's imagery represents a misunderstanding of the poetic and dramatic effect of the verse. The discussion is, moreover, irrelevant to Bonnefoy's central concerns as a translator and as a theorist of translation, which are to bridge the gap (whether we consider it to be quantitative or qualitative) between the metaphysical viewpoints inherent in French and English as poetic languages. In this context, some loss of the complexity of Shakespeare's richly clotted imagery is inevitable.

What is more interesting, in the example I give above, is that Bonnefoy has chosen, even within the images he transposes into French, to render aspectual words by more essential ones. Thus, 'grapple' becomes 'enclos', 'hoops of steel' become 'barres de fer', and 'palm' becomes 'mains'. Here, Bonnefoy is practising what he preaches in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité': he obviously considers that (say) 'agripper', 'cerceaux d'acier' and 'paume' would give an effect of triviality in French. And we must certainly admit that such a multiplicity of concrete detail would make the translation seem merely fussy, rather than rich in connotations.

My reservations about Bonnefoy's rigid distinction between French and English, then, apply principally to his theoretical over-view of these languages as vehicles for poetry. It is undeniable that the translator must be painfully aware, in practice, of how wide is the gap between them. Bonnefoy claims, however, that the modern French poetic sensibility may be able, by a rather circuitous route, to identify with the sensibility underlying Shakespeare's poetry. This claim, made explicitly in the last section of 'Shakespeare et le poète français', relates to the possibility of the modern French poet achieving contact with, and expression of, what I have called <u>l'éphémère</u>.

Given the inevitable differences between languages, Bonnefoy considers that the art of translation should be an attempt to re-think the text to be translated in the translator's own linguistic and philosophical idiom, which may entail a rethinking of that idiom itself: 'toute vraie traduction se doit d'être, au-delà de la fidélité au détail, une réflexion métaphysique, méditation d'une pensée sur une pensée différente, essai d'exprimer le vrai de cette pensée dans sa perspective propre, finalement interrogation sur soi' (H, p. 242). Such a process will obviously have a greater chance of success if the two idioms are already close to each other. 'Traduisez votre proche!' Bonnefoy advises at the beginning of 'Comment traduire Shakespeare' (CTS, p. 341). Rather surprisingly at first sight, Bonnefoy considers that Shakespeare's idiom is close to that of the modern French poet. Reaffirming that 'le mot français, dans son emploi classique, ne posait son objet que pour exclure le monde et la diversité des existences réelles' (H, p. 243), and that even Baudelaire (at least for the purposes of the essay on 'Shakespeare et le poète français') represents an expression of immediate reality only through its identification with a kind of ideal, Bonnefoy adds that more recent French poetry, in contrast, 'considère que l'objet réel, séparé de nous, infiniment autre, peut être dans l'instant notre accès à l'être, notre salut - pour peu bien sûr que nous allions jusqu'à lui en déchirant le voile des définitions essentielles, des concepts' (H, p. 243). This might indeed stand as a definition of l'éphémère, the Here and Now suddenly affirmed, outside the normal continuities of time and space, as an incidental detail, through which the whole phenomenal world and the articulacy which is trying to name it may perhaps mysteriously be redeemed. On the level of language itself, of course, the search for the expression of l'éphémère is very far from being equivalent, except in a very

indirect way, to the easy availability of phenomenal reality for expression in English. But on a more metaphysical level, Bonnefoy suggests that the presence of l'éphémère in the modern French poetic consciousness is analogous to the all-pervading presence of the particular but mysterious spiritual dimension of the witches in Macbeth, of the ghost in Hamlet or of the hope of redemption in The Winter's Tale.

Here, then, is the possible point of contact: both modern French poetry and that of Shakespeare feel the presence of a mysterious reality beyond their divergent metaphysical presuppositions:

> C'est par leur intuition la plus profonde, la plus élémentaire, autrement dit, que le réalisme de Shakespeare et l'idéalisme renversé de la poésie française récente peuvent désormais communiquer. L'un décrit ce que l'autre demande à vivre. Et ce qui est dit directement par Shakespeare, pourra peut-être être suggéré, indirectement, dans un langage ajoutant à la fidélité au contenu explicite de chaque oeuvre, une épreuve constante de tous ses moyens poétiques par le sentiment de l'objet profond. (H, p. 244)

Bonnefoy's criticism of Shakespeare, and his remarks on translation, thus coalesce into a restatement of his ideas on the possibility of poetic discourse in the French language of today.

Having now looked at much of Bonnefoy's own literary criticism, it may now be worth considering his view of literary criticism itself. This follows naturally from what I have been discussing, since Bonnefoy's principal statement of his ideas on literary criticism takes the form of a comparison of French criticism with English.(10)

(10) For convenience of vocabulary, I take 'English' critics and criticism to refer to critics writing, and criticism written, in English, whatever its country of origin. This appears to be what Bonnefoy means by 'anglo-saxon'.

XVII Literary criticism, English and French

In a note to 'Shakespeare et le poète français', Bonnefoy remarks:

> la poésie anglaise 'signifie' beaucoup plus que la poésie française. L'une, dont les mots ne prétendent pas être Idée, principe et origine du monde, aura à dire celui-ci, à le transformer en signification, en formule. L'autre ne fait que présenter l'Idée dans son évidence muette au-delà de tout concept. De cette opposition on pourrait déduire également les profondes divergences des critiques littéraires anglo-saxonne et française. (H, p. 239)

One may once again question Bonnefoy's implication here that a linguistically-determined difference between the English and French casts of mind should qualitatively control not only the kind of poetry written in each language, but also the kind of criticism. What began as an analysis of the differing poetic potentials of the two languages seems to expand and cover an alarmingly large field of rather vague speculation. Bonnefoy has been taken to task for this, in empirical British fashion, by Professor Alan Boase in an article[1] in which he points out that the New Criticism may direct its attention to literary texts without becoming obsessed with the mere minutiae of explication, while critics writing in French may be concerned with the delicate nuances of poetic sensibility without necessarily forgetting entirely the poems to which that sensibility has given birth. In his reply to this criticism, Bonnefoy makes it clear in what sense the differences between the two critical approaches are fundamental, and finally, in his view, irreconcilable:

(1) A. Boase, 'Critiques français, critiques anglais, ce qui les divise. Réponse à Yves Bonnefoy' Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises 16 (March 1964), pp. 157-65.

> Je vais prendre un exemple sous-jacent à tout ce que j'ai essayé de dire. Il s'agit d'une comparaison: dans l'Eglise orthodoxe grecque, au moment du mystère, le Christ est présent; tous les assistants sont incorporés dans la présence divine. Dans l'acte littéraire, il y a une présence qui se donne ou ne se donne pas. La poésie est fondamentalement un acte à comparer au grand moment d'une liturgie ou d'un rituel. Il y a inadéquation fondamentale du poème avec le sens prêté au poème. Toute la critique anglaise s'éloigne de la conception théologique, qui reste cependant sous-jacente chez certains Français, alors qu'il y a agressivité contre cette conception théologique chez les Anglais. D'un côté, la catégorie de la signification, de l'autre la 'réorientation' de la conscience vers une présence vécue. . .
>
> Le malentendu entre certains critiques anglais et français s'est curieusement réaffirmé. L'option fondamentale entre l'être et les êtres, entre la présence et le sens, n'a pas été comprise.(2)

The comparison Bonnefoy makes here, in oral discussion, is more explicit than any he might be expected to make in a carefully thought-out essay, and could perhaps for that very reason be misleading. Not surprisingly, he had to make clear later in the discussion that he himself subscribes to no religious belief. Furthermore, he does not here draw the consistent distinction I have commented on earlier between signification and sens: instead, he contrasts both signification and sens with présence. Nevertheless, the comparison supports his apparent rejection of any form (and not simply the English form) of analytical criticism in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', where he says that '/la poésie n'est/ nullement . . . la fabrication d'un objet où des significations se structurent . . . Cet objet existe, bien sûr, mais il est la dépouille et non l'âme ni le dessein du poème; . . . et plus

(2) 'Résumé des discussions', ibid., pp. 290-91.

on en voudra analyser les finesses, les ambiguïtés expressives, plus on risquera d'oublier une intention de salut, qui est le seul souci du poème.' (I^2, p. 250).

This is consistent with Bonnefoy's overall aesthetic, as we have seen. One is led, therefore, to ask what valid task Bonnefoy would assign to the critic, who must comment on works of art in language which is inevitably conceptual and which must therefore, it seems, betray the essence of the works of art which it is trying to elucidate. Any other function for critical writing would seem to condemn the critic to produce mere pseudo-literature himself: and as Professor Boase points out, the critic need not try to avoid using conceptual language, for 'la critique d'art, la critique musicale ne sont pas invalidées par le fait qu'elles ne consistent ni en peinture ni en musique'.(3)

After a certain amount of equivocation, in which he seems to suggest that textual analysis is appropriate to English poetry but inappropriate to French, and admits that English critics, in spite of their concern with the elucidation of meaning, still show 'un sentiment aigu, généreux de la réalité poétique' (CAS, p. 70), Bonnefoy makes his own position clear by saying, 'il me semble qu'une critique de la poésie qui se fonde sur la signification laisse échapper son objet. Elle se laisse enclore, en effet, dans une sorte de cercle dont l'origine est cette conception du positivisme logique: que l'on peut séparer dans le discours la fonction de connaissance (cognitive function) et la fonction "émotive".' (CAS, p. 70).

I have already commented on Bonnefoy's frequent slightly idiosyncratic use of the word 'signification', or more often 'significations', since

(3) ibid, p. 161.

the idea itself implies a fragmentation of the work of art with which it is concerned. He goes on to describe the consequences, in his view, of the cognitive and emotive functions in discourse being separated:

> En un mot, ce qu'il y a de ruineux dans cette critique, c'est que le langage symbolique de la science . . . a réussi à s'identifier avec ce que Cassirer appelait le pôle objectif dans le langage: alors que la poésie aussi dit le vrai, dit ce qui est, et a valeur, à sa manière et dans son champ propre, de vérité objective - son objet spécifique étant l'individu, c'est-à-dire l'infini. Au regard de cette vérité de la poésie qui est (pour peu qu'on ne l'aborde pas avec les catégories logiques) toute simple, les significations les plus complexes ne sont peut-être que des fantômes. (CAS, p. 71)

Here Bonnefoy is becoming confused: for he talks of the 'langage symbolique de la science' identifying itself with the 'pôle objectif' in language, and then develops his argument as if he had said that this symbolic language of science had identified itself with the whole of language. And this would indeed be 'ruineux'. But the idea of an objective pole in language (if we are using words precisely) implies a subjective pole which is not only its polar opposite, but is also essential to the subjective pole's own existence as such: and if the language and thought-processes of literary criticism must incline towards the objective pole, they need not therefore be interpreted as conspiring to prevent the language and thought-processes of literature from inclining towards the subjective pole. This implies that analytical criticism is seeking in some sense to replace the literature it discusses. This does indeed seem to be Bonnefoy's opinion when he says of American criticism that 'l'idée que la signification non comprise puisse subsister dans une oeuvre semble être ressentie alors

comme un scandale, une atteinte à la sécurité morale collective' (CAS, p. 70), or when he talks of 'fantômes'. From the point of view of the poem itself, of course, analysis can produce only 'fantômes': but no competent critic will claim that his analysis should do anything but lead the reader to a richer experience of the poem, for which such abstractions, properly assimilated, may well be useful. The only critics who would make larger claims for the analytical method are not English at all, but the enthusiasts, if any still exist, for what Professor Boase calls 'le fétiche pédagogique de l'explication française'.(4)

We may thus defend English criticism against Bonnefoy's strictures. But the fact that a French sensibility should find such strictures necessary may itself serve to confirm, up to a point, Bonnefoy's theory of the differences between the linguistically- determined French and English views of the world. Bonnefoy, it seems to me, is here interpreting the English mind's living and valid concern for the aspects of reality as such - on which he comments so perceptively elsewhere - as nothing more than the dessicated, over-analytical approach of the explication de texte. And this (from an English point of view) slightly false perspective is also to be seen in Bonnefoy's use of the word 'trivialité' (which has if anything even stronger pejorative connotations in French than in English) in his discussion of English poetry, and especially of Shakespeare: 'D'une part la poésie anglaise s'engage dans le monde du relatif, de la signification, de la trivialité (le mot est intraduisible), de l'existence de tous les jours, d'une façon presque impensable en français dans la poésie la plus"haute"' (I^2, p. 257). Though we may accept the general point

(4) Boase, 'Critiques français, critiques anglais . . .', p. 165.

Bonnefoy is making, it is difficult to imagine an English critic describing the manifold complexity of, say, Shakespeare's imagery as 'trivial'.

We may push this point a little further. If a linguistic grasp of the concrete must be seen by the French sensibility as (and indeed must actually be, in the French language) something more trivial, more paltry and - ironically - farther from any true apprehension of reality than the equivalent grasp in English, the converse is also true: a linguistic grasp of the abstract must be seen by the English sensibility as more remote and theoretical than it is felt to be by the French. I do not wish to digress too far at this point: one might, however, point to examples of abstract words which have a definite secondary concrete meaning, as in 'dépendre un tableau du mur', or which may half-assume a concrete reference in certain circumstances, as in 'il a découvert sa calvitie', or which may appear (though perhaps only to the translator) to have the ghost of a concrete reference lurking behind them as when one is dissatisfied with translating 'position' by its direct equivalent, since the French word seems to imply distantly something being, or having been, concretely placed.

If we find in Bonnefoy's attitude to English criticism, then, a certain lack of comprehension stemming from his French presuppositions, we would do well to consider carefully how far anglophone presuppositions may colour our attitude to the French critical positions which he defends. Here we may quote the distinction he makes between English and French poetry, from the critical point of view:

> Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang, pour reprendre une fois de plus le vers fameux de Shakespeare, est un complexe

> de significations; on peut s'engager loin dans leur enchevêtrement sans pour autant s'éloigner de la qualité poétique. Tout au contraire, chez Rimbaud, Mais que salubre est le vent! dont la beauté est si haute, si pleinement magique, signifie extrêmement peu. (CAS, p. 70)

One could easily enough claim that the basic poetic quality of Shakespeare's line lies in something beyond the most sensitive tracing-out of its network of associations, or that other poets in English operate in a much less obviously intricate way (see my discussion above (pp. 76-8) of the difference between Norman MacCaig and Edwin Muir, or consider the admirably poetic 'simplicity' of a line like Wordsworth's 'The things which I have seen I now can see no more' (5)), or that not all French poets share Rimbaud's brand of meaningless or magical beauty. Any of these approaches would however miss the point: for Bonnefoy is associating with the French poetic sensibility a kind of criticism, typified by such diverse figures as Marcel Raymond, Albert Béguin, Georges Poulet, Jean-Pierre Richard and Maurice Blanchot, in which the critic directs his attention to 'la zone crépusculaire du langage, où la vérité est contact plus que formule' (CAS, p. 73). It is therefore feeling which is being considered as primary in the poetic process: and feeling must reach expression through (in Bonnefoy's words, referring to Béguin) 'la fluidité du signe, les métamorphoses incessantes de son contenu, la valeur essentielle de l'analogie qui déborde toute signification finie dans une expérience intime de l'être' (CAS, p. 72).

This is an admirable summary, expressed in French terms, of the nature of poetic language. The English approach, however, is all too liable

(5) Wordsworth, 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood', Poetical Works, ed. Hutchinson and de Selincourt (London, 1950), p. 460.

to condemn criticism based on such an assumption as imprecise, or subject to the 'intentional fallacy', or both. This is indeed the risk taken by such 'French' criticism: that the critic should involve himself in a wordy second-hand attempt to describe the feeling which has already been conveyed in the poem. This is the opposite fault to English over-attention to the poem's verbal details. We should not, however, categorise critics' tendencies to false judgement simply by their nationalities. In Professor Boase's criticism of Blanchot, it is Blanchot who seems to me to have the clearer idea of what the dangers for the French type of criticism are, and Professor Boase who asserts too easily the possibility of direct expression of discursive concepts in a poem:

> du Toast Funèbre de Mallarmé /Blanchot/ maintient qu'il 'existe' en tant que poème indépendamment du contraste entre l'idée chrétienne de la survie personnelle (que Mallarmé y rejette) et la survie du poète dans sa poésie (qu'il y affirme si triomphalement), contraste qui donne sa structure au poème. Blanchot va jusqu'à dire: 'Si l'on y cherche illicitement un sens transmissible à la prose (pourquoi illicitement?) on y peut reconnaître la glorification de l'existence qui n'a pas craint son néant (d'accord! mais ce n'est qu'un élément du poème!). Mais est-ce (demande-t-il) cette métaphysique, cette allusion à un problème général qui nous découvre la vérité du poème? Naturellement non.' (6)

Professor Boase does not agree with Blanchot on this point - he adds 'Je réponds: Si, tout de même!' - and he is troubled by the expression 'vérité du poème'. But it seems clear that the dangers Blanchot is sketching out in the passage quoted differ from the dangers of the kind of analysis criticised by Bonnefoy only in the extent to which the critical method directs itself towards the text of a poem, rather

(6) Boase, 'Critiques français, critiques anglais. . .', p. 163.

than towards the feeling or thought (for thought can be a component of effective poetic feeling) behind it. Both approaches must produce something which is basically irrelevant to the poem itself; and the danger of both lies in the extent to which they may be tempted to substitute what they produce (which, by definition, is manipulable in terms of conceptual discourse) for the poem (which is not). One might go further, and say that the undoubted usefulness of each method varies directly with the extent of the critic's awareness of the dangers inherent in it.

We may postulate, then, as the ultimate object of criticism, something to be labelled 'la vérité du poème' or, perhaps, the existential reality of the poem, which is neither the object on the printed page, nor the poet's intention, but rather the poem in action and as experience, which must be considered as something abstract enough to avoid being identified with its effect on the consciousness of the poet or of any individual reader, but at the same time concrete enough to have a unique and individual mode of being. This existential reality of the poem is ineffable (or rather, it can only be expressed, uniquely, by the poem itself): and any critical approach must be aware of this, and of its own limitations. In the frame of reference Bonnefoy is using, two approaches, identified with the English and French languages and modes of thought, are suggested. English criticism will tend to approach the poem through the text, seen as an object, and will therefore run the risk of identifying the poem's reality with the network of meanings analysis may abstract from it: French criticism will try to recapture the poetic impulse, and will risk identifying the poem's reality with whatever discursive concepts may be considered to have been present in the poet's mind at the moment of composition.

Ironically, as I have suggested, a French type of analysis (the explication de texte) represents the worst extreme of the basically English danger of over-conceptualisation from textual study, perhaps because of the difficulty the French language experiences in dealing with concrete details considered simply as themselves.

We have moved some distance from the simple consideration of Bonnefoy's attitude to criticism. I hope, however, that the issues raised have been relevant enough to Bonnefoy's ideas on poetry itself for this digression to be justified. Before going on to a general summary of Bonnefoy's poetic theory, we may sum up this section by quoting from the end of his essay on English and French criticism:

> L'oeuvre est le combat d'une signification qui tend à s'installer dans la netteté du signe, à prendre appui sur les caractères les plus objectifs de celui-ci - et d'une intuition qui va au-delà de tous les meanings et oblige le signe à cesser d'être une chose. Et, en somme, la critique française et la critique anglo-saxonne s'en tiennent chacune à l'une des composantes de cette lutte profonde, qui est le fait même de créer. (CAS, p. 73)

D. CONCLUSION

XVIII The development of Bonnefoy's theory: sign and substance

As a conclusion to this investigation of what by a convenient shorthand one may call Bonnefoy's 'poetic theory', which has concerned itself with the philosophical background to the theory, with its more abstract features such as the concepts (considered as concepts, and therefore incompletely) of 'le principe d'identité' and 'vérité de parole', and with its working-out through Bonnefoy's consideration of the poets to whose work he has turned his attention, I wish to summarise the ways in which language, according to Bonnefoy, may constitute an artistic medium. This will involve some recapitulation of what has been said before in the consideration of this or that aspect of Bonnefoy's theory, and some further treatment of his more recent work which, strictly speaking, falls outside the chronological limit I have set myself: I hope that the elements of recapitulation, in a more general context, will clarify, rather than merely repeat, the points already made. I also wish to consider briefly the ways in which Bonnefoy sees the poet's use of language as being analogous, and indeed in some sense identical, to the visual artist's use of his materials, since, although it is beyond my present scope to deal systematically with Bonnefoy's art criticism, the omission of any reference to the visual arts would give a very one-sided view of the processes of thought which, for instance, led Bonnefoy to give Le Nuage rouge, much of which is concerned with painting, the subtitle 'essais sur la poétique'.

This summing-up will also include a consideration of two areas which would repay further investigation, but which are not part of my main subject here - the ways in which Bonnefoy's own poetry mirrors the

development of his theory of poetic language, and the possibility of his critical writings being considered as elements of an interpretation of the historical development of art. Bonnefoy has expressly denied that any such interpretation forms a background to his thought:(1) but while the explicit formulation of a history of human artistic creativity and, beyond that, of the human spirit itself, would indeed represent the kind of ponderous, over-ambitious and over-conceptual enterprise that Bonnefoy sees, for instance, in Hegel's system, some of his own remarks could justify our seeking in his theory at least fragments - whose fragmentary nature constitutes their only validity - of such a conception, as applied in particular to the baroque period.

We may first establish clearly what Bonnefoy's view of poetic language is not, taking as starting-point a passage in his essay on the seventeenth-century Japanese poet Bashô added after its original appearance in the 1972 Festschrift for Georges Poulet, Mouvements premiers:

> Nous avons pris l'habitude, Occidentaux que nous sommes, de ne rapporter chaque réalité à son nom que par la voie d'un concept, qui la confond alors avec les autres 'semblables'. Et soit nous privilégions cette langue de la signification infinie, et sa généralité nous annule, mais pauvrement, sans lumière; est bien éteinte en nous l'étincelante nuée. Soit nous rêvons encore à quelque absolu pour nous-mêmes, mais il nous faut alors faire du sujet que nous demeurons ainsi une transcendance, par opposition aux autres choses ou êtres qui sont moins ou qui ne sont pas. (NR, pp. 340-41)

Discussion of this passage could lead in several directions. The emphasis on the involvement of the artist's personality in his creation of the work of art, mentioned in the last sentence quoted, is a relatively recent concern of Bonnefoy's, to which I will return. We may first of all note, however, that the passage sums up what Bonnefoy

(1) in conversation, Nice, 14 May 1975.

sees as the Scylla and Charybdis between which the modern poet must steer a course: on the one hand the dead language of conceptualisation, and on the other any kind of privileged transcendentalism. I have described the course which Bonnefoy strives for, and sees some modern French poets as having attained, as 'vérité de parole' (see section XI above). We may now take a closer look, however, at the habit of thought which consists 'de ne rapporter chaque réalité à son nom que par la voie d'un concept, qui la confond alors avec les autres "semblables"'. This confirms, I think, what I have tried to demonstrate in my remarks on proper names (see section VII above): that Bonnefoy distrusts the process by which language groups a series of phenomena into a category, say 'horse', thus denying to words in their normal usage the proper name's unique individual capacity for evoking 'l'existence effective, ici, devant moi' (I^2, p. 245) of the object to which it refers. The criticism, however, of a view of language which postulates the necessary intervention of a conceptual process (in Bonnefoy's sense of the word 'concept', that is, a shallow intellectualisation of reality) between a word and the object of its reference, also picks up implicitly the criticism which Bonnefoy makes explicit elsewhere of the approach to the kind of analysis of language which is common - indeed almost universal - in the twentieth century and which is exemplified by the work of Ferdinand de Saussure.

We have already seen (pp.90-91 above) how Bonnefoy refers to Saussure's distinction between 'langue' and 'parole', only to assert the primacy of 'parole', the individual speech-act seen as communication, over 'langue' considered as a system, which must be seen as something abstract. In 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', he compares his own approach to language with Saussure's theory of the double-faced linguistic sign which 'unit non une chose et un nom, mais

un concept et une image acoustique' [2] - terms which Saussure later identifies with 'signifié' and 'signifiant':[3]

> Il m'importe, en effet, de bien marquer que cette approche diffère, et de façon radicale, de ce qui passe ordinairement pour la seule saisie du signe qu'il soit possible de concevoir. . . . Saussure et ceux qui l'ont suivi ont montré que le signe est déterminé par une structure, ainsi ont-ils ajouté une dimension nouvelle à la signification et, partant, à la connaissance des oeuvres. Mais la fonction qu'ils reconnaissent au mot est toujours de simplement signifier, et leur richesse même devient dès lors un danger pour la réflexion sur la poésie. (I^2, pp. 244-45)

The reference to 'Saussure et ceux qui l'ont suivi' is vague enough to show that Bonnefoy is not concerned with entering into a polemic against the doctrine of any particular individual. His quarrel is with the whole idea of an analytical approach to language, which he sees as particularly irrelevant to a discussion of the language of poetry. He expresses his reservations through relatively rare references of the type I have quoted, and through such quietly indirect hints as his ironical use of 'traits distinctifs', a technical term of phonological analysis, in his description of the observer's first contact with the salamander - which is, of course, to be overtaken and transcended by his later experience of the salamander's <u>présence</u>: 'je regarde la salamandre, je reconnais ses traits distinctifs, comme l'on dit, - je vois <u>aussi</u> ce cou étroit, cette face grise, ce coeur qui bat doucement' (I^2, p. 246 - my emphasis). It may also be worth noting that in both the cases I have quoted - the distinction between 'langue' and 'parole' and the notion of the primarily referential (rather, say than evocatory) properties of the linguistic sign - Bonnefoy

(2) Ferdinand de Saussure, <u>Cours de linguistique générale</u> (3rd edition, Paris, 1965), p. 98.

(3) <u>ibid</u>., p. 99.

rejects the principle of Saussure's analytical approach to language. He does not follow the analytical method in order to dispute its results; on the contrary, as in the case I am about to examine, he admits that these may be valid, once the principle of analysis is accepted at all.

If, then, one goes on to ask what view of language Bonnefoy sets against an analytical approach, it has to be admitted that this is never spelt out in clear terms, perhaps because a direct statement of a position specifically opposed to analysis, aimed at refuting the analytical position, would itself have to be couched theoretically, and would therefore have to accept the modes of thought of the analytical view-point itself. Bonnefoy does, however, suggest an answer in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité'; and although this is not (as it could not be) a fully satisfactory formulation, it is interesting in the context of the overall development of his thinking. He admits, first of all, that the analytical approach may be justifiable in its own domain, but asserts that that domain is not relevant to poetry:

> Et cela semble évident. Que serait-ce que 'le cheval', sinon un concept? Un cheval, oui, devant moi, et 'le cheval' comme sa notion, quelle que soit la façon dont cette notion se détermine. - J'admets que ce point de vue permet de décrire correctement la façon dont la langue est disponible pour la plupart des usages. Mais justement la poésie n'est pas un 'emploi' de la langue. Peut-être une folie dans la langue. Mais qu'on ne peut comprendre en ce cas que par ses yeux de folie - que par sa façon à elle d'entendre et prendre les mots. (I^2, pp. 245-6)

It is perhaps a pity that Bonnefoy does not take further this argument stemming from his partial acceptance of analysis as a valid approach to language. It might be demonstrated that the features of language which are prominent in poetry - those features which, in Bonnefoy's

terms, allow ordinary language to approach the evocatory power of the proper name - are in fact to be found, to a greater or lesser degree, in almost all uses of language (most noticeably perhaps in 'rhetorical' uses such as the language of direct or implied political persuasion); and in no case can the effect of language easily be split by analysis into separate 'denotative' and 'connotative' functional elements. An analysis of denotation, which must be seen as primary in any theory of words as referents, can therefore fully account neither for the effects of language in poetry nor for a much wider range of linguistic effects.

Bonnefoy however does not attempt to construct an argument in this profoundly conceptual area. The price of his refusal to do so is that in this context he comes close to saying that poetry has nothing to do with the primary function of language as a system of references, and therefore to seem to fall almost by default into a theory of poetry which seriously diminishes the importance and relevance of poetry itself. In other contexts, by contrast, Bonnefoy opposes the world of analysis, ruled by the concept, to that of poetic experience (whether this is seen as 'présence', 'l'éphémère' or 'l'arrière-pays') and asserts his passionate rejection of the former while accepting and seeking to express, by however roundabout a route, the latter. He is generally at pains to deny any implication that the analytic approach can lead to an understanding of, or participation in, reality: whereas in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', with his reference to poetry 'qu'on ne peut comprendre en ce cas que par ses yeux de folie', he implicitly seems to allow the analytic approach that contact with reality which he denies it elsewhere.

Be that as it may - and the whole untypical passage may indeed be

tinged with irony - even in this context in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité' the apparent primacy of analysis is overturned when Bonnefoy goes on to evoke the notion of <u>présence</u>. He talks of the first stage in the perception of the salamander, which I have called 'simple classification', as categorising its objects 'comme ferait le mot de la prose' (I^2, p. 246); and this must inevitably lead, in the analytical efforts of <u>mauvaise présence</u>, to a realisation of 'l'angoissante tautologie des langues' (I^2, p. 247). The only way to escape from this tautology is to admit the relevance of analysis in its own domain, but to assert that <u>présence</u> can only spring from quite a different domain which, through the observer's participation in the experience of <u>présence</u>, takes over the domain of analysis and transfigures it also. <u>Présence</u> - and the use of language in poetry which may possibly express <u>présence</u>, despite 'l'angoissante tautologie des langues', in which phrase one senses an implicit comparison with 'parole' as true poetic articulacy - cannot therefore be rationalised, but must simply be asserted as an existential fact. Bonnefoy goes on to say of the salamander:

> Disons - car il faut sauver aussi la parole, et du désir fatal de tout définir - que son essence s'est répandue dans l'essence des autres êtres, comme le flux d'une analogie par laquelle je perçois tout dans la continuité et la suffisance d'un <u>lieu</u>, et dans la transparence de l'<u>unité</u>. Le mur est justifié, et l'âtre, et l'olivier dehors et la terre. Et moi, redevenu tout cela, réveillé à ma profonde saveur - car cet espace se voûte en moi comme l'intérieur de mon existence - je suis passé de la perception maudite à l'amour, qui est prescience de l'invisible. (I^2, p. 248)

This passage, then, after starting out with what might have become a theoretical discussion of Saussure's analysis of the way in which

language refers, with perhaps some consideration of the differences between poetry and prose, becomes a description of mystical experience; and the embryo discussion is simply brushed aside, its terms of reference implicitly rejected, and the whole section rounded off with a quotation from St. John of the Cross. It is of course quite legitimate for a poet to explore his poetic experience in this way, and to seek to describe in discursive language the route by which, in this case, he reaches a perception very similar to Blake's:

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.(4)

What is curious in Bonnefoy's case is not the fact of his describing mystical experience, but the starting-point of his description in a reference to the kind of analysis which one might expect him to ignore as completely irrelevant. The apparent contradiction, however, is fundamental to Bonnefoy's thought, the development of which can indeed be seen as a series of attempts to reconcile the two poles which might be called 'analysis' and, perhaps, 'non-analytical apprehension'. Though the passage which I have just discussed may be one of the less successful of these attempts, it shows particularly clearly what Bonnefoy calls elsewhere 'mon besoin maladroit d'une pensée cohérente' (AP, p. 131).

Indeed, although Bonnefoy's awareness of two diverging approaches to reality has not changed since his earliest published writings, his perception of the contrast between them has varied. In 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' he sees the analytical consciousness as a

(4) William Blake, 'Auguries of Innocence', Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. Keynes (4th edition, London, 1967), p. 118.

kind of nothingness which may suddenly be transformed into an awareness of the fullness of being, but the nature of this turning-point is not explored; it is expressed chiefly in terms of literary or mythological references. It could, of course, be argued that this is the only possible way to express such a notion, but its expression nevertheless seems somewhat precious and over-literary. There is enough analysis to whet the reader's appetite, but not enough to give real insight into how the change described might come about. Bonnefoy describes the starting-point for 'le pas baudelairien de l'amour des choses mortelles':

> Ici tout avenir et tout projet se dissipent. Le néant consume l'objet, nous sommes pris dans le vent de cette flamme sans ombre. Et nulle foi ne nous soutient plus, nulle formule, nul mythe, le plus intense regard s'achève désespéré. Restons pourtant devant cet horizon sans figure, vidé de soi. Tenons, si je puis dire, le pas gagné. Car il est vrai que déjà un changement se produit. L'astre morne de ce qui est, l'élémentaire Janus, tournant avec lenteur - mais dans l'instant - sur lui-même, nous découvre son autre face. Un possible apparaît sur la ruine de tout possible. (I^2, pp. 121-2)

In the later formulation of the contrast in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité' Bonnefoy, as we have seen, goes further towards a definition of the analytical process, splitting it into the two modes of perception I have called 'simple classification' and 'mauvaise présence', clarifies the notion of non-analytical apprehension (through présence) by an appeal to common human experience in the example of the salamander (though of course the fact that the animal is a salamander gives the experience a mythic dimension in itself), and seeks to show clearly how language is involved in these various apprehensions of reality. The essay, however, lays itself open to criticism on several

points of detail (some of which have already been remarked on, one of its faults being the number of purely conceptual arguments which the thesis-writer can find to quarrel with), and generally gives the impression of Bonnefoy struggling to achieve a kind of clarity which is irrelevant to his intentions.

The development, in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', of the example of the salamander is however an early indication of the broadening of Bonnefoy's preoccupations beyond what might appear, in the earlier essays, to be too great a degree of concentration on purely aesthetic questions. His more recent concern with the value of ordinary human experience, and with language as an agent for its communication, provides a means by which the painful dualism of analysis and non-analytical apprehension may be, if not solved, at least side-stepped in a way which allows his theory to leave behind its earlier unsuccessful striving for precision (which must inevitably become over-involved in conceptual thought) and instead to play its full part in that very broadening of his preoccupations.

Bonnefoy, of course, has always been concerned with the importance of everyday experience, through the notion, explored earlier, of l'éphémère; but in his early writings the affirmation of this depended on a process of aesthetic theorising, culminating in the description of an experience which, however insignificant it seemed, still represented some kind of privileged moment of artistic perception, consciously evoked as such. We have seen, however (pp.89ff.above), how, in his essay on Jouve, Bonnefoy treats the whole of everyday human experience and its expression in language as privileged insofar as it establishes human communication. In the long and often difficult final section of 'Baudelaire contre Rubens', published in Le Nuage rouge (a very significant expansion of

the version published in L'Ephémère no.9 in 1969), Bonnefoy develops this idea by contrasting the creative involvement of the artist in life both with the empty pretensions of the work of art seen from outside simply as an object, and with the mechanical deadness of the world of merely routine action. He first of all states the extreme position, which will be modified later, that the work of art, once completed and therefore cut off from the living artistic experience from which it arises, must become something static and lifeless. The image used is remarkable:

> Il est vrai que ce que l'écriture a touché n'est bientôt plus, pour le Midas qui s'y livre, qu'un dehors transformé, réformé, finalement aboli par le travail sans fin d'une cristallisation implacable. Aussi 'subjectif', aussi imprévisible et violent, aussi riche de contradictions et d'apports soit-il dans son rapport d'individu à autrui, l'auteur de ce qui se veut parole ne peut aboutir qu'à un texte, où le moi essentialisé, réduit aux dimensions de l'Intelligible, est comme une monnaie qu'on a retirée de l'échange, bien qu'elle reste comme jamais exposée à tous les regards. (NR, p. 64)

This currency is valueless because it is no longer available, as the most banal of ordinary language can be, for the purposes of living communication. It constitutes only 'des pages qui ne feront que s'obstiner dans leur dire, quels que soient les arguments que le lecteur leur opposera' (NR, p. 64).

This, however, as Bonnefoy recognises, is an unduly pessimistic and theoretical formulation. The reader does, after all, make contact with the work of art, even if contact is not established directly with the artistic impulse which created it, but can only be mediated through the imperfect image of that impulse provided by the text: 'tant d'oeuvres, quand je cherchais pour ma part non certes le

divertissement mais à me trouver, pour sortir d'une solitude, m'ont été un secours, le seul à portée, et appréciable! Platon pour préparer au Christ, oui, peut-être: Shakespeare, en tout cas, et Rimbaud, et Baudelaire tout le premier, pour ouvrir à l'expérience de l'être' (NR, p. 65).

It might be objected that here Bonnefoy is taking a very long route to arrive at quite a simple statement: that we do gain illumination from works of art, even if the experience of that illumination is not the same (and how could it be?) as the experience which gave rise to the works of art themselves. But Bonnefoy's earlier criticism had continually emphasised the distance between artistic experience and the work of art itself, seen as a possible object of analysis (which he considered the only, or at least the predominant, way in which the modern Western consciousness could see it). Against this background, it is not surprising that the discovery of the possible communicative powers which even a static text possesses should be unexpected. Bonnefoy, in fact, is here moving towards a redefinition of the idea of the relationship between art and life which underlay his earlier work. Having established the perhaps obvious point that literature cannot be simply dismissed because it does not afford perfect communication of artistic experience between writer and reader, he goes on to admit that the world of action, for its part, is not always experienced in its full potential existential richness; it may indeed represent an empty stasis, just as the literary text may do so:

> Que des hommes 'agissent', dans le champ apparemment ouvert du possible, et combien de fois c'est sous l'empire de références figées à des valeurs jamais remises en cause - structures intelligibles qu'on peut tenir de ce fait pour

> autant des refuges que des moyens, autant l'occasion d'un rêve, 'doublé', celui-ci, de bonne conscience, qu'une prise effective sur le problème à résoudre! Gestes-signes, par quoi l'être prétendu agissant en fait se donne figure, aliénant avec un morne plaisir son libre arbitre dans l'écriture, se faisant langue, c'est-à-dire forme, solitude, silence, quand il aurait pu et même dû se risquer dans un début de parole . . . (NR, pp. 65-6)

The assertion, made explicit only at this relatively late point in Bonnefoy's work, that 'life' and 'art' cannot be as easily opposed as seems to be assumed in his earlier essays, represents a significant re-ordering of his ideas. He thus succeeds in breaking out of the strained, and ultimately fruitless, confrontation which so far I have presented in terms of 'existence' and 'essence'. This does not imply any simplification of his ideas on the intellectual level. On the contrary, the argument to be found in 'Baudelaire contre Rubens' and in the other essays collected in Le Nuage rouge is as complex as any in his earlier work. Its greater variety, however, provides a commentary on, and is an integral part of, the broadening of his artistic range which has taken place since the publication of Pierre écrite and Un Rêve fait à Mantoue (which themselves represented a considerable development beyond his work published in the 1950s).

Bonnefoy takes as starting-point for his new exploration of the relationship between life and art the contemplation of the Belgian baroque pulpits on which Baudelaire had commented in Pauvre Belgique:

> Dans ce second moment de la pulsation la chaire, qui est l'image de l'oeuvre - non, sa vie même - , se propose à mon souvenir, se maintient devant moi pour un avenir, comme le 'positif' lumineux, et possible, déjà réel, déjà

> partout ébauché, déjà parfois rayonnant, de l'écriture que notre temps de la loi, dans sa crispation, ne connaît que tyrannique ou souffrante. Quelle métamorphose, sans que rien pourtant ait changé, - et quel changement en moi-même! Avant, eh bien j'aurais demandé, comme Baudelaire, comme Pascal, qu'entre écriture et présence, vertige et vie, on choisisse, quitte dans mon propre destin à ne pas me résigner à le faire. Mais maintenant . . .
>
> Maintenant, oui, je sens se former en moi une nouvelle évidence. (NR, p. 70)

We have, indeed, seen Bonnefoy in many contexts insisting on the irreconcilable duality of life and art, 'quitte . . . à ne pas /se/ résigner à /choisir/'. The actual nature of the 'nouvelle évidence' which he mentions, however, is more difficult to pin down. Its first characteristic, perhaps, is that it can only be expressed in personal terms, through the human experience of Bonnefoy the man, rather than simply through the ideas (no matter how concrete) of Bonnefoy the thinker, or even through the images of Bonnefoy the poet (insofar as these incarnations can, in fact, be considered as separate). This is shown in the growing importance of explicit autobiography in Bonnefoy's work, through his accounts of his childhood experiences, of travel and of his artistic development, in L'Arrière-pays, through the autobiographical elements (whether they refer to dreams, visions or reality) in the stories and prose-poems of Rue Traversière, and through the recognisable anchoring of Dans le leurre du seuil in personal experience (as, for instance in the passage on the death of Boris de Schloezer (P, p. 234)), as well as in imagery more distantly connected with the poet's experience, and in myth.

In 'Baudelaire contre Rubens' Bonnefoy goes on to describe the

'nouvelle évidence' with which he has made contact:

> Comment définir cette conviction, cet acquiescement? J'ai eu longtemps moi aussi l'expérience du doute, du vertige, - le rêve, la crispation, le refus ont longtemps pris le pas en moi sur la confiance qui cherchait forme, et en un sens ils sont toujours là: le tableau du grand horizon, avec ses montagnes, ses routes, ses villes inouies inconnues, a toujours les mêmes nuées, qui offusquent le soleil, le tonnerre gronde, passent rapidement des ondées. Mais aux 'théologies négatives' que me mettaient en esprit jadis ces étendues difficiles, se mêle à chaque rémission plus intense une lumière d'en dessous, d'au-dessus, de toutes parts, comme si l'astre masqué n'était pas ou plus la seule source, comme si avait soif de répondre en moi, à cette ardeur déchirée, l'afflux d'une autre origine . . . Paysages mystérieux, comme lorsqu'un retour de soleil du soir se prend dans la pluie qui cesse, - nuage rouge au-dessus des routes. Evidence de la lumière comme en soi-même sa cause et en soi seule sa fin. (NR, pp. 72-73)

The 'théologies négatives' mentioned here are also mentioned in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', where Bonnefoy says, 'cette poésie qui ne peut saisir la présence, dessaisie de tout autre bien sera du grand acte clos la proximité angoissée, la <u>théologie négative</u>' (I^2, p. 125; Bonnefoy's emphasis). As I have mentioned above (p. 22), the notion of 'théologie négative' - that the essence of God is unknowable and can only be referred to through God's negative attributes - is widespread in early Christian thinking, and is also relevant especially to Plotinus. Such a notion indeed provides an apt metaphor for Bonnefoy's view of the possibility of poetic articulacy and the context in which that possibility may exist, in what we may call the more rigorous phases of the development of his thought. When the poet's struggle to make sense of the world results

in such an anguished dialectic of existence and essence as is described in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', stability is indeed unknowable and words can explore only the periphery of an area of poetic articulacy which itself can hardly be hinted at, far less referred to or described. Words, as possible expressions of 'tout ce que l'univers propose d'indéfini', can hold only a paradoxically inarticulate promise of something beyond themselves: 'Ils apparaissent aux confins de la négativité du langage comme des anges parlant d'un dieu encore inconnu' (I^2, pp. 125-6). Poetry, Bonnefoy implies here, must be either something totally magical and inexplicable, like Goethe's true symbol in which 'the particular represents the universal, not as a dream or shadow, but as the living and instantaneous revelation of the unfathomable',(5) or else it must fail completely to 'arracher ce qui est au sommeil de ses formes stables, qui est le triomphe du néant' (I^2, p. 125).

This, however, is of course an unnecessarily rigorous line of argument, which could indeed lead to the kind of extremity of aesthetic purism by which Bonnefoy elsewhere sees Mallarmé as having been tempted. Just as Bonnefoy's evocations of 'l'Un' and 'l'Unité' lay greater emphasis on participation in the plenitude of existence than a strict application of the relevant Plotinian notions would warrant, even at the end of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' he suggests that the attainment of poetic articulacy may be simpler than his earlier line of argument had suggested: 'Etait-ce donc si difficile? Ne suffisait-il pas d'apercevoir, au flanc de quelque montagne, une vitre au soleil du soir?' (I^2, p. 131).

In his later work, indeed, Bonnefoy has achieved a much calmer apprehension

(5) from Kunst und Altertum V:3 (1826), translated and quoted by Erich Heller, The Disinherited Mind (London, 1961) p. 90.

of a mystery which he is content to evoke as such, without seeking to give it a theoretical explanation: it is significant that the reference he makes in evoking that mystery in 'Baudelaire contre Rubens' is not to any theory, or even to myth, but to the painting by Mondrian which gives its title to the whole volume - and, what is more, to that painting seen in relation to an imagined, or perhaps remembered, incident from a context of simple reality - 'lorsqu'un retour de soleil du soir se prend dans la pluie qui cesse' (NR, p. 73). This might indeed be the same incident alluded to at the end of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie'.

It is therefore as a communication of simple reality that Bonnefoy now wishes to consider poetic language: no longer, perhaps, as the 'réalisme initiatique' (I^2, p. 130) of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', because that, after all, like the same essay's 'théologie négative', relates to a process of conceptual reasoning and yearning for an intellectual absolute, but rather a kind of realism where the world is simply itself, without any burden of stated or implied ontological significance, but with a numinous quality which comes from the poet's calm vision of the whole of reality, and the particular object which is a part of it - seen, however, not as an object by an observing subject, but as an éphémère, participating in the observer's existence, - as impregnated with poetic truth (a vision, of course, which may have to come out of, and transcend, some previous more intellectual quest): 'N'ai-je pas le droit d'espérer . . . qu'il est un emploi simple des signes; et que le Signe majeur, s'il ne vient pas à nous là où nous l'avons attendu, sur les chemins du miracle, naîtra, naîtra simplement, chair et souffle, comme un enfant - et anonyme dès lors, comme chaque homme

doit l'être - , dans la parole commune?' (NR, p. 73).

The possible echo here of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is another example of Bonnefoy's fondness for alluding to systems of thought or belief to which he does not explicitly subscribe but with which he may wish in particular contexts to express his sympathy indirectly. His main emphasis, however, is not here on established religious doctrine. He had earlier written, towards the end of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', 'Déjà, pour celui qui cherche, et même s'il sait bien qu'aucun chemin ne le guide, le monde autour de lui sera une demeure de signes. Le moindre objet, l'être le plus fugitif, par le bien qu'ils feront, réveilleront l'espoir d'un bien absolu' (I^2, p. 128). His later theory, though well aware of this hope, might be content to say, 'pour celui qui cherche . . . le monde autour de lui sera'. For 'signe' in the context of 'Baudelaire contre Rubens' and Bonnefoy's other more recent work is not a mere pointer, and should not be confused with Saussure's linguistic sign; and if it comes from 'la parole commune', it is nevertheless not observed from the outside, as by the analytical consciousness, but seen, as it were, from the inside, through the poet's participation in the communication which is its raison d'être. This sign, in other words, is the artistic experience which is called in L'Arrière-pays 'à la fois signe et substance' (AP, p. 10) and expressed in Dans le leurre du seuil in these terms:

> . . . la lumière joue avec la lumière
> Et le signe est la vie
> Dans l'arbre de la transparence de ce qui est.
>
> Je crie, Regarde,
> Le signe est devenu le lieu. (P, pp. 277-8)

It is interesting that this last expression of something which, in

terms of Bonnefoy's prose writings, represents a relatively recent development, is to be found (though perhaps in a rather imperfect context) in a poem published in Cahiers du Sud as early as 1962 which only found its place in a published volume, Dans le leurre du seuil, in 1975:

Lieu
. . . Tu es cachée
Et pourtant tu emplis la grande salle.
Tu es absente
Et pourtant la musique dans nos voix.
Le signe est devenu le lieu, les marches sombres
Se sont enfin élargies et brisées.
Sur la terrasse de pierre
Nous voici maintenant pour tout un jour.
Peut-être sommes-nous comme la flamme
Quand elle se détache du flambeau,
La phrase de fumée un instant lisible
Avant de s'effacer dans l'air souverain. (6)

The play of permanence and impermanence, of absence and presence, in this poem marks it as an imperfectly realised formulation of a kind of imagery of physical substance which will only find full expression on the much larger canvas of Dans le leurre du seuil. The quotation from that volume which I have just given (p. 195) continues:

Sous le porche de foudre
Fendu
Nous sommes et ne sommes pas.
Entre avec moi, obscure,
Accepte par la brèche au cri de faim.

Et soyons l'un pour l'autre comme la flamme
Quand elle se détache du flambeau,
La phrase de fumée un instant lisible
Avant de s'effacer dans l'air souverain. (P, p. 278)

(6) in 'Poèmes ébauchés', Cahiers du Sud 365 (1962), pp. 7-12

It is interesting also that the later version involves the poet, explicitly, in creating the moment of privileged experience he expresses ('Je crie, regarde . . . soyons l'un pour l'autre') - though this of course remains a moment, instantaneous and ephemeral - and this may be seen as representing a gain in poetic self-confidence on Bonnefoy's part in parallel with the gain in self-confidence in his critical and theoretical attitudes which I have pointed out, even though the poetic image itself dates from much earlier.

XIX The languages of Bonnefoy's poetry

It is perhaps appropriate that in attempting to summarise the development of Bonnefoy's poetic theory - starting from his differing perceptions of the distinction between what might be called the analytic and non-analytic ways of approaching reality, and going on to his realisation of the value of human involvement in reality as a kind of mediating force, in which can also be involved the contact between artist and audience through the audience's experience of the work of art - we have reached a point where we have to take some account of the ways in which Bonnefoy's poetry reflects the development of the theory which I have sketched. To look at Bonnefoy's poetry in this perspective is perhaps to go the wrong way round, in that Bonnefoy would certainly consider his poetry as the primary element in his creative output, with his criticism and other prose writings playing a secondary role.(1) While acknowledging that, it may nevertheless be useful to look briefly at the ways in which Bonnefoy's poetic development may throw some light on his theory as set out in his essays: a study primarily directed at his poetic practice could no doubt, from a different perspective, similarly benefit from insights taken from his critical work.

(1) He has in fact said as much (in conversation, Nice, 14 May 1975).

Bonnefoy has claimed, in a note appended to the NRF/Poésie edition of his early poetry, that his poetic project had always been conceived of as a whole: 'Ces poèmes sont les premiers moments de ce qui fut - depuis Anti-Platon, l'origine - toujours conçu et attendu, mais par mirage peut-être, comme le devenir d'un seul livre en au moins quatre parties' (NRF, p. 222). This statement - on which Bonnefoy has not, to my knowledge, significantly expanded elsewhere, though a remark in his note on the reprinting of 'L'Ordalie' seems to indicate that the overall shape of his work did not turn out quite as expected ('Mais voici la recherche plus avancée - quatre étapes, déjà, sur le chemin, j'avais cru que ce serait suffisant, - et je vois surtout maintenant que les courants de l'écriture ne se partagent pas aussi simplement que je le pensais.' (O, p. 44)) - could of course mean anything, or nothing. The typical qualifying phrase 'mais par mirage peut-être' leaves it unclear whether Bonnefoy is claiming that a project for his entire poetic output was mapped out in detail at a very early stage of his career, or whether he simply grasped in principle at an early stage the basis of his poetic endeavour, whose details would depend to a considerable extent on the course taken by his life and his artistic preoccupations generally. Whatever Bonnefoy may have had in mind in making the statement, however, it is indeed possible to see his work as a progression exploring in different ways and with a growing depth of penetration the relationship between human consciousness and its experience of the world, which includes the phenomena of physical substance and of death. His critical work may equally be seen, to some extent at least, as pursuing a parallel course: and while the major part of this study has been concerned with exploring the consistent elements in his critical work, I have indicated in the previous section how his attitudes have changed and developed over time.

Similarly, the developing approaches of Bonnefoy's poetry to the relationship between consciousness and reality, whether or not they are to be seen as four parts of 'un seul livre', could be categorised in a number of ways, depending on the critical approach adopted: John E Jackson, for instance, summarises his investigation of Bonnefoy's poetic progress through his four main volumes under the headings 'Le pays où mourir . . . le temps recommencé . . . la présence et le rêve . . . monde détruit et monde rédimé'.(2) It is beyond my purpose here to undertake a further analysis in these or similar terms of Bonnefoy's poetic output. Analysis either of the content or the linguistic structure of his poetry could no doubt identify the characteristic themes and the linguistic features which give his work its overall homogeneity of tone and content, and contribute to the distinctive quality of his poetic 'voice'. Bonnefoy's prosody, for instance, has been investigated by Richard Vernier in relation to Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve(3) and by Frédéric Deloffre in relation to Pierre écrite.(4)

More immediately relevant to my main purpose here of setting out the ways in which Bonnefoy sees artistic creativity as operating in poetry is some treatment of the extent to which each of his volumes of verse, although possibly contributing to the single 'livre en au moins quatre parties' referred to above, represents in some sense a fresh approach to reality through the development of a distinctive style of poetic

(2) John E Jackson, La Question du moi (Neuchâtel, 1978), pp. 243-324.

(3) Richard Vernier, 'Prosodie et silence dans un recueil d'Yves Bonnefoy', Studia Neophilologica 45 (1973), pp. 288-97.

(4) Frédéric Deloffre, 'Versification traditionnelle et versification libérée d'après un recueil d'Yves Bonnefoy', in Le Vers français au vingtième siècle. Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, ed. Parent (Paris, 1967), pp. 43-55, with discussion, pp. 56-64.

language. In 'Baudelaire contre Rubens' Bonnefoy clearly states the importance of the specifically verbal element within each volume. Talking of the 'nouvelle évidence' (NR, p. 70) of the relationship between life and art which he has experienced, as against the temptations of routine or rhetoric, he concludes:

> Je voudrais rappeler, en bref, ce qui a lieu aux premiers instants de la création poétique. J'ai dit, on ne l'a entendu que trop, j'ai répété, je redis encore, hantise qui est bien sûr une tentation, un appel, que le livre de poésie s'organise comme une langue, se ferme ainsi à toute autre langue, fragmente donc l'unité, compromet ou ruine la présence. (NR, p. 75)

We may pause here to note that this is a restatement of the extreme position that written language, even in poetry, must fail as a medium of communication precisely because it represents a 'langue', in the idiosyncratic approach that Bonnefoy takes to Saussure's distinction, rather than the living impulse towards verbal communication represented by 'parole'. It is therefore fixed and static, rather than dynamically active, 'comme une monnaie qu'on a retirée de l'échange' (NR, p. 64). This view in itself, however, is not one with which the poet can be satisfied, however much it may represent 'une tentation, un appel', because the simple acceptance that poetry can only exist in such static terms is in fact a denial of the poetic impulse and ultimately of the possibility of communication through language in poetry at all. Bonnefoy goes on to describe the status of the poetic impulse itself:

> Mais le mot avec lequel on va commencer d'écrire, le mot qui a monté dans ma voix tendue vers cette phrase future, qui doit être pour tous, qui tient aussi du serment, ce mot, s'il se propose à moi, c'est avant le travail des surdéterminations inconscientes qu'il le fait, c'est avant même celui des conceptualisations de la prose 'de reportage' ordinaire: et

> en ceci il reste contemporain de mon espoir de présence, il ne l'a pas abolie dans ce premier pas, né de mon émotion à précisément des rencontres, des sympathies, des attachements, il en porte inentamée l'exigence. (NR, p. 75)

The problem, however, remains: how can the poetic impulse, even embodied in the kind of primal articulacy here described, find some form of more permanent existence which will nevertheless avoid the dead stasis of ordinary written language? Bonnefoy goes on to hint at a solution and, typically, turns away from it almost immediately:

> Dans cet instant d'origine encore, l'absolu, c'est-à-dire l'incarnation, laisse à briller en lui un reflet au moins de son brasier, notre verbe. Les voûtements d'un sacré - le pain et le vin, disait Hölderlin -, ce mot de l'instauration ébauchée reste assez robuste pour en supporter le grand poids et s'articuler de leur lumière. Et c'est donc de ce fait un carrefour. (NR, p. 75)

The suggestions here are complex. In the first place, the poetic impulse may be imbued with symbolic significance through the poet's use of 'les mots profonds'. As we have seen earlier, however, Bonnefoy's attitude to these is ambiguous: he sometimes suggests that they may name universally valid essences, while elsewhere he considers that they may call up notions of particular psychological significance to individual poets, as when he states that they 'varient certes avec chacun d'entre nous' (I^2, p. 252). Here, however, he is suggesting something further - that the poetic word may, at least potentially, make contact with the central enactive religious symbol of the Real Presence, as a reminder of the word having literally been made flesh. But this suggestion is of course not one to which Bonnefoy, as an atheist, could give other than temporary and oblique assent. It is therefore tempered, characteristically, by the implication that even

this poetic revelation may depend not on any kind of intrinsic validity but on the force it may be given in the work of a great poet - and the indirectness of this is compounded ironically by the example he alludes to of Hölderlin's Brod und Wein, an elegy which in fact laments the separation between common reality and any kind of divinity.

In any case, therefore, any suggestion - or at least any explicit suggestion - of a form of validity for the poetic word can only lead to a kind of crossroads at which, as in L'Arrière-pays, the poet runs the risk of concluding only that the possibility of true poetic articulacy lies along the road he has not taken, while the actual expression he has chosen remains subject to 'cet émiettement, l'apparence' (NR, p. 75). And Bonnefoy finally suggests - though this formulation may well, and in the dialectic spiral of his thought indeed must, turn out yet again to be provisional - that the poet must turn his back on his writing considered in any way as an absolute, while maintaining a commitment to its validity as a kind of ephemeral commentary on a human endeavour which itself, ironically, is authentic only insofar as it seeks to explore the possibility of the poetic word as an absolute expression of présence:

> qui m'empêche de refuser non le fait de cette écriture - elle est là, c'est mon choix d'aujourd'hui, que je ne puis désavouer - mais tout son poids de symboles particuliers, de hantises, tout ce fatum qu'elle a substitué, désir fermé sur son rêve, à cette ouverture d'hier et de demain? . . . Ecrire, certes, - qui a jamais pu ne pas le faire? Mais désécrire, aussi bien, par une expérience complémentaire au poème, par la maturation que lui seul permet, les fantasmes et les chimères dont notre passé, autrement, obscurcirait notre vue. Et au total, non plus désormais quelque livre aveuglément confirmé deux ans après par un autre, mais une vie où, l'écrit n'étant plus dans sa profondeur même de polysémies et d'images qu'un brouillon

> qui s'effacerait à mesure, ce qui se ferait peu à peu, et parlerait comme tel, c'est une présence à soi, un destin: la finitude qui se fait claire et veille ainsi sur le sens. (NR, pp. 75-76)

This fairly dense statement of the ways in which the poet's consciousness may relate to his work as that work develops is some distance from, but is nevertheless relevant to, the consideration of the developing work as a reflection of the poet's artistic development generally - a perspective which must be of some importance to the reader who for his part is anxious to establish through the all-too-fallible 'text' the dimension of communication which he must hope to participate in with the poet if his experience of the poetry is to be of any value at all. Bonnefoy gives us a glimpse of the poetic process seen in this light in his essay 'Sur la fonction du poème', when he talks of the 'rupture' from which the writing of a volume of poetry starts:

> Dans cet esprit, je ne cherche pas, au début, à dire, ayant au contraire une langue (celle du livre antérieur) à oublier, sacrifier. Et vient un moment où les mots surgissent, ébauchant le réseau dont il me faudra emplir les espaces, comprendre le vouloir, élaguer le sens. Un jour la langue nouvelle est là, avec sa logique. (NR, p. 274)

This partly echoes the mention in 'Baudelaire contre Rubens' of 'le mot avec lequel on va commencer d'écrire' (NR, p. 75), but the notion of a separate 'language' being almost deliberately created for each book of poetry takes a stage further the idea in 'Baudelaire contre Rubens' of each volume having its own language, even if that language, from the point of view of the outside observer, can only be considered and commented on as 'langue' rather than 'parole'. Later in 'Sur la fonction du poème', Bonnefoy goes on to warn off the potential critic -

particularly the 'formalist' critic - who might be tempted to '/confondre/ le texte d'un livre - qui est bien une langue, un univers, avec ses lois, son dire plus nombreux que le contenu explicite, son moi mythique en lieu et place de la présence - et l'écriture possible d'une personne, groupe de transformations combien plus vaste à son tour que les partis définis et occasionnels par quoi se décident les livres' (NR, p. 276). It would be beyond the scope of this study to consider in any detail what specific peculiarities may be discerned in the languages of each of Bonnefoy's books of poetry, and what connections (if any) may be demonstrated between them and the poetic impulse which produced them. Such an analysis would have to consider, on the level of syntax as well as on that of imagery, to what extent each of Bonnefoy's four main books of poetry represents a closed system, and in order to do this thoroughly a full methodology of stylistic analysis would have to be set up to take into account not only the features which are peculiar to each volume of poetry, but also the features (such,as Graham Martin has suggested, as the idiosyncratic use of articles[5]) which may be found throughout Bonnefoy's poetic language, but which are exceptional in relation to standard French usage. This, while of great interest in relation to Bonnefoy's poetic achievement generally, would be too ambitious a project for inclusion in this study which is basically concerned with Bonnefoy's poetic theory as set out in his essays.

While, therefore, it would not be appropriate here to sketch in even the outline of an exhaustive analysis of the development of Bonnefoy's poetic language as a whole, it may be worth indicating the possible scope of such an investigation and giving one or two pointers - in the

(5) Graham Dunstan Martin, 'Evoking the "objet profond": the poetry of Yves Bonnefoy' in Michael Bishop, ed. The Language of Poetry: Crisis and Solution (Amsterdam, 1980), p. 82. See also my discussion on the definite article in 'Movement and Immobility in a Poem by Yves Bonnefoy', Modern Language Review 72, 3 (July 1977), p. 568.

form of remarks on the more immediately obvious characteristics of the differing uses of language and imagery in each of Bonnefoy's volumes - towards the lines along which the investigation might be pursued.

The bulk of such a study would have to be concerned with seeking to tease out the ways in which idiosyncratic usages in the field of syntax characterise Bonnefoy's language, and the particular language of each of his books. It is impossible, without undertaking a full analytical exercise, to give any real indication of what this investigation would reveal. It is clear, however, that it would have to take into account, for instance, such obvious peculiarities of language as the formula whereby, in Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve, a close relationship between the poet's persona and the figure of Douve is marked by such phrases as 'Je te voyais courir' (P, p. 23). Further examples of the same syntactic fingerprint, which in Bonnefoy's work is well-nigh confined to his first volume, are:

Je t'ai vue ensablée au terme de ta lutte (P, p. 29)
Je te découvre étendue, (P, p. 31)
Mais je vois tes yeux se corrompre (P, p. 35)
je te vois luire, Douve immobile, (P, p. 38)
Je te nommerai guerre (P, p. 51)
je tiens Douve morte (P, p. 55)
Toute une nuit je t'ai rêvée ligneuse, Douve, (P, p. 75)

Similarly, in Hier régnant désert the repeated and distinctive use of the phrases 'Il y a que . . .' or 'Il y avait que . . .' give the language of the volume a specific imprint and appear, in contrast to the integrating phrase 'Je te /vois/ . . .' in Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve, to reduce the poet's involvement in the poems

and distance his persona from them. Examples of this are:

Il y a que la transparence de la flamme / Amèrement nie le jour (P, p. 109)

Il y a que la lampe brûlait bas, (P, p. 110)

Il y avait / Qu'une voix demandait d'être crue, . . . (P, p. 115)

Il y avait qu'il fallait détruire et détruire et détruire, (P, p. 117)

Il y a que les doigts s'étaient crispés, (P, p. 127)

Il y a qu'une épée était engagée / Dans la masse de pierre. (P, p. 139)

In the language of Pierre écrite, and particularly in that of Dans le leurre du seuil, there are fewer examples of conspicuous verbal formulae. This may reflect the achievement in Bonnefoy's later work of a poetic language which is closer to ordinary syntactical usage than that of his first two volumes - a feature which in its turn may demonstrate his developing mastery of an idiom whose characteristics, in parallel with Bonnefoy's theoretical preoccupations, are to describe a poetic world which has clear links with the real world and which does not largely depend on tightly-ordered and idiosyncratic forms of language, as such, to enact its existence. This is not to imply, however, that a full investigation of the language of the later volumes would not reveal equally characteristic, though less conspicuous, examples of syntactic organisation. In Pierre écrite, for instance, we may note a procedure whereby an image is repeated in order to mark, in one of several possible ways, a change in poetic intensity connected with the achievement, or with a hint of the achievement, of présence. This procedure depends for its effect on simple, bold repetition, with the same word taking on, usually within a single line, two different levels of intensity, thus bringing forcibly to the reader's attention the changing ontological status of the image. Examples of this are:

Et le feuillage aussi brille sous le feuillage, (P, p. 163)

L'arbre vieillit dans l'arbre, c'est l'été. / L'oiseau franchit le chant de l'oiseau et s'évade. (P, p. 201)

Le jour au fond du jour sauvera-t-il / Le peu de mots que nous fûmes ensemble? (P, p. 212)

. . . On a dit au coeur / D'être le coeur. (P, p. 227)

These few indications may suffice to suggest that there are certainly elements discernible at a syntactic level in each of Bonnefoy's books of poetry which may show the individual characteristics of each, and confirm the existence in each case of a separate 'langue nouvelle . . . avec sa logique' (NR, p. 274), even if a much more rigorous analysis would be required to demonstrate in detail the ways in which the particular 'mot qui a monté dans ma voix tendue vers cette phrase future' (NR, p. 75) may be seen to have manifested itself at each stage of his poetic development and to reflect the development of his theoretical preoccupations.

It may however be possible to demonstrate a little more clearly, even on a very cursory examination of Bonnefoy's poetry, how, in his choice of predominant areas of imagery in each book, his poetry may be seen to move in parallel with his critical work. In particular, we may note the changing status of mythology in his poetry, which seems to reflect the movement of his theory towards a greater preoccupation with simple reality and ordinary human concerns.

In the first place, Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve places much greater emphasis than the succeeding volumes on mythological references. This may be seen on the one hand in the use of established mythology, as in the mentions of the Maenad and the Osirian legends of renewal in 'Le seul témoin' (P, pp. 45-50) and elsewhere, of the Phoenix in a number of poems and of Cassandra in 'Hic est locus patriae' (P, p. 72)

and 'Cassandre, dira-t-il . . .' (P, p. 79). (These latter references however represent a complex network of associations for Bonnefoy, relating also to the character Cassandre in the early récit L'Ordalie, whose imagery 'prenait forme, irrésistiblement, de poèmes'.(6)) On the other hand, the imagery of Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve depends also on more generalised references to figures which have a mythological dimension but which are not treated as mythological characters capable of being evoked directly by means of proper names, as in the reference to Charon as 'l'informe nautonier' in 'Aux Arbres' (P, p. 43) or the various references to the salamander in 'La Salamandre' (P, p. 74-77) and 'Lieu de la salamandre' (P, p. 89). Most important of all in this volume are the references to the figure of Douve herself - the only instance in which Bonnefoy has undertaken the creation of an entirely new 'mythological' figure, without any basis in given mythological reference, and thus the establishment of an autonomous poetic system which depends relatively little on any appeal or reference to the mythological element in ordinary human experience.

In this respect the imagery of Hier régnant désert represents a movement away from explicit reference to, and more particularly from the creation of, any kind of mythology, and the beginnings of a greater emphasis on the importance in poetic terms of phenomenal reality. Although the book's tone is often negative, in that it concentrates in general on the destruction and abandonment of any kind of fixed certainty such as that which may be represented by 'given' mythology (in such poems as 'La Beauté' (P, p. 114) or 'L'Imperfection est la cime' (P, p. 117)), there are also indications of a positive acceptance of the value of physical reality, as for instance in 'Rive d'une autre mort' (P, p. 101)

(6) L'Ephémère 1 (1966), p. 52.

where 'L'oiseau qui s'est dépris d'être Phénix / Demeure seul dans l'arbre pour mourir./ . . . Il fait un lent retour à la matière d'arbre'. While, therefore, Hier régnant désert may be seen to some extent as the volume in which Bonnefoy plunges almost in despair into mauvaise présence, it also contains suggestions of a movement beyond that negative state into the revelation of présence, no longer primarily through contact with any form of mythology but through the exploration of mauvaise présence itself, in the same way as Baudelaire is seen in Bonnefoy's essay as having explored and identified himself with death in order to make it articulate (I^2, p. 32); and this exploration leads to the suggestion that meditation on simple reality may constitute a way forward for the poet. A particular example of this movement towards the acceptance of, and involvement in, reality is the poem 'A la voix de Kathleen Ferrier' (P, p. 137) which in addressing itself to an actual modern singer goes beyond anything else in Hier régnant désert and to some extent prefigures the appearance of individual human beings in Dans le leurre du seuil.

The imagery of Pierre écrite avoids any overt rejection of mythological references such as may be found in 'La Beauté' or 'L'Imperfection est la cime', and this may in itself indicate a further stage in the development of Bonnefoy's concern to make contact with the real, rather than with any sort of readily-available mythological system, since given mythology has simply been overtaken rather than having to be explicitly rejected. In Pierre écrite Bonnefoy moves towards the expression of physical substance in two main ways - through the icon-like naming of individual poems 'Une pierre', on which I have remarked in passing earlier (see p. 69 above), and through a strikingly direct and powerful form of evocation of the plenitude of nature.

We may contrast the first of these poetic procedures - the device whereby poems are named 'Une Pierre' - with Bonnefoy's attempt in his first volume to create a mythological figure, Douve, to be integrated into a system depending also to some extent on given mythological references. The naming of poems 'Une Pierre', and their integration into the overall scheme of the volume Pierre écrite, again aims at associating the imagery of the volume with something beyond the poems themselves, and something beyond the simple reference-system of ordinary language: but the difference is that whereas Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve tries to set up something approaching a mythological system, which in the last analysis can be appreciated, in the modern age, only on the level of intellectual abstraction, Pierre écrite associates its imagery with the physical substance of stone, a common element of all human experience as well as, in terms of Bonnefoy's theory of the enactive power of poetic language, an 'objet profond' (H, p. 244). The plenitude of nature in Pierre écrite may equally be mediated at times (as, in the sequence 'L'été de nuit (P, pp. 163-171), by indirect reference to the myth of the Garden of Eden), but it is nevertheless more forcefully and freely expressed than in previous volumes. Where mythological figures appear explicitly in Pierre écrite (as in the case of Phénix in 'Le lieu des morts' (P, p. 183), Aglaure in 'Une pierre' (P, p. 190) or Coré in 'Le Dialogue d'angoisse et de désir' (P, p. 220)) they are not mentioned simply for the sake of the strength of the validating mythological reference which they might bring into the poems from outside, but take their place naturally as one of a number of elements of imagery, along with images of the natural world, of the world as seen by art, and to some extent of ordinary life (particularly in 'Jean et Jeanne' (P, p. 189), where the human figures, though not without archetypal significance, are

basically seen as individuals).

This tendency towards the concentration of a number of ranges of imagery on simple human experiences is continued in Dans le leurre du seuil. Here, the system of poetic reference within which Bonnefoy operates is less than ever dependent on given mythology or on any attempt (as with the figure of Douve) to create a direct equivalent of myth, but relies to a very large extent on the building-up of images taken from reality, which in some cases are clearly identifiable as coming from Bonnefoy's own experience: these autobiographical elements do not however jar on the reader but take their place naturally in the image-system which the poem as a whole sets up. It is even less appropriate to treat Dans le leurre du seuil as simply a collection of shorter pieces than is the case with the earlier volumes. Thus, the mention of a deathbed experience of Boris de Schloezer (P, p. 234) serves to illustrate the gap with which Bonnefoy is concerned at this point in the poem between the simple plenitude of physical existence and man's yearning to make of that plenitude something beyond physical existence; but the mention of this particular incident in itself anchors the poem in the reality of the poet's human experience and thus serves to avoid any suggestion of a discussion of abstract ideas, which would otherwise be a considerable risk here. Similarly, later in the poem the mention of an inscription in the 'grand grenier' by 'Jean Aubry, d'Orgon / Et ses fils Claude et Jean' (P, p. 320) puts a seal of lived experience on the poet's assent to the concrete reality of a particular phenomenon - both because of the validating force of the existence of the inscription itself and because its simple mention in this context brings into the poem an element of the poet's own experience, without this being merely anecdotal on the one hand or

on the other an attempt to import any kind of given mythological reference which itself could tend towards conceptual abstraction. On a different level, the poetic system of Dans le leurre du seuil develops and makes more explicit a theme which had appeared, in very allusive form, in Pierre écrite: that of the poet's experience of the visual arts, as exemplified by the paintings of Poussin and in particular by the two paintings of 'Moïse sauvé des eaux' referred to by Bonnefoy in L'Arrière-pays (AP, pp. 88-9 and 155). In the earlier book, the references to a common motif in Poussin's painting had simply been to 'la robe rouge' and 'le rouge de la robe'(in 'La Chambre' (P, p. 199) and 'L'Arbre, la lampe' (P, p. 201)). In Dans le leurre du seuil, however, the references are more directly to the human context in which the characteristic artistic device of a splash of colour appears: the poem evokes 'La fille de Pharaon / Et ses servantes, // Celles dont l'eau, encore / Avant le jour, / Reflète renversée / L'étoffe rouge' (P, p. 244) and 'le rouge des lourdes / Etoffes peintes / Que lavait l'Egyptienne, l'irréveillée, / De nuit, dans l'eau du fleuve (P, p. 259).

We can therefore see, through a very brief consideration of the imagery of Bonnefoy's successive volumes and in particular of the way in which given or constructed mythological references are displaced in favour of more personal, but at the same time more universal, types of imagery, how Bonnefoy's poetry may be said to reflect his developing theoretical concerns. While it may be worth emphasising again that this is very far from being a rigorous demonstration, it may have served to indicate, in however sketchy a way, certain parallels in the development from Bonnefoy's more rigid earlier habits of mind, in both poetry and theory, to his later more relaxed, wide-ranging and genuinely human preoccupations.

XX Poetic theory and the theory of art

Having considered the ways in which Bonnefoy's poetic theory has developed through his essays, and looked briefly at the ways in which his main volumes of poetry may be taken to show a broadly analogous development, we may complete this study with some remarks on the relationship between his art criticism and his literary and aesthetic criticism.

Bonnefoy is, of course, an art critic by profession, and this may explain to some degree the very considerable bulk of his art criticism in comparison with that of those of his writings which deal specifically with poetry or with literature generally (16 of the 29 items in the 1980 edition of L'Improbable are wholly or mainly concerned with the visual arts, as are 8 of the 19 items in Le Nuage rouge). At the same time, many of the essays dealing with art deal also in specific terms with wider questions of aesthetic theory; as I have already noted (p. 178 above), the subtitle of Le Nuage rouge is 'essais sur la poétique'. A full treatment of Bonnefoy's views on all the visual artists to whose work he has turned his attention would be outside the scope of this study. It is clear, however, that the same general framework can be postulated for Bonnefoy's treatment both of poetry and of the visual arts: it may also be worth looking at one or two points where the detailed treatment of a question relating to art may be particularly applicable, by analogy, to poetic theory. From there we may go on to consider briefly how far Bonnefoy's views on parts of the history of art may refer to, even if they do not actually constitute, some form of historical overview of the ways in which human artistic creativity operates.

We may start by considering again Bonnefoy's most concise, and at the

same time most puzzling, expression of the way in which he would wish that an artistic medium should operate, and in which, in his more positive and reckless moments, he simply asserts that it does operate. Contrasting the work of Gaston-Louis Roux with what he sees as less valid approaches to artistic creativity, Bonnefoy writes: 'Le romantisme tragique de la séparation d'avec la nature ou la société, l'angélisme de la poésie fin de siècle, le souci obsédant de l'écriture ont fait ou font ou feront la preuve de leur faiblesse: on représentait au lieu d'être, alors qu'il faut, disons, être la pierre par le mot pierre, le gris instaurateur par la couleur grise' (I^2, p. 291).

This is one of the points in his essays where Bonnefoy deliberately turns away from any coherent line of intellectual discourse - because the essence of what he wants to say cannot be conveyed in terms of discursive argument - and instead simply asserts the direct power of art to express reality through the artistic medium's capability of actually constituting reality. A similar example is his statement in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité' that '/la langue/ semble nous inviter à porter dans sa profondeur la parole qui fera être ce qu'elle nomme' (I^2, p. 250). One's sympathy for such assertions must inevitably be intuitive rather than analytical, but it is important to recognise that in terms of Bonnefoy's theory as a whole they constitute a necessary counterweight to the kind of closely-argued line of reasoning which can only lead to the conclusion that such direct expression of reality is simply impossible. At some points Bonnefoy appears to assent to that conclusion, but the assertion of the contrary at other points is equally necessary to a theory which strives to present art as being, in some rather oblique sense, directly enactive rather than representative. What John E Jackson, in describing

Bonnefoy's concern for the paradoxical immediacy of the artistic medium, says about 'le mot' could also apply to Bonnefoy's view of the visual media:

> Pour Yves Bonnefoy, en effet, le mot - le mot de poésie en tout cas - tend à être, autant et même plus qu'un élément de signification, une image. Comprenons: une figuration du réel. Comme l'image, le mot, chez lui, se veut rapport à l'être. Plastique, au sens où il se donne comme re-présentation de la chose qu'il désigne, il est aussi bien ce rapport au dehors, et par là l'espace de ce pari, au sens pascalien, où les hypothèses formelles définissent en vérité un lien à la fois éthique et ontologique au réel. (1)

This is a concise summary of the position which is expressed by Bonnefoy in his essays through an oscillation between assertion and denial of the more extreme proposition that art can actually re-present the objects of its concern without any mechanism of symbolic reference (which implies abstraction) at all: and while Jackson is right to describe this attitude, as far as language is concerned, as an 'ambition, somme toute, pré-saussurienne',(2) this need not imply that Bonnefoy's attitude to language is any less valid for his own purposes than Saussure's was for his. As I have mentioned in Part XVIII above, the two lines of approach are separate and do not meet.

In any case, Bonnefoy's assertions of the hope that art may in some immediate way be capable of actually expressing reality are normally accompanied by one of his characteristic indications of possible doubt, as when in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité' he talks of language which 'semble nous inviter à porter dans sa profondeur la parole qui fera être ce qu'elle nomme' (I^2, p. 250), or when in the

(1) John E Jackson, Yves Bonnefoy (Paris, 1976), p. 64.
(2) ibid, p. 65.

essay on Gaston-Louis Roux he adds a faintly ironical 'disons' to the assertion that 'il faut . . . être la pierre par le mot pierre, le gris instaurateur par la couleur grise' (I^2, p. 291), thus implying that the hope of immediacy can itself only be voiced in an imperfect medium, language, which may account for the fact that the expression of the hope must appear unsatisfactory.

We may now return, however, to the interesting juxtaposition here on equal terms of statements about the nature of poetry and the nature of painting, seen as creative media. This suggests that the painter's aim of achieving through the colour on his palette the 'gris instaurateur' which may express présence in a painting is subject to the same constraints and difficulties as is the poet's aim of truly expressing présence through words which are inevitably distanced from reality by their normal function as references for concepts. Poetry, in other words, is not at a unique disadvantage in comparison with the other arts because its medium is itself involved with conceptual thought. The medium of expression of the visual arts is equally compromised, though the fact that colour, outside the context of a painting, is simply substance rather than a pointer to something beyond itself cannot be a disadvantage to the visual artist. The main point to be made, however, is firstly that each medium may in certain undefined circumstances achieve the expression of présence, even if this achievement can only be described through the distorting medium of discursive language; but secondly that each medium in itself has no automatic contact with présence, which depends for its manifestation on some mysterious quality of immanence which may infuse the intrinsically inert words, or colour, in the context of a successful work of art.

The equivalence of language and colour as artistic media is again

referred to in Bonnefoy's later essay on Claude Garache, 'Peinture, poésie: vertige, paix', though here the possibility of artistic expression is considered from a negative standpoint rather than being in any sense asserted positively. Typically, Bonnefoy starts with an assertion of the failure of language as an artistic medium:

> Jamais d'immédiat pour l'écrivain, . . . Il sait, d'intuition, la qualité de vérité autre que propose une branche en fleurs, ou une pierre qui roule, de rebords en rebords, dans un ravin. Mais vouloir en recréer dans les mots la densité infinie, ou le vide pur, ce n'est qu'un voeu d'emblée insensé, que la poésie, qui en vit, doit abandonner page après page. (NR, p. 319)

The 'qualité de vérité autre' to which Bonnefoy refers here is in part the existential specificity of an individual phenomenon, seen, however, as in some way different from its mere physical existence and therefore in a sense transcendent as well as immanent. It is indeed perhaps a measure of the failure of language to express the plenitude of existential reality that the only way in which language can directly refer, even in general terms, to that plenitude is through a word implying transcendence rather than the immanence which is basic to the experience of plenitude itself. In any case, Bonnefoy's denial here, in conceptual terms, of the pretention of poetry to express the intrinsic nature of things, and the statement that poetry 'doit abandonner /le voeu insensé/ page après page', leaving the words on the page as the dead husks of what might have been the elements of the expression of reality, are to be taken as categorical only in their own limited terms. Hovering behind the reference to poetry 'qui en vit' is an unexpressed and conceptually

inexpressible assertion that poetry can, in fact, work the miracle.

Bonnefoy goes on, in 'Peinture, poésie: vertige, paix', to consider the ways in which, on the face of it, painting might be seen as an artistic endeavour more directly in touch with reality than writing. He concludes, however, that the analogy between painting and poetry is complete. In neither case can the medium be seen as an intrinsically satisfactory means of expression of reality; in either case, however, the artist may achieve a sudden and inexplicable contact with présence:

> Il n'y a pas d'immédiateté aux commencements du peintre, et il n'y en a pas davantage là où sa recherche aboutit. Les déchiffrements conventionnels, il les a refusés, bien sûr, et remplacés, mais il les maintient aussi du seul fait qu'il cherche à les vaincre, et il ne fait pour finir qu'ajouter aux intrications du travail du signe sur l'être, doublant la langue commune de celle de son génie. Et, réciproquement, tel fragment chez des poètes - ainsi: 'J'ai vu le soleil bas . . .',dans Le Bateau ivre - peut être aussi brutalement 'rouge', malgré les mots, que le tableau de Van Gogh le plus ardent à vouloir l'outre-regard.
>
> Il n'y a pas d'immédiateté, il n'y a que ce désir d'immédiat, que tant éprouvent. (NR, p. 323)

Here, of course, we reach the point where discursive criticism inevitably ends and subjective impressionism takes over, for the assertion that a phrase of Rimbaud's is 'rouge' is possibly even less strictly verifiable than Mallarmé's conviction that the word nuit has a 'sonorité qui est claire', whose subjectivity Bonnefoy recognises in his comment 'Mallarmé en tout cas n'en a pas douté' (NR, p. 186). Such assertions are of doubtful value if considered as analysis of the nature of the poetic language in question, but may be valid as

insights into the poetic effect of the words on a particular reader. What is more relevant here is the fact that Bonnefoy places his assertion of the 'redness' of Rimbaud's phrase - which is presumably an indication that in his view the poet has here achieved some form of immediate expression of <u>présence</u> - in the context of an explicit assertion that painters, like poets, cannot achieve such direct expression of the intrinsic nature of reality. This is therefore another example of the deliberate ambiguity with which Bonnefoy often surrounds his comments on the possibility, or impossibility, of art achieving contact of this kind.

The expression here of the visual artist's final achievement as one of only contributing 'aux intrications du travail du signe sur l'être, doublant la langue commune de celle de son génie' is again reminiscent of Bonnefoy's ideas on poetic language and particularly of his argument that the poet may in some way create a separate language for each of his volumes of poetry, which I have discussed above (pp. 202-203). A further parallel between painting and poetry as artistic media may be seen, once again, in Bonnefoy's short essay on Gaston-Louis Roux. Speaking of 'l'accord juste de deux couleurs', he says:

> Voici que deux données de la perception, en elles-mêmes insignifiantes, font à deux comme un bruissement, comme un ange; cependant que la chose qui a prêté ses aspects, offert ce jaune et ce rouge, est effacée comme objet mais se réforme en tant qu'âme, connue de l'intérieur désormais par ce projet d'harmonie qui était en elle, et n'y était que pour nous. (I^2, pp. 289-90)

This is a less obscure formulation of the possibility of art expressing <u>présence</u> than the later mention in the same essay of 'être . . . le gris instaurateur par la couleur grise' (I^2, p. 291). Its emphasis

on the artistic effect of the juxtaposition of colours echoes Mallarmé's idea, on which Bonnefoy comments in 'La Poétique de Mallarmé', that even if the word nuit is in some mysterious way light in itself, it may nevertheless, through its juxtaposition with other words in a line of poetry, lose something of its intrinsic quality and indirectly enact the true meaning of what it names:

> réunis à d'autres /mots/ de son espèce - subtil, par exemple, et triomphe, ou même ancien, au début du Faune - le son nuit va permettre à plusieurs notions de s'allumer chacune d'un reflet venu de chaque autre: et toutes s'approfondiront, se rectifieront, dans ce rapprochement opéré sous le signe clair, - dans la lucidité d'un son pur . . . (NR, pp. 189-90)

In the same way as we must remember, in cases where Bonnefoy is explicitly denying the power of the poetic word, or of the elements of visual art, that the denial is implicitly the reverse side of a forceful but irrational assertion of the contrary, we should be careful to remember in contexts like this comment on Mallarmé that Bonnefoy is only giving a temporary and provisional assent to the positive assertions with which he is dealing. His own overall attitude - which can only be gauged if we take into account simultaneously both the positive and negative assertions that he makes - is that of a precarious equilibrium between belief in the direct power of art to represent reality, and the denial of that belief, or at any rate the denial that that belief can be articulated in any way which does not betray its essence.

From the examples I have given above, therefore, it will be clear that although Bonnefoy does not formulate a coherent theory of the expression of reality through the visual arts - as indeed he formulates no coherently set-out theory of the expression of reality through literature - he

nevertheless sees the possibilities and limitations of the two media as being analogous, if not identical. It may now be worthwhile to look at two of the essays in Le Nuage rouge which expand somewhat on the nature of the representation of reality in art - those dealing with Elsheimer and Mondrian - to consider how Bonnefoy sees the artistic symbol as operating in practice in similar ways to the symbol in poetry.

It is interesting that in these two essays Bonnefoy comes closer than anywhere else in his writings to undertaking the exercise of explication de texte, though the texts in question are not works of literature but paintings. As would be expected, however, he does not undertake a technical analysis but instead considers the paintings - Elsheimer's Dérision de Cérès and Mondrian's Le Nuage rouge - within the artists' work as a whole as examples of how a particular artistic statement relates to the reality (whether phenomenal or mythological) of its subject, and what implications can be drawn from this about the nature of the artistic symbol generally in the historical context of the paintings in question.

Bonnefoy sees Elsheimer, first of all, as a highly individual artist standing at a particular point in art history at which the assumptions of the Italian Renaissance were beginning to be questioned:

> Et ainsi lisons-nous dans les tableaux d'Elsheimer à la fois les singularités sans recours d'un être de solitude et la mise en question très lucide, très résolue de cette poétique de l'approche de l'être par la forme que la Renaissance italienne avait tenue pour un vrai savoir, mais en se vouant de ce fait à une autre et bien pire solitude. (NR, p. 96)

We will return to the question of how Bonnefoy's critical work may be taken to reflect and comment on the history of art and the history of culture of which it is a part. It may now however be worth exploring

how Elsheimer is seen, in his painting of the Dérision de Cérès in particular, as carrying out a 'mise en question . . . de /la/ poétique de l'approche de l'être par la forme'. The painting (which shows an episode from Ovid's Metamorphoses in which Ceres, while searching for Proserpine, stops at a house to ask for a drink of water and, annoyed by a boy who has mocked her, throws some of the water over him, turning him into a lizard) is seen as an exemplar of the artistic process. Bonnefoy comments first of all on the mythological background:

> Cérès est l'être, que l'esprit de possession vient éteindre dans chaque vie qu'éclairait le sens. Proserpine est la vie qui pourrait être présence, participation à un sens, à l'être donc, et que voici aliénée de soi: comme il en va aussi en peinture, quand un intelligible y réduit ce qui est à d'abord la forme spatiale, quitte à le voir prendre figure insolite et s'obscurcir et se taire dès que lui-même devient un dogme. (NR, p. 99)

This is a reiteration, in terms adapted to the particular work of art on which Bonnefoy is commenting, of his oft-repeated explicit view of the impossibility of the expression of the true existence of reality through art, of the inevitable involvement of the artistic process in abstraction, and of the loss of contact between art and reality. Bonnefoy asserts the nature of the artistic symbol as a mediating force between reality and the substantive existence of the raw material of art (whether that be words or colour), but states that this mediation can only operate through a process of association which is itself subject to the fluctuation of the ontological validity of the artistic impulse which informs it. The power of the symbol is therefore by no means self-evident - though even when it is subject to the kinds of failure described here, it may still show considerable artistic strength when, taking the form of a myth like this episode of the story of Ceres

and Proserpine, it enacts those kinds of failure themselves. The image of Ceres's desolate quest for her daughter thus attains a certain, albeit negative, artistic validity through being underlined by the metamorphosis of boy into lizard: 'Des pattes prendront les places des membres, le corps s'amenuisera, la divinité a voulu que l'offenseur devienne un lézard, j'aimerais dire une salamandre' (NR, p. 100). (The last phrase is in part ironical, since the mythological overtones of the salamander would be inappropriate in this context, but nevertheless shows obliquely the importance which Bonnefoy attaches to the participation of the observing commentator in the experience of a work of art.)

In order for the individual artistic statement to achieve some form of positive validity, however, in an age such as the immediate pre-Baroque period in which Elsheimer was working, and which Bonnefoy sees as to some degree analogous to the modern age, the artist must himself provide an element of redemptory transformation of the 'condition malheureuse' (NR, p. 101) of the myth which he uses as raw material. Bonnefoy sees such a transformation as having been achieved through an incidental detail of the foliage of trees in the painting which acts as a kind of catalytic <u>éphémère</u>:

> voici ce peu de feuillage dont j'ai parlé, ces branches où la lumière des torches, qui y a porté des crevasses, éveille maintenant les vibrations infinies de ce qu'un siècle plus tard on nommera la nature. . . Va-t-on penser que je donne trop à ces quelques branches encore noires? Mais ne faut-il pas comprendre plutôt que dans l'écriture de poésie l'essentiel se joue sur une nuance? Un mythe a été revécu dans sa profondeur signifiante par le travail inexplicité mais lucide de l'écriture du peintre. (NR, p. 101)

The basic parallelism of the media of literature and painting is here strikingly expressed. Bonnefoy goes on to describe what Elsheimer

achieves in the painting as the expression of 'une intermittence saisonnière, une précarité à jamais: ce qui est, un et multiple mariés par des ramures vivantes - un absolu et un infini qui valent aussi et d'abord pour le regard de l'artiste' (NR, pp. 101-2).

Bonnefoy therefore sees in Elsheimer's painting a kind of contact with reality which has been achieved through the painter's attachment to an incidental detail which, while itself remaining incidental rather than occupying the centre of the artist's (literal or metaphorical) field of vision, nevertheless allows the work of art as a whole to reflect the plenitude of existence. This is of course closely related to what, in the context of poetic theory, I have called l'éphémère: something like the 'vitre au soleil du soir' (I^2, p. 131) which appears at the end of (though only indirectly as a result of) the intellectual convolutions of 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poesie', or the 'simple' to which poetry must come 'comme les bêtes lointaines à l'eau le soir', as Bonnefoy puts it in L'Ordalie, despite the necessity of the poet also in some sense taking account of 'les mille excarnations que l'on a été' (O, p. 45). The necessary intellectual preliminaries to the expression of reality through l'éphémère are represented, in Elsheimer's picture, by the use made of the background of given mythology, which is thus itself transformed in what Bonnefoy calls 'cette redécouverte du mythe' (NR, p. 102). This however can only come about in this particular way in the specific historical context within which Elsheimer was working, which itself reflects the degree of acceptance by society of the validity of symbols whose significance is basically religious:

> Car l'avenir va le confirmer: du moment que nous ne disposons plus d'un sacré, avec ses références, dieux par exemple,

> explicitement dénommées, on peut encore, on doit même interroger les mythes, irremplaçables, dans les récits que nous en trouvons, ici ou là, mais il faut d'abord les mettre à l'épreuve de notre condition comme elle est, les réentendre à travers ses voix à elles, brouillées, les reformer de notre substance, sinon ils ne sont vite que de trop belles images, qui disent notre nostalgie mais nullement notre vérité, et restent d'ailleurs en deçà de la maturation, de l'illumination, souhaitables. (NR, p. 102)

The phrase 'du moment que nous ne disposons plus d'un sacré' defines Bonnefoy's view of the historical context within which the modern artist - the post-Renaissance artist, that is - must work, just as he sees the modern poet as coming 'après les dieux' (I^2, p. 107). He expands on the idea, which I will consider in more detail later, that the first moment of the truly modern artistic consciousness was the early Baroque period, that of 'Elsheimer et Poelenburgh et Breenbergh, des protestants, les premiers qui furent privés de la Présence réelle, d'où leur hantise de Rome' (NR, pp. 104-5), in Rome 1630. We may note here, however, the clear association established between the historical circumstances in which an artist finds himself and his attitude to the key question which, according to Bonnefoy, lies at the centre of the artist's endeavour - the investigation of the 'means for the metaphysical approach to the sacred' (3) which he mentions in relation to Mallarmé. It is interesting also that Bonnefoy is able, as here in the context of Elsheimer, to discuss much more explicitly in relation to painting than in relation to poetry the question of the ways in which a modern artist may use given mythological references in his work: presumably the discussion of this in abstract terms in relation to poetry would impinge too closely for comfort on his own continuing concerns as a practising poet.

(3) Bonnefoy: article on 'Symbolism' (trans. Spender) in The Concise Encyclopaedia of English and American Poets and Poetry, ed. Spender and Hall (London, 1963), p. 325.

However, before considering the question of Bonnefoy's attitude to art history generally, and to the function of the artistic symbol at different historical moments, it may be useful to look briefly at an essay in which he takes a painting from a different historical period as the subject of what is almost an explication de texte - 'Quelques notes sur Mondrian', whose subject gives the volume Le Nuage rouge its title. Here, as often when Bonnefoy meditates on a particular artist or a particular work of art, the relationship between the painting and what it may be taken to represent is explored from a number of different angles rather than being described by a process of logical argument leading to a single, supposedly definitive, interpretation. Bonnefoy first of all sketches in a view of the relationship between the painting and the given mythological references (in a broad sense) which may be seen as relevant to it:

> Même les couleurs du Nuage rouge, bleu du manteau de la Vierge, émeraude de l'alchimie, rouge dont Delacroix ensanglantait l'Idéal, sonnent là une fois de plus dans l'histoire les trois notes fondamentales de notre condition qui veut forcer ses limites.
>
> Il reste que ce grand signe qui domine la terre nue, cette nuée qui éclaire tout comme un autre buisson ardent, n'offre pas, au second regard, la netteté des épiphanies qu'aimaient évoquer les anciens peintres. (NR, p. 117)

The implication here is that while a modern painting like Le Nuage rouge may contain a number of resonances from given mythology (within which I include, in this context, religious references), such references themselves cannot constitute the work of art's central communicative element. We are not concerned here, as was the case with Elsheimer's Dérision de Cérès, with some kind of 'redécouverte du mythe' (NR, p. 102), even if such a rediscovery in order to be truly valid must be further

transformed by the artist's own contact with reality through l'éphémère. The possibility of true contact with reality through myth may be referred to in a modern work of art, but must nevertheless be considered as illusory in the modern age which, Bonnefoy again repeats, has no contact with religious certainty:

> Il y a eu une ombre d'épiphanie, un peintre a cru percevoir la forme qui se détache du rien du monde, la flamme qui transfigure: mais Mondrian est assez de notre époque sans dieux pour percer à jour ce mirage et lui faire avouer du fond même de sa figure furtive qu'il n'est qu'un reflet déformé de son désir qui se cherche. (NR, p. 118)

The harshness of this dismissal of the validity of any reference to given mythology is not, of course, to be taken as a statement of Bonnefoy's final position on this point, but as a moment in his consideration of given mythology seen through the question of the ontological validity of a particular implied reference in a particular painting. The true artistic effect of the painting comes from a different source - the way in which the cloud may be seen, once again, as a kind of éphémère:

> En somme, c'est là un autre 'nuage rouge'. Non plus une chose de notre monde qui se fait le signe d'un absolu, mais notre univers comme tel qui, de l'intérieur, se révèle à la fois la diversité des êtres et l'unité que les lie, - à la fois le rien et la plénitude, à la fois la ténèbre et une lumière. Et ne faut-il donc pas se tourner vers ce ciel qui est au fond du hasard et - écrivant même, peignant - se simplifier pour en faciliter la rencontre: renonçant aux pratiques qui jugent la finitude, qui croient avoir raison contre elle, cherchant l'universel au contraire sur les voies qu'elle nous indique? (NR, p. 122)

And again, the particular quality of Mondrian's artistic project may be seen as analogous to that of the literary artist, even if the

effect of his work can only be described through a relatively technical comment on the way his use of colour suggests an ephemeral presence:

> c'est de toujours /que Mondrian/ a perçu, comme Racine ou Mallarmé qui furent souvent ses proches, la vérité d'existence sous la vérité d'écriture, le trouble dans le cristal. . . /Dans Le Nuage rouge/ aux confins du vert et du bleu, dans l'étroitesse d'un peu de blanc et de noir mais qui vibrent à l'infini, c'est la profondeur comme telle qui du coup se signifie à l'encontre, s'indique non abolie. Dimension autre, cet horizon. (NR, pp. 122-3)

In this picture, therefore, Mondrian may be seen as seeking the expression of, on the one hand, simple reality, and on the other, the necessarily undefined 'vibration à l'infini' to which true contact with simple reality may give rise.

We see again here an example of how Bonnefoy's consideration of a visual artist's approach to reality through painting comes to similar conclusions to those he might draw about the approach of a poet to reality through words. The comparisons he draws - or rather, the juxtapositions he makes - between the artistic possibilities of the literary and visual media show that he sees these possibilities, whether or not they can be explicitly affirmed, as being broadly similar. A further characteristic of his approach to both literature and the visual arts is his apparent tendency to see artists as being subject to the artistic possibilities peculiar to the historical period in which they worked. This can be seen frequently in his essays, as for example in the essay on Elsheimer, in which modern artists are said to be working in a period where 'nous ne disposons plus d'un sacré' (NR, p. 102), and more specifically in which Elsheimer, Poelenburgh and Breenbergh are described as 'des protestants, les

premiers qui furent privés de la Présence réelle' (NR, pp. 104-5). A more striking and wide-ranging example of the kind of generalisation Bonnefoy sometimes makes about a particular historical period is to be found at the end of 'L'Architecture baroque et la pensée du destin', where human artistic creativity is said to turn away from architecture after the baroque period because of the impossibility of that art expressing any kind of valid collective truth, and to turn instead towards the possibilities of music, 'seul lieu maintenant possible pour l'émergence de l'Un', and in particular towards the possibilities of the type of music which best represents the spirit of individuality which is the only valid mode of artistic enterprise in the new historical circumstances: 'C'est vers 1670, au déclin de la grande architecture romaine, qu'apparaît le concerto, où la voix solitaire d'un instrument se détache de la communauté musicale' (I^2, p. 232).

This kind of idea could not, by its very nature, be written up into a comprehensive history of culture: there would be too many obvious exceptions to refute any facile assertion of what human artistic creativity consists of, and of how it has been realised in different art-forms and at different historical periods. Equally, any expression of such a comprehensive theory would be foreign to Bonnefoy's habits of thought, which tend to meditation on individual works of art and the distinctive sensibilities of individual artists rather than to the construction of all-embracing theories - and these would in any case carry all the dangers of the philosophical system which Bonnefoy points out in 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne' and elsewhere. It may nevertheless be worth investigating in a little more detail Bonnefoy's views on painting and the other visual arts, as I have investigated his views on poetry in parts XII-XV above, in the perspective of the relationship between the individual artist's sensibility and the context in which he works - a relationship which, in Bonnefoy's view, is at least partly historically influenced through the loss, at some

point in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, of the medieval confidence in the unity of creation guaranteed by the central religious symbol of the Real Presence of Christ. (We may note in passing that in theological terms it is wrong to see this, as Bonnefoy apparently does in the passage on Elsheimer, Poelenburgh and Breenburgh quoted above, as a specifically Protestant doctrine: while Zwingli abandoned the doctrine of the Real Presence, Luther defended it at their debate in Marburg in 1529.) Be that as it may, however, the principle remains, and the ways in which the history of art is affected by this loss of the link between the religious or artistic symbol and the reality whose spiritual dimension it may express are summed up by Erich Heller, in relation to the seventeenth century:

> Robbed of its real significance, what did the symbol signify? Robbed of its symbolic meaning, what did reality mean? What was the State on earth? A Leviathan. What was God? More and more a <u>deus absconditus</u>, an infinitely remote and impenetrably veiled God. This was not only the century of Newton, the century of cosmic tidiness and calculable pulls and pushes. This it was indeed in the sphere of 'reality', that obedient patient under the fingers of man's mind. But in the sphere of the soul, disobedient sufferer of God's anger and grace, it was the century of Pascal and Hobbes, of the desperate and once more triumphant convolutions of the baroque, and of the metaphysical poets. Commerce between the separated spheres, felt to be urgent again, moved uneasily, intensely and anxiously along disrupted lines of communication. Strategical points had to be gained by cunning, break-throughs to be dared with the passion of spiritual violence. The baroque was the architectural style of such manoeuvres of the soul.(4)

And this essential separation of art from any vision of a spiritually-validated form of reality continued, according to Heller, after the seventeenth century, bringing about a change in the orientation of art itself:

(4) Erich Heller, <u>The Disinherited Mind</u> (London, 1961), pp. 231-2.

> Architecture, the most 'real' of all the arts, steadily declined. After the seventeenth century Europe no longer dwelt or worshipped or ruled in buildings created in the image of authentic spiritual vision. For all that was real was an encumbrance to the spirit who, in his turn, only occasionally called on the real, and even then with the embarrassment of an uninvited guest. He was most at home where there was least 'reality' - in music. The music of modern Europe is the one and only art in which it surpassed the achievement of former ages. This is no accident of history: it is the speechless triumph of the spirit in a world of words without deeds and deeds without words.(5)

Once again, it must be stressed that such views, which bear a close resemblance to Bonnefoy's references to music at the end of 'L'Architecture baroque et la pensée du destin', are not susceptible of empirical verification as historical theory. I am not however concerned with their strict historical accuracy, nor with the extent to which the implication that the art of an earlier age had a more genuine contact with reality can be proven scientifically, but rather with their aptness as a reflection of the position of the modern artist as Bonnefoy sees it, and of the aesthetic concerns to which that position gives rise, both in relation to Bonnefoy's views of artists and poets of former ages and to his views of the possibilities of artistic creation generally in an age where the artist is seen as necessarily possessing - to use Erich Heller's phrase - 'the religiously disinherited religious mind'.(6)

Bonnefoy's most comprehensive account of the attitudes of artists to the possibility, against this background, of artistic creation is

(5) Heller, p. 232.
(6) ibid, p. 141.

contained in his survey of the ways in which 'le principe d'identité' operates in French poetry. He states that the principle 'a dû varier dans son appréhension des essences, et changer de métaphysique, depuis les débuts du français' (I^2, p. 260). This is a small change from the rather more mechanistic phrasing of the earlier version of the essay in Un Rêve fait à Mantoue, where he talks of the variable 'indice métaphysique' of the principle (RFM, p. 112). The notion of some such 'indice métaphysique' may also be useful in considering Bonnefoy's approach to painting, though in relation to painting he never enunciates such a clear general formula as that of the 'principe d'identité'. Nor does he make any systematic comparative assessment of the ways in which the approaches of the painters of any particular school relate to reality, as he does where French poets are concerned in 'La poésie française et le principe d'identité'. The absence of such a clearly-stated - though perhaps rather simplistic - doctrine in relation to painting need not however prevent us from noting the similarities between his treatment of French poetry by reference to the 'principe d'identité' and the general views on the modes of apprehension of visual artists which appear to underlie his consideration of their work.

The first similarity to be noted between 'le principe d'identité' and Bonnefoy's critical approach to the visual arts is that in both cases the approach is only to a limited extent historical. Bonnefoy considers that the order represented by 'le principe d'identité' in the Middle Ages was 'éprouvé comme réalité religieuse' (I^2, p. 260), whether it is to be attributed, as Bonnefoy asserts here, to the fact that the language of the liturgy was Latin and not French, or, as he argues elsewhere, to the loss of belief in the bread and wine of the Mass

as enactive symbols of the Real Presence, marked a historical turning-point (whose exact placing in time is, however, never made entirely clear) after which the 'principe d'identité' becomes a notion allowing the categorisation of poets according to their attitudes towards language rather than a principle which may be said to develop historically. While Bonnefoy states that 'notre poésie a aussi, comme dimension de son histoire et de sa diversité, ces égarements et ces retours' (I^2, p. 270), the 'principe d'identité' does not provide the basis for a theory of consistent historical development, since the examples cited of 'retours' are Baudelaire and Rimbaud, and those of 'égarements' Racine, Mallarmé and (more by implication than by direct statement) a number of more recent poets, and in particular Valéry. In the same way, Bonnefoy sees painters of different periods as facing essentially similar problems in their relationship to reality, but does not see their creativity as being primarily conditioned (at least since the Renaissance) by the phase of the historical development of art in which they worked. Although his criticism may take historical factors into account, the main historical circumstance which he sees as having a determining effect on the work of visual artists is, again, the specifically modern loss of a settled religious consciousness which may be postulated to have taken place at some point in the Renaissance or baroque periods.

The second feature of 'le principe d'identité' which may be taken to be relevant, by analogy, to Bonnefoy's art criticism is the diversity of possibly valid ways in which the artist may approach reality. While Bonnefoy makes clear in relation to poetry that what I have called the 'existentialist' approach, characterised by Baudelaire and Rimbaud, allows a more valid grasping of the ephemeral kernel of reality than the 'essentialist' approach characterised by Racine,

Mallarmé and Valéry, the poetic achievement of these latter poets is by no means to be dismissed, and in Mallarmé's case at least bears witness to a striving after a kind of (albeit unattainable) poetic perfection which is in its way no less heroic than Baudelaire's achievement of 'vrai discours' (I^2, p. 34) through his poetic identification with death. Similarly, while Bonnefoy may place particular visual artists at different points in the spectrum of possible approaches to the expression through art of ever-elusive reality, he is if anything rather less prescriptive that he is in relation to poets in 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité' as to what may be considered the most correct or artistically desirable approach. Rather is he concerned to recognise, and to delineate with finely-tuned discrimination, the particular quality in each artist which constitutes his originality and which shows the intensity and seriousness of the artistic enterprise he has undertaken. Thus, before comparing Raoul Ubac to 'ce "paysan" qu'Une saison en enfer finit par opposer à tous les mirages de l'imagination angélique' (I^2, p. 295), Bonnefoy seeks to describe in more detailed, though not in more analytical, terms the precise characteristics of Ubac's approach:

> Il y a dans son oeuvre ces bleus, ces gris, mais ce n'est pas le bleu, pas le gris, c'est une âme grise de la couleur qui pénètre aussi bien les ocres, les bruns, les rouges: et voilà qui n'est pas une description des données sensibles et moins encore une décision esthétique, une stylisation de l'objet mais, directement exprimée par la plus simple des métaphores, l'immanence de l'être dans la précarité de la vie. . . Ubac semble poser d'emblée, par cette couleur qui domine, la catégorie de présence, et n'y inscrire qu'ensuite la variété des choses terrestres. (I^2, pp. 294-5)

In this kind of assessment the artist's work is seen in terms of his own resolution of the problems posed by the need to express through

a medium common to all artists a unique view of the reality which cannot be directly interpreted through painting any more than it can be expressed through words. The description of this resolution in any particular case cannot be rigorously exact and must to some extent be impressionistic. The critical approach also implies an overall view of the background against which the artist is working which Bonnefoy does not spell out in terms as explicit as those which he uses in relation to poetry in formulating the idea of 'le principe d'identité'. He nevertheless suggests, in the first version of his essay on 'Baudelaire contre Rubens', such a general view of the artist's position:

> Et il faut sentir qu'à travers l'histoire de la peinture, par exemple, s'affirme une dialectique qui est moins celle des langues qu'elle a adoptées tour à tour, que celle des témoins de l'invisible - ou découvreurs - et des colonisateurs du perçu, grands ou petits maîtres de l'apparence. La dialectique, disons, du 'dessin' profond et des parlers périssables. C'est elle qui assure que l'art, la poésie, peuvent ne pas être lettre morte.(7)

In his critical work as a whole Bonnefoy sees this 'dialectic' less as a historical development - and certainly less as a historical development which can be rigorously charted through the course of the development of art - than as a kind of combat within the creative process itself, in the context of which each artist must define his position, the significance of the creative act being the depth of commitment which each artist brings to the effort of definition. The idea of the artist's endeavour being a combat within the creative process finds an echo, in relation to poetry, in Bonnefoy's statement in 'L'Acte et le lieu de

(7) L'Ephémère 9 (1969), p. 110: the passage is dropped from the later version of the essay published in Le Nuage rouge.

la poésie' that 'Je voudrais que la poésie soit d'abord une incessante bataille, un théâtre où l'être et l'essence, la forme et le non-formel se combattront durement' (I^2, p. 124).

It is outside the scope of this study to trace Bonnefoy's views on how all the visual artists of whom he writes resolve the problems they face. It may however be worth saying something further about the period in which Bonnefoy most clearly sees specific historical factors as having a significant influence on how artists have defined their stance - the baroque period.

Bonnefoy sets baroque art in a very specific historical context in the development of human thought and belief in 'La seconde simplicité':

> Le baroque est un réalisme passionnel. Le désir emporté, déraisonnable, aveuglé, que l'existence terrestre accède aux droits du divin, et ce n'est pas un hasard, sûrement, si cet art a grandi quand on a commencé à douter de la présence réelle, quand on n'a plus compris ce pain et ce vin qui sacralisaient toutes choses, et d'abord le lieu où nous sommes et notre instant. (I^2, p. 185)

The particular manner in which Bonnefoy sees the baroque as seeking to reconcile the multiplicity of earthly experience with the unity represented by the spiritual validation of that experience - at a time when, through the loss of belief in the Real Presence, no automatically valid identification of the spiritual world and the world of physical existence could any longer be counted upon - is expressed again in his comments on Bernini in Rome 1630. Describing Bernini's art as 'le mouvement recommencé de la foi', he continues:

> Bernin a retrouvé les clefs de l'hic et nunc - de l'expérience de cette rédemption réservée ici, maintenant, à la personne, absolue, unique - ce que le monde grec n'avait pas et qu'avait

méconnu la Renaissance italienne. Mais il est temps d'en venir à des problèmes de mots; et, caractérisant le Bernin comme le témoin sur le plan de l'art de cette foi qui focalise l'espace par la présence, et déploie la durée humaine, mais en même temps la recourbe, comme en spirale, dans l'unité du divin - je dirai, par définition, que c'est cela le baroque, avec les corollaires, bien sûr, qu'il sera aisé d'en déduire. (R, pp. 18-37)

It may be as well at this point to compare Bonnefoy's view of what constitutes baroque art, expressed as it is in personal and rather idiosyncratic terms, with the principles underlying one of the most influential standard statements of the place of the baroque in art history - that of Heinrich Wölfflin. In his Principles of Art History he describes his approach as aiming at 'an art history which conceives style primarily as expression, expression of the temper of an age and a nation as well as expression of the individual temperament'.(8) This sounds very like the kind of approach which could be argued to lie behind much of Bonnefoy's consideration of art, and particularly of the baroque. Wölfflin goes on to recognise the difficulties with which he is faced: 'it remains no mean problem to discover the conditions which, as material element - call it temperament, zeitgeist, or racial character - determine the style of individuals, periods and peoples.(9)

Wölfflin's analysis, stemming from these principles, is however more systematic and technical than anything Bonnefoy attempts, or would wish to attempt. Furthermore, Wölfflin specifically eschews value-judgements on different periods. Comparing the classic art of the

(8) Heinrich Wölfflin, Principles of Art History, trans. M.D.Hottinger (London, 1932), p. 10.

(9) ibid, p. 11.

sixteenth century with the baroque art of the seventeenth, he says: 'We can turn our sympathy to one or to the other, but we must realise that that is an arbitrary judgement, just as it is an arbitrary judgement to say that the rose-bush lives its supreme moment in the formation of the flower, the apple-tree in that of the fruit'.(10) This is of course an echo of the passage from Hegel's Phänomenologie des Geistes which I have quoted towards the beginning of this study (p. 26) as an example of the kind of philosophical procedure which, though claiming to transcend fixed systems, constitutes in fact the most gargantuan system of all: and the comparison with Wölfflin's approach shows by implication the extent to which Bonnefoy's attitude differs from that of the system-builders, and why, though one may discern some shadow of an overall view of art history behind his criticism of individual artists, it would be wrong to argue that such an overall view constitutes the substance of his criticism. Of the various forms taken by a plant at different stages of its development Hegel says, 'leur nature fluide en fait des moments de l'unité organique dans laquelle elles ne se repoussent pas seulement, mais dans laquelle l'une est aussi nécessaire que l'autre, et cette égale nécessité constitue seule la vie de tout'.(11) The 'égale nécessité' here, however, means that the critic, in observing similar principles at work in the history of art, is precluded from expressing a full imaginative interpretation of the work of any individual artist, which it is Bonnefoy's implicit ambition to express; and while this ambition does not lead to the necessary condemnation of approaches different from that with which the critic is dealing at any particular moment,

(10) Wölfflin, Principles of Art History, p. 14.
(11) Hegel, La Phénoménologie de l'esprit, vol.1, p. 6.

it does imply a greater identification of the critic with the artist's aims than can be achieved by, in Wölfflin's words, 'turning our sympathy' to a particular artist or period.

Even bearing in mind, however, these necessary caveats, it is interesting to go on to consider the precise terms in which Wölfflin deals with the baroque period, in comparison with the Renaissance:

> The central idea of the Italian Renaissance is that of perfect proportion. In the human figure as in the edifice, this epoch strove to achieve the image of perfection at rest within itself. Every form developed to self-existent being, the whole freely co-ordinated: nothing but independently living parts. The column, the panel, the volume of a single element of a space as of a whole space - nothing here but forms in which the human being may find an existence satisfied in itself, extending beyond human measure, but always accessible to the imagination. With infinite content, the mind apprehends this art as the image of a higher, free existence in which it may participate.
>
> The baroque uses the same system of forms, but in place of the perfect, the completed, gives the restless, the becoming, in place of the limited, the conceivable, gives the limitless, the colossal. The ideal of beautiful proportion vanishes, interest concentrates not on being, but on happening. The masses, heavy and thickset, come into movement. Architecture ceases to be what it was in the Renaissance, an art of articulation, and the composition of the building, which once raised the impression of freedom to its highest pitch, yields to a conglomeration of parts without true independence.(12)

The central point being made here - that there is a radical change in emphasis between the Renaissance and the baroque periods in the way in which artists conceive the relationship of the parts of a work of art to the whole - coincides, to some degree, with Bonnefoy's approach.

(12) Wölfflin, Principles of Art History, pp. 9-10.

This partial sympathy between the two viewpoints is made clearer in Wölfflin's summary, later in his book, of the basic aim underlying baroque art: 'On principle, the baroque no longer reckons with a multiplicity of co-ordinate units, harmoniously interdependent, but with an absolute unity in which the individual part has lost its individual rights. But thereby the main motive is stressed with a hitherto unprecedented force'.(13)

The emphasis here on the subordination of detail in baroque art to the work's overall artistic aim is not however quite in line with Bonnefoy's approach - for while Bonnefoy may on occasion summarise the intention of baroque art as 'cette volonté de tout unifier sous le signe de la Présence' (I^2, p. 212) (without, incidentally, making it quite clear whether this view is entirely his or at least partly that of Pierre Charpentrat, whose book he is reviewing), his considered view of the relationship of parts to whole in the baroque is more complex. And indeed the impression given by baroque art - whether architecture or painting - is that of a 'conglomeration of parts' which, though lacking 'true independence', nevertheless have definite significance for the effect of the work as a whole.

Bonnefoy's views on this point might best be approached rather indirectly. We may note first of all that even in Rome 1630, the book in which he takes most care to place artists in their historical context, he does not present even the baroque as an exclusively historical category - rather the contrary. After his 'definition' of the baroque which I have quoted above (pp. 236-7), he goes on to make it clear that that category cannot be seen as simply covering a historical period: 'on ne pourra plus appliquer ce mot à tous les travaux d'une époque, ni même

(13) Wölfflin, Principles of Art History, p. 157.

à des esprits qu'on a rapprochés du Bernin - ainsi certains poètes de France - si ces derniers ne font que ressentir le néant, comme beaucoup disent: le "change", sans accomplir sa mutation en présence.'(R, p. 37). A little later, he underlines the point that what characterises the baroque, in his view, is not an accident of history or even a point of view peculiar to specific artists, but a kind of attitude which artists may be led to adopt, though not necessarily throughout their work:

> Et parce que j'identifie ainsi le baroque à un mouvement de conscience, que l'on peut accomplir ou non - c'est notre liberté qui décide, - il va de soi qu'il n'y a pas de raison pour que le mot, s'il prend son sens de Bernin, s'applique même à toutes ses oeuvres. . . . Le baroque prend dans un moment de la sensibilité, comme la cristallisation peut le faire dans un liquide: comme l'amour, dirait donc Stendhal. Et ainsi il a pu arriver que cette synthèse attendue, espérée, voulue, se dérobe indéfiniment dans la destinée d'un artiste. (R, p. 37)

It therefore seems that Bonnefoy hardly uses the term 'baroque' to apply to an art-historical category at all, but rather to a moment of the human artistic consciousness - rather loosely defined in historical terms - at which an individual artist is facing certain central questions about the ontological status of the artistic symbol.

We may now go back and consider further the differences of emphasis - which seem, indeed, to amount to fundamental differences of substance - between Bonnefoy's approach to art and that of a more rigorously systematic historian like Wölfflin, exemplified by the question of how the baroque deals with the balance between parts and whole. Using the criteria he has already defined, Bonnefoy makes the surprising claim that the work of Pietro da Cortona is not baroque. He says of Cortona's Allegory of Divine Providence (or Glorification of the

Pontificate of Urban VIII) in the Palazzo Barberini:

> ce que Bernin a dressé, au bout de la nef de Saint-Pierre, c'est la présence de Dieu, qui est celle d'une conscience, au delà de toute nature - tandis qu'au centre de ce plafond, de cette gloire dite divine, il y a le bourdonnement diffus de trois immenses abeilles, l'unité chaleureuse et indifférente de la nature physique. Une unité, mais celle de la sensation, qui exclut de soi notre conscience particulière, qui ne veut rien savoir de notre destin, qui n'est donc pas l'unité. Et j'en conclurai donc que Pierre de Cortone n'est pas baroque, il ne sait rien de l'instant où se ressaisit le Longin, où s'éprouve infinie la Sainte Thérèse, il respire suavement comme l'animal ou la plante dans la torpeur de l'intemporel, à tout le moins dans le rêve d'un âge d'or hors du temps. (R, p. 79)

From this negative statement - in which, incidentally, we may see the distance between Bonnefoy and standard academic criticism in the fact that he does not mention that the 'trois immenses abeilles', while they may signify 'l'unité chaleureuse et indifférente de la nature physique', are also the emblem of the Barberini family of which Pope Urban VIII was a member - we may deduce Bonnefoy's positive assessment of the importance of detail in baroque art, and link this to his view of the historical circumstances which gave rise to that art. For if Pietro da Cortona is to be excluded from the ranks of baroque artists because the unity he depicts is merely that of nature and takes no account of the integration within true unity of the individual human consciousness, the baroque cannot simply be concerned with, in Wölfflin's words, 'an absolute unity in which the individual part has lost its individual rights',(14) but must involve a kind of unity which allows the individual part to enjoy its individual rights while

(14) Wölfflin, Principles of Art History, p. 157.

nevertheless participating to the full in the overall unity which is the final objective of the work of art. In Bonnefoy's own terms, as we have seen, baroque art participates in 'cette foi qui focalise l'espace par la présence, et déploie la durée humaine, mais en même temps la recourbe, comme en spirale, dans l'unité du divin' (R, p. 18).

We may mention here in passing a further perspective according to which Bonnefoy considers what might be called the baroque consciousness. This lies in the development of physical science and in the radical change in man's view of the nature of the universe which took place at about the same time, and helped to overturn the classical and Renaissance view of the symmetry of the world. At a time when Galileo and Kepler were themselves unable fully to accept the implications of their astronomical observations for the symmetrical model of the universe which they had until then taken to be objectively true, a reorientation of human consciousness itself was necessary:

> C'est à la fin du XVI^{e} siècle que se répand l'idée que la matière - notre matière d'ici - est universelle; que les astres les plus lointains et 'divins' sont comme la terre sur ce point. Et l'on peut déjà pressentir les conséquences sans nombre de cette nouvelle intuition: si les sphères célestes sont corruptibles comme la nature terrestre, voici fermé à jamais le plus superbe chemin par lequel l'exercice des sens ait jamais approché des dieux - et le divin doit être cherché désormais comme transcendance pure, dans une expérience <u>intérieure</u>. (R,p. 12)

We may therefore summarise how Bonnefoy sees baroque art as mirroring the religious consciousness of the artists, and in a less direct way of the age which produced it. While classical and Renaissance art was able to see the world as a well-balanced arrangement of elements, each having a fixed place in the divine scheme of things, baroque art had lost this calm confidence and had to reach out to grasp a transcendent

reality which had become separated from the ordinary reality of the world. Ironically, however, while this yearning for unity led to a diminution in the importance of the elements of a work of art, these elements gained in another sense in importance as the only possible mediators in the quest for unity: and here we may see another echo of Bonnefoy's notion of the elusive éphémère.

The idea of a kind of éphémère, in relation specifically to baroque art, is developed further at a number of points in Bonnefoy's writing. In the first place, he sees the contrast between the architectural styles of Bernini and Borromini as a kind of variation within the baroque itself. Bernini is seen as exemplifying the main baroque tendency towards unity:

> l'objet, du point de vue de la représentation, pourra être laissé à son apparence ordinaire, à ses mille aspects non réduits aux besoins spécieux de l'Idée, - parce qu'il importe d'abord d'exprimer la tension qui fait l'unité du monde, la grande forme spirale qui et rassemble et transcende les mille formes ouvertes qui sont tournées vers la mort. (I^2, pp. 220-21)

If the emphasis here, so to speak, is on the all-embracing character of the spiral, and on its primary upward thrust, Borromini tends, in Bonnefoy's view, rather to express the importance of the circular motion at particular points of its progress upwards:

> ce qui est là devant nous . . . affirme, avec une énergie saturnienne, les caractères propres d'une existence à jamais particulière, les signes paradoxalement restés extérieurs d'une irréductible intériorité. . . le premier motif, bien que reclos sur soi-même, s'est raccordé à bien d'autres par tout un système de rythmes, lesquels, sans l'arracher à son 'en-soi' plein de rêves, ont pourtant déployé une part de son apparence, ont suspendu 'un instant' ce qu'il avait d'insensé, d'incompatible avec la nature, - mais pour y consentir à nouveau dans une musique instable et fuyante, qui ne fait qu'agrandir

> aux proportions de toute l'église ce détail du début, toujours intérieur et séparé. (I^2, p. 222)

In this contrast, indeed, between Bernini and Borromini within a single artistic tendency (the baroque), we come close to the central preoccupation of Bonnefoy's aesthetic theory. It is significant that he expresses that contrast in religious terms by asking 'Est-ce, Borromini, le christianisme et Bernin, malgré tout, le "paganisme éternel"?' (I^2, p. 225). The sense in which he sees Borromini's concentration on detail as a means to achieving the expression of unity (as against Bernini's expression of unity in which detail, though important, is secondary) as Christian may be clarified by his remark in 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie' that 'La difficulté de la poésie moderne, c'est qu'elle a à se définir, dans un même instant, par le christianisme et contre lui. Car . . . l'invention baudelairienne de tel être ou de telle chose est bien chrétienne pour autant que Jésus a souffert sous Ponce Pilate, donnant une dignité à un lieu et à une heure, une réalité à chaque être' (I^2, pp.119-20). It is true that, at least at the time when he was writing 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', Bonnefoy saw this Christian sanctification of the here and now - or of l'éphémère - as an unsatisfactory basis for artistic endeavour, since 'le christianisme n'affirme qu'un court instant l'existence singulière. Chose créée, il la reconduit à Dieu dans les voies de la Providence et voici ce qui est privé une fois encore de sa valeur absolue' (I^2, p. 120). In other words, a conventional religious guarantee of existence, and its expression in art, fails through the intrinsic failure of any philosophical system to avoid abstraction and grasp the true existence of the particular. In Christian terms this may, of course, be a misinterpretation of the sacrifice of Christ. But in replying to his own question about the

Christianity and paganism of Borromini and Bernini, Bonnefoy gives a further formulation which shows how Borromini, in his view, takes something from Christianity, in the same way as 'la poésie moderne . . . a à se définir . . . par le christianisme', and how Bernini, comparably, takes something from paganism, while both nevertheless represent facets of a single impulse, which is central to Western artistic creativity:

> Mais plus rien alors, dans le premier cas /de Borromini/, de la religion de Saint François, comme plus rien chez Bernin de l'horreur platonicienne de la matière. Plutôt les deux grandes forces, d'incarnation et d'excarnation, de rapport immanent au monde et d'intériorité transcendante, qui se retrouvent en oeuvre, des hypothèses contradictoires du Parménide au catholicisme jésuite, dans l'élaboration ambigue de la sensibilité d'Occident. (I^2, p. 225)

And, more directly in the context of seventeenth-century painting, Bonnefoy expresses again the central importance, and at the same time the complementarity, of the art of Bernini and of Borromini in a striking image: 'Le Je transfiguré par la grâce, le Je paralysé par le péché: c'est, face au moi impersonnel, intemporel de Cortone, ou à l'individu que le rationalisme recherche à travers ses châteaux de sable, - disons face à cette âme végétative et à ce cerveau - la diastole et systole d'un même coeur.' (R, p. 84).

We may now attempt to summarise briefly how Bonnefoy's art criticism, and in particular his view of the baroque, shed light on his poetic theory. He is concerned with defining - or rather with describing, through patient and sensitive investigation of the individual approach of each of the artists to whom he turns his attention - how an artist, be he painter or poet, can express at the same time the particular existence of the reality with which he is dealing and the need, for

the Western consciousness as Bonnefoy interprets it, to grasp at some form of transcendent reality beyond that particular existence. Final and definitive expression of any such simultaneous vision is by definition impossible, if only because the division itself is a product of the split made by the Western intellectual consciousness between reality and what reality may be taken to signify: but it is clear that Bonnefoy sees the attempt to achieve such expression as basic to any genuine attempt at artistic creativity. His consideration of particular poets or painters therefore is basically a description of the particular terms in which they make such an attempt, and of the extent of their necessarily incomplete success. He sees each artist as an individual engaged in an individual, and unique, struggle: and even within the baroque itself (a period, or moment of the Western consciousness, in which the problems of artistic creativity are seen as having presented themselves in a particularly critical form) the varieties of struggle which are undertaken extend not only to those I have described of Bernini and Borromini, but also, for instance, to the apparently distant art of the group of painters known as the bamboccianti (from the nickname of its most prominent member, Peter van Laer). These are painters of genre pictures which, though apparently quite inconsequential, may nevertheless sometimes make contact with the reality which is also the concern of more 'metaphysical' artists: 'Ce qui me touche, c'est qu'en ces images qui se sont voulues fugitives affleure l'épiphanie qu'il nous faut, de la terre sans nymphes désormais ni amadryades mais d'autant plus à nouveau la Mère, qu'on peut aimer' (NR, p. 104). Once again, therefore, some form of contact with what I have called l'ephémère is seen as a major artistic goal.

The conclusion to this study cannot, by the nature of its subject-matter, be a neat formula summarising the content of Bonnefoy's poetic theory - since that theory is not an abstraction from the objects which it considers but an attempt to convey the intrinsic quality of each, against a background whose theoretical content can only be implied rather than directly stated. It may be preferable therefore to turn aside from poetic theory altogether and emphasise again that in Bonnefoy's view specifically artistic activity, while of great significance, cannot be of supreme importance in human endeavour, precisely because the artist can never achieve the complete simultaneous expression of the ideal and the real for which he must nevertheless strive. At the end of Rome 1630, Bonnefoy mentions 'cette variété d'expériences qui s'est déployée devant nous, depuis les hautes ambitions métaphysiques de Bernin, Borromini ou Poussin jusqu'au réalisme "entravé" des Bamboccianti' (R, p. 166), but decides to close his book with an appreciation of the human qualities (albeit in relation to his art) of another artist, Valentin:

> Mais Valentin, c'est bien mieux qu'un peintre, c'est un homme . . .
>
> Valentin est un homme de la province française, et nous savons qu'il ne fut jamais oublieux de sa Brie natale. Cela signifie que sa relation profonde avec le réel avait été déterminée par tout un réseau d'actes simples et substantiels, boire, manger, dormir, veiller soigneusement sur les quelques biens que la terre évidente donne. (R, p. 166)

Bonnefoy's criticism seeks to chart the ways in which artists and poets have expressed their personal relationship with reality, and with the spiritual dimension of reality which in his view represents for the Western consciousness both an inescapable challenge if reality is itself to be fully grasped, and a dangerous temptation insofar as it

may lead away from reality itself and into some form of philosophical or religious abstraction. Art is not therefore seen as something which can be said to operate, or can be commented on, in isolation from the reality which it strives to express or the wider contexts in which artists relate to that reality. Bonnefoy's consideration of particular painters and poets has to take into account the contexts in which they worked, whether these are the background of ideas prevalent at the time, the conditions determined by that background for the possibility of artistic expression of an individual temperament, or the overriding characteristics of that temperament itself. These contexts, however, are equally never Bonnefoy's primary concern on their own account, and while he may sometimes hint at some form of philosophical or art-historical superstructure for his consideration of individual artists, it would be a radical misunderstanding of his method and aims to attempt to distil any kind of abstract theory, or even any generalised view of the nature of artistic creativity, from his work. He is concerned rather with refusing any such abstract definition, and through this refusal with exploring the particular qualities discernible in individual artists and works of art. This study has therefore attempted to review the ways in which, in his criticism and to some extent in his poetry, Bonnefoy declares the necessity for artistic endeavour to address itself to the particular which contains within itself resonances of wider significance, and to seek to enact that particular, however fruitless the attempt at enactment may be in the last analysis. Precisely, indeed, and consistently, Bonnefoy is concerned to deny the adequacy of the kind of analysis which nevertheless, as a thinker in the Western tradition, he sees as one of his basic conceptual tools.

Finally, then, we may quote once again Bonnefoy's remarks on the

symbolic nature of the bread and wine in the Mass, encapsulating physical reality and metaphysical significance - a symbol whose reality, ironically, Bonnefoy feels unable to accept:

> Que le pain soit le corps du Christ, cela n'est communicable que pour autant que le pain soit déjà le pain, c'est-à-dire une réalité bien identifiée et stable, et non quelque apparition obscure et changeante, indéfiniment susceptible de prendre forme nouvelle. Il reste que ce pain, s'il a ainsi son image claire et distincte, est donc vécu en Dieu et sous le signe de l'Un. (I^2, p. 260)

The central assertion of Bonnefoy's theory is that any such final identification of reality and symbolic significance is impossible (which may explain his unequivocal, but obviously reluctant, atheism): but that the modern artist must pursue with all his strength the search for such an identification, while rigorously avoiding the dead formulae of any kind of conventional doctrine. Only then may the artist possibly achieve, apparently obliquely and almost by accident, the kind of true artistic expression of reality that he seeks.

Bibliography

This is a working bibliography in the sense that it lists all the material on which this thesis is based, rather than attempting to catalogue fully everything which Bonnefoy has published and everything which has been published about Bonnefoy. A complete bibliography of Bonnefoy's publications, of translations of his work, and of critical work on his writing up to the end of 1978, is to be found in Annie Prothin, 'Yves Bonnefoy: A Bibliography', Bulletin of Bibliography 36, 3 (Autumn 1979), pp. 128-43.

The main references to Bonnefoy's critical work in this thesis are taken from L'Improbable et autres essais (Paris, 1980) to which I refer as I^2, and which republished with verbal modifications the essays previously collected in L'Improbable (Paris, 1959 - referred to as I) and Un Rêve fait à Mantoue (Paris, 1967 - referred to as RFM), and from Le Nuage rouge (Paris, 1977 - referred to as NR). References to Bonnefoy's poetry are taken from the collected edition of Poèmes (Paris, 1978), referred to as P. Other books and uncollected articles by Bonnefoy referred to in the text by abbreviations are as follows:

CAS 'La Critique anglo-saxonne et la critique française', Preuves 95 (January 1959), pp. 68-73

RTCE 'De la Rome troublée à la conscience élisabéthaine', Cahiers Renaud-Barrault 30 (1960), pp. 3-16

Rbd Rimbaud par lui-même (Paris, 1961)

H Hamlet, suivi d'une Idée de la traduction (Paris, 1962)

CTS 'Comment traduire Shakespeare', Etudes anglaises 17, 4 (1964), pp. 341-51

R Rome 1630: l'horizon du premier baroque (Paris, 1970)

NRF Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve, suivi de Hier régnant désert (nouvelle version) et accompagné d'Anti-Platon et de deux essais (Paris, 1970: NRF/Poésie edition)

AP L'Arrière-pays (Geneva, 1972)

O L'Ordalie (Paris, 1975)

The first part of this bibliography lists works by Bonnefoy under a number of headings. The second part lists critical works about him, and the third part gives a selective list of other books which I have consulted while writing the thesis. Items in the first part are arranged in chronological order of publication under each heading, while those in the second and third parts are arranged under each heading in alphabetical order of the authors. The reprinting of Bonnefoy's essays in book form is only noted in relation to the latest collected editions: Le Nuage rouge (Paris, 1977) and L'Improbable et autres essais (Paris, 1980). There are often considerable textual differences between these and the original printings in periodicals or in the earlier collected editions.

I WORKS BY BONNEFOY

A Collections of poetry and essays

1. Traité du pianiste (Paris, 1946)
2. Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve (Paris, 1953)
3. Peintures murales de la France gothique (Paris, 1954)
4. Hier régnant désert (Paris, 1958)
5. Pierre écrite Ardoises taillées par Raoul Ubac (limited edition) (Paris, 1958)
6. L'Improbable (Paris, 1959)
7. Rimbaud par lui-même (Paris, 1961)
8. La seconde simplicité (Paris, 1961). Reprinted for the most part in I^2, pp. 173-97

9. Anti-Platon, avec Le coeur-espace (limited edition) (Paris, 1962)

10. Miró (Milan, 1964: Paris, 1965)

11. Pierre écrite (Paris, 1965)

12. La Poésie française et le principe d'identité avec deux eaux-fortes de Raoul Ubac (limited edition) (Paris, 1967). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 243-70

13. Un Rêve fait à Mantoue (Paris, 1967)

14. Rome 1630: l'horizon du premier baroque (Paris, 1970)

15. Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve suivi de Hier régnant désert et accompagné d'Anti-Platon et de deux essais (Paris, 1970)

16. L'Arrière-pays (Geneva, 1972)

17. Une peinture métaphysique [on Denise Estaban] (limited edition) (Paris, 1973)

18. L'Ordalie avec des eaux-fortes de Claude Garache (Paris, 1975)

19. Dans le leurre du seuil (Paris, 1975)

20. Le Nuage rouge (Paris, 1977)

21. Rue Traversière (Paris, 1977)

22. Poèmes (Paris, 1978)

23. L'Improbable et autres essais (Paris, 1980)

B Articles and other contributions (except poetry) to periodicals and books

24. 'Donner à vivre', Le Surréalisme en 1947 (catalogue de l'exposition internationale du surréalisme, présentée par André Breton et Marcel Duchamp) (Paris, 1947), pp. 66-8

25. 'L'Eclairage objectif', Les deux soeurs 3 (1947), pp. 42-53

26. 'Sur le concept de lierre', Troisième convoi 5 (1951), pp. 26-8

27. 'Les Tombeaux de Ravenne', Les Lettres nouvelles (May 1953). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 11-28

28. 'Aspects nouveaux de Michel-Ange', Les Lettres nouvelles (December 1953). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 151-7

29. 'En Miroir' [on Jouve], Les Lettres nouvelles 17 (July 1954), pp. 93-7

30. 'Les Fleurs du mal', Mercure de France (September 1954), pp. 41-7. Reprinted in I^2, pp. 29-38

31. 'La Danse des morts de la chaise-Dieu', Mercure de France (October 1954), pp. 193-9

32. 'Raoul Ubac', Derrière le miroir 74-76 (1955). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 57-9

33. 'Degas', Critique 102 (November 1955). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 165-9

34. 'L'Oeuvre de Fra Angelico', Critique 105 (February 1956). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 139-150

35. 'Le moyen âge fantastique', Mercure de France (May 1956), pp. 172-5

36. 'L'Invention de Balthus', Mercure de France (March 1957), pp. 402-417. Reprinted in I^2, pp. 39-56

37. 'Mélodrame' /on Jouve/, Mercure de France (November 1957) pp. 510-12

38. 'G. Lely ou le réalisme poétique', Critique 132 (1958), pp. 387-95. Reprinted as postface to G. Lely, Vie du Marquis de Sade, in Sade, Oeuvres complètes, vol.1 (Paris, 1966) and, under the title 'La cent vingt et unième journée', in I^2, pp. 85-95

39. 'Valéry l'apostat', Les Lettres nouvelles 6, 2 (1958), pp. 234-9. Reprinted under the title 'Paul Valéry' in I^2, pp. 97-103

40. 'La Critique anglo-saxonne et la critique française', Preuves 95 (January 1959), pp. 68-73

41. 'Le Temps et l'intemporel dans la peinture du Quattrocento', Mercure de France (February 1959). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 61-84

42. 'L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie', Les Lettres nouvelles (4 March 1959) pp. 21-27 and (11 March 1959), pp. 37-47. Reprinted in I^2, pp. 105-31

43. 'Shakespeare et le poète français', Preuves 100 (June 1959), pp. 42-8

44. 'Spanzotti redécouvert', Mercure de France (June 1959), pp. 355-57

45. 'Deux livres sur Caravage', Les Lettres nouvelles 33 (December 1959). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 159-64

46. 'La Décision de Rimbaud', Preuves 107 (January 1960), pp. 3-16

47. 'La Poésie objective' /on Rimbaud/, Two Cities 4 (15 May 1960), pp. 6-15

48. 'De la Rome troublée à la conscience élisabéthaine', Cahiers Renaud-Barrault 30 (1960), pp. 3-16. Reprinted in Cahiers Renaud-Barrault 57 (1966), pp. 49-62

49. 'Une Saison en enfer', Mercure de France 341 (March 1961) pp. 385-412

50. 'Transposer ou traduire Hamlet', Preuves 134 (April 1962), pp. 31-4

51. 'La Poésie de du Bouchet', Critique 18 (April 1962), pp. 291-8

52. 'La Religion de Chagall', Derrière le miroir 132 (1962)

53. 'Le Voyage de Grèce', Mercure de France 349 (1963). Reprinted under the title 'Un Rêve fait à Mantoue' in I^2, pp. 199-205

54. 'Symbolism', trans. S. Spender, in The Concise Encyclopaedia of English and American Poets and Poetry, ed. Spender and Hall (London, 1963), pp. 323-6

55. 'Comment traduire Shakespeare', Etudes anglaises 17, 4 (1964), pp. 341-51

56. 'The Feeling of Transcendency' [on Surrealism], Yale French Studies 31 (May 1964), pp. 135-7

57. 'A la mort de Jacques Villon', Art de France 4 (1964). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 285-7

58. 'Une Vigne qui bouge dans ses ombres', Mercure de France (May 1964). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 289-91

59. 'Des fruits montant de l'abîme', Derrière le miroir 142 (1964). Reprinted in Raoul Ubac (Paris, 1970) and in I^2, pp. 293-303

60. 'La Poésie française et le principe d'identité', Revue d'esthétique 18 (1965), pp. 335-54. Reprinted in I^2, pp. 243-70. See also 12.

61. 'L'Illumination et l'éloge', Honneur à Saint-John Perse (Paris, 1965), pp. 327-37. Reprinted in NR, pp 221-33

62. 'Pierre Charpentrat et l'architecture baroque', Critique 223 (December 1965), pp. 999-1015. Reprinted under the title 'L'Architecture baroque et la pensée du destin' in I^2, pp. 211-33

63. 'Proximité du visage' [on Raoul Ubac], Derrière le miroir 161 (October 1966). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 305-14

64. 'L'Ordalie', L'Ephémère 1 (1966), pp. 52-64. Reprinted as 18

65. 'L'Etranger de Giacometti', L'Ephémère 1 (1966), pp. 79-91. Reprinted in I^2, pp. 315-28

66. 'Rome 1630: définition du baroque', Preuves 189 (November 1966), pp. 3-14

67. 'Sept Feux', L'Ephémère 2 (1967), pp. 69-77. Reprinted in I^2, pp. 329-40

68. 'Hercule Seghers', L'Ephémère 2 (1967), pp. 89-96. Reprinted under the title 'Notes sur Hercule Seghers' in I^2, pp. 207-10

69. 'Jacqueline Lamba', L'Ephémère 3 (1967), pp. 83-90

70. 'Sur la Chanson de Roland', L'Ephémère 4 (1967), pp. 55-65. Reprinted under the title 'Les mots et la parole dans le Roland' as a postface to La Chanson de Roland (Paris, 1968), and under the title 'Les mots et la parole dans la Chanson de Roland' in NR, pp. 171-81

71. 'A l'horizon de Morandi', L'Ephémère 5 (1968), pp. 117-24. Reprinted in NR, pp. 107-14

72. 'Elsheimer et les siens', L'Ephémère 7 (1968), pp. 79-104. Reprinted in NR, pp. 95-105

73. 'L'Art et le sacré, Baudelaire parlant à Mallarmé', in L'Art dans la société d'aujourd'hui, Revue neuchâteloise 42 (1968), pp. 75-94, with discussion, pp. 191-215

74. 'La Traduction de Shakespeare', Revue d'esthétique 21 (1968), pp. 94-6

75. 'Rimbaud devant la critique', Rimbaud (Paris, 1968), pp. 269-87

76. 'Baudelaire contre Rubens', L'Ephémère 9 (1969), pp. 72-112. Reprinted, in a much altered and expanded version, in NR, pp. 9-80

77. 'Pierre Jean Jouve', Cahiers de l'Herne 19 (1972), pp. 60-75. Reprinted in NR, pp. 235-65

78. 'La fleur double, la sente étroite' /on Bashô/, Mouvements premiers: études critiques offertes à Georges Poulet (Paris, 1972), pp. 307-16. Reprinted,in an expanded version under the title 'La fleur double, la sente étroite: la nuée', in NR, pp. 327-45

79. 'Fonction du poème', Bulletin de l'Académie royale de langue et de littérature françaises 50, 3-4 (1972), pp. 161-175. Reprinted under the title 'Sur la fonction du poème' in NR, pp. 267-283

80. 'Paul Celan', Revue de belles-lettres 96, 2-3 (1972), pp. 91-7. Reprinted in NR, pp. 303-9

81. 'Hommage à Jaccottet', Revue de belles-lettres 97, 3-4 (1973), pp. 107-9

82. 'George Henein', La Part du sable (July 1974). Reprinted in Argile 5 (1974-75), pp. 22-39, and in NR, pp. 287-302

83. 'La Poétique de Mallarmé', Critique 31 (1975), pp. 1053-74. Reprinted as introduction to Mallarmé, Igitur, Divagations, Un Coup de dés (Paris, 1976), and in NR, pp. 183-211

84. 'Rome, les flèches', Les Cahiers du chemin 24 (1975), pp. 57-66

85. 'Raymond Mason', Arfuyen 1 (1975), pp. 61-3

86. 'Peinture, poésie: vertige,paix' /on Claude Garache/, Derrière le miroir 213 (1975), pp. 1-10. Reprinted in NR, pp. 319-26

87. 'L'Egypte, et quelques poèmes', Argile 7 (1975), pp. 5-17.

88. 'Les Découvertes de Prague', Celui qui ne peut se servir des mots /homage to Bram van Velde/ (Montpellier, 1975), pp. 33-43

89. 'Le Grillon' Première livraison 1-6 (1975-76)

90. 'Seconde rue Traversière', Argile 9-10 (1976), pp. 232-35

91. 'Terre seconde', preface to an exhibition at the Château de Ratilly (1976). Reprinted in NR, pp. 347-63

92. 'Deux souvenirs de Georges Duthuit', Georges Duthuit (1976). Reprinted in NR, pp. 159-67

93. 'Rimbaud encore', Archives des lettres modernes 160 (1976). Reprinted in NR, pp. 213-19

94. 'De Dada au dadaïsme. Une encyclopédie sur Dada, c'est une somme explosive', Les Nouvelles littéraires (23 December 1976), p. 4

95. 'Chants de la Balandrane' /on Char/, Les Nouvelles littéraires (22 December 1977), p. 21

96. 'Rimbaud: "Les reparties de Nina"', Le Lieu et la formule: hommage à Marc Eigeldinger (Neuchâtel, 1978), pp. 88-110

97. 'Madame Rimbaud', Etudes sur les "Poésies" de Rimbaud, ed. Eigeldinger (Neuchâtel, 1979), pp. 9-43

98. 'Deux soirées au théatre' (with translations by Susanna Lang), World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 370-3

99. 'L'Analogie suprême', Stiftung F.V.S. zu Hamburg. Verleihung des Montaigne-Preises 1978 (1979), pp. 43-8

100. 'Rembrandt vu par Genet', Les Nouvelles littéraires (2 August 1979), p. 4

101. 'Gilbert Lely', Gilbert Lely: études critiques inédites (Paris, 1979)

C Selected periodical and anthology publications of poems and translations

102. 'Anti-Platon', La Révolution la nuit 2 (1947), pp. 14-15

103. 'Théâtre de Douve', La Part du sable (1949)

104. 'L'Orangerie' (7 poems), Mercure de France 1054 (June 1951), pp. 213-15

105. 'Vrai Lieu' (11 poems), Mercure de France 1077 (May 1953), pp. 16-20

106. 11 poems in 'Poésie d'aujourd'hui', Le Point (June 1954)

107. 'Veneranda' (3 poems), Mercure de France (January 1956), pp. 87-8

108. 20 poems in J. Paris, Anthologie de la poésie nouvelle (Monaco, 1956), pp. 59-69

109. 'Les Lampes' (6 poems), Les Lettres nouvelles (July-August 1956), pp. 3-4

110. 'Scènes de Jules César de Shakespeare', Mercure de France (February 1957)

111. 'Le Bruit des voix' (9 poems), Les Lettres nouvelles 58 (March 1958), pp. 321-5

112. 'A une terre d'aube' (10 poems), Mercure de France (May 1958), pp. 37-41

113. 'Pierre écrite' (7 poems), Two Cities 2 (15 July 1959), pp. 23-4

114. 8 poems in Les Poèmes de l'année (Paris, 1959)

115. 3 poems in Cahiers Renaud-Barrault 30 (October 1960)

116. 'Une Ombre respirante' (7 poems), Mercure de France (June 1963)

117. 'Dans le leurre du seuil' (fragments), L'Ephémère 11 (1969), pp. 344-357

118. 'Dans le leurre du seuil' (fragments), Les Poèmes de l'année (1970)

119. 'Dans le leurre du seuil, 2' (fragments), L'Ephémère 19-20 (1972-3), pp. 293-307

120. 'Par expérience' (4 poems), Arfuyen 1 (1975), pp. 3-6

D Editions and introductions

121. 'Dans la lumière d'octobre', preface to Georges Séféris, Poèmes (Paris, 1963). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 235-42

122. 'Léonor Fini ou la profondeur délivrée', preface to the catalogue for the Fini exhibition at the Galerie Lolas, Paris (1965)

123. 'Les Romans arthuriens et la légende du Graal', introduction to Albert Béguin and Yves Bonnefoy, La Quête du Graal (translation of the 13th century Queste del Saint Graal) (Paris, 1965)

124. 'L'Obstination de Chestov', preface to Léon Chestov, Athènes et Jérusalem (Paris, 1967). Reprinted in I^2, pp. 271-83

125. 'Un Ennemi des images', preface to Georges Duthuit, Représentation et présence (Paris, 1974). Reprinted in NR, pp. 125-57

126. 'Giovanni Bellini', introduction to T. Pignatti, Tout l'oeuvre peint de Giovanni Bellini (Paris, 1975). Reprinted in NR, pp. 83-94

127. 'Andrea Mantegna', introduction to Tout l'oeuvre peint de Mantegna (Paris, 1978)

128. 'Readiness, ripeness: Hamlet, Lear', preface to William Shakespeare, Hamlet/Le Roi Lear, trans. Bonnefoy (Paris, 1978)

E Translations by Bonnefoy

129. Carrington, Leonora: Une Chemise de nuit de flanelle (Paris, 1951)

130. Shakespeare, William: Henri IV, lère partie (Paris, 1957)

131. Shakespeare, William: Jules César (Paris, 1958, reprinted 1960)

132. Shakespeare, William: Hamlet (Paris, 1958). Reprinted, with additional material, under the title Hamlet suivi d'une Idée de la traduction (Paris, 1962), and in 128

133. Shakespeare, William: Le Conte d'hiver (Paris, 1959)

134. Shakespeare, William: Vénus et Adonis (Paris, 1960)

135. Shakespeare, William: Le Viol de Lucrèce (Paris, 1960)

136. Frost, Robert and Yeats, W.B.: 'Poèmes', Cahiers Renaud-Barrault 30 (1960), pp. 96-8

137. Shakespeare, William: Le Roi Lear (Paris, 1965). Reprinted in 128

138. Shakespeare, William: Roméo et Juliette (Paris, 1968)

139. Séféris, Georges: 'Sur un soleil d'hiver', in Trois poèmes secrets (Paris, 1970)

140. Yeats, W.B.: 'Sailing to Byzantium, traduction et notes' in Le Romantisme anglo-américain: mélanges offerts à Louis Bonnerot (Paris, 1971), pp. 307-16

141. Gelb, I.J.: Pour une théorie de l'écriture (Paris, 1973)

142. Yeats, W.B.: 'Douze poèmes', Argile 1 (1973-74), pp. 64-93

143. Bonnefoy, Yves: 'In the threshold's lure' (extracts), French Poetry Now, Prospice 3 (1975), ed. Edwards, pp. 20-28

144. Frost, Robert and Donne, John: 'Deux poèmes', Port-des-singes 3 (1976)

F Interviews

145. Piroué, Georges, 'Bonnefoy ou l'acte de dégager la présence dans l'absence', Mercure de France 333 (June 1958), pp. 365-8

146. interview in L'Express (17 December 1959)

147. Falciola, Bernard, 'Yves Bonnefoy et le pouvoir poétique', Gazette littéraire (11-12 November 1972)

148. interview with John E Jackson, L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 85-92

149. Lemoine, Yves, 'Les Etats du langage. Un entretien avec Bonnefoy', Les Nouvelles littéraires 2573 (24 February 1977), p. 7

G Selected translations of works by Bonnefoy

150. 5 poems, translated by Wallace Fowlie, in 'Postwar French Poets', Poetry (Chicago) (September 1952), pp. 365-71

151. 'Critics, English and French, and the distance between them' [translation of 40], Encounter (July 1958), pp. 39-45

152. 'Akt und Ort der Dichtung' [translation of 42 by Max Hölzer], Die Neue Rundschau 71, 4 (1960), pp. 623-44

153. Poems, with translations by Galway Kinnell, The Hudson Review 13,4 (1960-61), pp. 528-49

154. 'Shakespeare and the French Poet' [translation of 43], Encounter (June 1962), pp. 38-43

155. Poems, with translations by Galway Kinnell and Jackson Matthews, Poetry (Chicago) (July 1962)

156. Poems, translated by Edward Lucie-Smith, The Critical Quarterly 4,3 (1962), pp. 245-6

157. 'New Poetry in France', poems translated by J.R. Lawler, Meanjin 22,3 (September 1963), pp. 292-306

158. Poems, translated by Galway Kinnell, Chicago Review 17, 1 (1964), pp. 116-17

159. 'Transpose or Translate' [translation of 50], Yale French Studies 33 (1964), pp. 120-26

160. 'Transponer o traducir Hamlet' [translation of 50], Sur 289-90 (1964), pp. 61-7

161. Poems, translated by John Lushington, Modern Poetry in Translation 2 (1966)

162. Miró [translation of 10 by Judith Landry], (London, 1967)

163. Selected Poems with translations by Anthony Rudolf (London, 1968)

164. On the Motion and Immobility of Douve [translation of 2 by Galway Kinnell], (Athens, Ohio, 1968)

165. Poems, with an interview and translations by Serge Gavronsky, in Serge Gavronsky, Poems and Texts (New York, 1969), pp. 125-41

166. Poems, translated by Anthony Rudolf, 'Poetry International 1970', Modern Poetry in Translation 7 (1970), p. 30

167. 'On Translating Yeats' and two poems, translated by Anthony Rudolf, Modern Poetry in Translation 16 (1973), pp. 11-12

168. Rimbaud [translation of 7 by Paul Schmidt], (New York, 1973)

169. 6 poems, translated by Anthony Rudolf, Prospice 1 (1973), pp. 58-60

170. 6 poems, presented and translated by Enrique Moreno Castillo, Campa de l'Arpa 7 (1973), pp. 4-6

171. 'French Poetry and the Principle of Identity' [translation of 60 by John Coombes], French Poetry Now, Prospice 3 (1975), ed. Edwards, pp. 29-48

172. 'Nell'inganno della soglia' [translation in part of 19 by Piero Bigongiari], L'Approdo letterario 70 (1975), pp. 24-45

173. 'The Poetics of Mallarmé' [translation of 83], Yale French Studies 54 (1977), pp. 9-21

174. 'On the Translation of Form in Poetry', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 374-9

175. Rue Traversière [translation of 21] with a postface by Friedhelm Kemp (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1980)

II CRITICAL WORKS ON BONNEFOY

A Books, theses and special numbers of periodicals

176. L'Arc 66 (October 1976), presented by Alain Paire. Articles by Starobinski, Vernier, Munier, Jaccottet, Vigée, Kemp, Picon, Agosti, Madeleine-Perdrillat, Roudaut, Poulet, Jourdan, Abe and Jackson: individual articles listed in part B below under authors' names

177. Arndt, Beatrice: La Quête poétique d'Ives [sic] Bonnefoy (Zürich, 1970). Zurich University thesis

178. Jackson, John E: Yves Bonnefoy (Paris, 1976)

179. Jackson, John E: La Question du moi: un aspect de la modernité poétique européenne. T.S. Eliot, Paul Celan, Yves Bonnefoy (Neuchâtel, 1978)

180. Price, J.D.: 'Le Chemin du seuil. Une analyse thématique de la poésie de Valéry, Jouve, Frenaud, Bonnefoy et Perse.' (Southampton University thesis, 1974)

181. Regniero, Helen: 'Issue and return. The poetic imagination in Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Yeats, Stevens and Bonnefoy.' (Brown University thesis, 1970)

182. World Literature Today 53, 3 (summer 1979). Articles by Bonnefoy, Vernier, Starobinski, Frank, Lawler, Lawall, Lang, Stamelman, Gordon, Kanes, Greene, Caws, Jackson, Breunig and Martin: individual articles listed in part B below under authors' names

B Articles and selected reviews, including chapters in books

183. Abe, Yoshio: 'La tentation de l'intelligible', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 71-81

184. Agosti, Stefano: 'Yves Bonnefoy e la grammatica dell'ineffabile', Sigma 14 (1967), pp. 75-93. Reprinted in part in I metodi attuali della critica in Italia, ed. Corti and Segre (Turin, 1970), pp. 356-62

185. Agosti, Stefano: 'Violence de l'oubli', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 42-7

186. Albert, Walter: 'Bonnefoy and the Architecture of Poetry', Modern Language Notes 82 (1967),pp. 590-603

187. Attal, J.-P.: 'La Quête de Bonnefoy', Critique 21 (1965), pp. 535-40. Reprinted in L'image 'métaphysique' et autres essais (Paris, 1969), pp. 211-16

188. Berger, Yves: 'Deux poètes devant la trahison du language' [on Bonnefoy and Emmanuel], Preuves 104 (October 1959), pp. 75-8

189. Bigongiari, Piero: 'La Metamorfosi di Bonnefoy', L'Approdo letterario 37 (1965). Reprinted in Poesia francese del novecento (Florence, 1968), pp. 235-52

190. Bigongiari, Piero: 'La poesia imperfetta di Bonnefoy tra Hier régnant désert e Pierre écrite', La Poesia come funzione simbolica del linguaggio (Milan, 1972), pp. 283-323

191. Bigongiari, Piero: '"Nell'inganno della soglia" ovvero l'altro nello specchio di Narciso', L'Approdo letterario 71-72 (1975) pp. 122-42

192. Blanchot, Maurice: 'Le grand refus', Nouvelle revue française 14 (1959), pp. 678-89

193. Blanchot, Maurice: 'Comment découvrir l'obscur?', Nouvelle revue française 14 (1959), pp. 867-79

194. Blanchot, Maurice: 'Rimbaud et l'oeuvre finale', Nouvelle revue française 18 (1961), pp. 293-303

195. Blot, Jean: 'Le Progrès d'Yves Bonnefoy', Nouvelle revue française 282 (June 1976), pp. 71-4

196. Boase, Alan: 'Critiques français, critiques anglais, ce qui les divise. Réponse à Yves Bonnefoy', Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises 16 (March 1964), pp. 157-65, with discussion, pp. 290-92

197. Boisdeffre, Pierre de:'Un siècle de poésie française: de Baudelaire à Yves Bonnefoy', Arts-Loisirs 66 (1966), pp. 28-9

198. Borel, J.: 'D'une expérience de l'impuissance', Cahiers du Sud 380 (1964), pp. 270-87

199. Bosquet, Alain: 'Bonnefoy ou la fuite devant le signifiant', Verbe et vertige (Paris, 1961), pp. 165-73

200. Bosquet, Alain: 'Yves Bonnefoy contre le signifiant immobile', Nouvelle revue française 294 (June 1977), pp. 91-2

201. Bowie, Malcolm: 'The immanent Idea', Times Literary Supplement (6 May 1977), p. 553

202. Brindeau, S.: 'La possession de l'être: Yves Bonnefoy', La Poésie contemporaine de langue française depuis 1945 (Paris, 1973) pp. 197-202

203. Breunig , Leroy C: 'Bonnefoy's Hamlet', World Literature Today

53, 3 (1979), pp. 461-5

204. Bruch, J.-L.: 'Approches de la poésie', Chantiers 24, 4 (February 1960), pp. 11-13

205. Casanova, Jean-Yves: 'A propos de Bonnefoy', Sud 10,31 (1980), pp. 52-6

206. Caws, Mary Ann: 'Bonnefoy: not the Peacock but the Stone', The Inner Theater of Recent French Poetry (Princeton, 1972), pp. 141-70

207. Caws, Mary Ann (with Sarah Lawall): 'A style of Silence: two readings of Bonnefoy's poetry', Contemporary Literature 16,2 (1975), pp. 193-217

208. Caws, Mary Ann: 'Reading, the cast shadows: a reflection', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 450-55

209. Chambaz, Bernard: 'L'Improbable', Nouvelle revue française 332 (September 1980), pp. 88-90

210. Chappuis, Pierre: 'Un Rêve fait à Mantoue', Nouvelle revue française 30 (1967), pp. 697-9

211. Chappuis, Pierre: 'Le Livre infaisable', Courrier du centre international d'études poétiques 121-2 (1977), pp. 11-19

212. Charpentrat, Pierre: 'Un instant privilégié de l'art de l'Occident', Critique 27 (March 1971), pp. 264-6

213. Charpentreau, J.: 'Poésie du temps', Signes du temps 1 (January 1960), pp. 29-32

214. Clancier, Georges-Emmanuel: 'Hier régnant désert', Mercure de France 334 (1958), pp. 293-8. Reprinted in La Poésie et ses environs (Paris, 1973), pp. 247-52

215. Cornulier, Benoît de: 'Métrique de l'alexandrin de Bonnefoy. Essai d'analyse méthodique', Langue française 49 (February 1981), pp. 30-48

216. Deloffre, Frédéric: 'Versification traditionnelle et versification libérée d'après un recueil d'Yves Bonnefoy', Le Vers français au vingtième siècle, ed. Parent (Paris, 1967), pp. 43-55, with discussion, pp. 56-64

217. Deloffre, Frédéric: 'Yves Bonnefoy: "Nous vieillissions, lui le feuillage et moi la source"', Stylistique et poétique françaises (Paris, 1970), pp. 199-211

218. Dickson, Andrew: 'Movement and Immobility in a Poem by Yves Bonnefoy', Modern Language Review 72, 3 (July 1977), pp. 565-74

219. Diéguez, Manuel de: 'Bonnefoy et la critique du style', Esprit 28 (December 1960), pp. 2120-28

220. Duits, Charles: 'L'énigme poétique d'Yves Bonnefoy', Critique 14 (1958), pp. 832-7

221. Dumontet, B.: 'Situer la poésie', Le Pont de l'épée 8 (1959), pp. 62-5

222. Estaban, Claude: 'L'Echo d'une demeure', Nouvelle revue française 225 (September 1971), pp. 19-34

223. Estaban, Claude: 'L'immédiat et l'accessible', Critique 33 (1977), pp. 913-48

224. Frank, Joseph: 'Yves Bonnefoy: Notes of an Admirer', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 399-405

225. Gateau, Jean-Charles: 'Dans le leurre du seuil', Nouvelle revue française 270 (June 1975), pp. 71-3

226. Glissant, Edouard: 'Notes sur Bonnefoy et le chemin de la vérité', Les Lettres nouvelles 6,2 (1958), pp. 583-7

227. Glissant, Edouard: 'Offrande', L'Intention poétique (Paris, 1969), pp. 230-35

228. Gordon, Alex L.: 'Things dying, things new born: the poetry of Yves Bonnefoy', Mosaic 6, 2 (1972-73), pp. 55-70

229. Gordon, Alex L.: 'Bonnefoy and "La conscience dans les pierres"', Dalhousie French Studies 1 (1979), pp. 75-94

230. Gordon, Alex L.: 'From Anti-Platon to Pierre écrite: Bonnefoy's "indispensable" death', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 430-40

231. Greene, Robert W.: 'Bonnefoy and art criticism: a preliminary study', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 447-50

232. Gros, Léon-Gabriel: 'Pactes avec la mort', Cahiers du Sud 322 (March 1954), pp. 471-6

233. Gros, Léon-Gabriel: 'Stylisation et invention', Cahiers du Sud 47 (1958), pp. 264-70

234. Grosjean, Jean: 'Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve', Nouvelle revue française (September 1954), p. 510

235. Henriot, E.: 'Essai d'explication d'un poète: Yves Bonnefoy', Le Monde (2 July 1958), pp. 8-9

236. Hofstadter, Marc: 'The Search for Transcendence in Bonnefoy's "Un Feu va devant nous"', Romance Notes 19, 1 (1978), pp. 4-9

237. Hofstadter, Marc: 'From alienation to incarnation. Bonnefoy's Hier régnant désert' The Romanic Review 72 (1981), pp. 333-48

238. Holkeboer, R.: 'Some Trends in Recent French Poetry', Studies in the Twentieth Century 9 (1972), pp. 1-13

239. Hubert, Renée Riese: 'Pierre écrite', The French Review 40 (1966-67), pp. 174-5

240. Hubert, Renée Riese: 'L'Arrière-pays', The French Review 47 (1973-74), pp. 216-17

241. Jaccottet, Philippe: 'Yves Bonnefoy', Nouvelle revue française 12 (1958), pp. 296-300

242. Jaccottet, Philippe: 'Vers le "vrai lieu"', L'Entretien des muses (Paris, 1968), pp. 251-7

243. Jaccottet, Philippe: 'Une lumière plus mûre', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 24-6

244. Jackson, John E.: 'En personne', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 82-4

245. Jackson, John E.: 'Rilke, Eliot and Bonnefoy as Readers of Baudelaire', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 456-61

246. Jamme, Franck André: 'Rue Traversière', Nouvelle revue française 313 (February 1979), pp. 94-6

247. Jourdain, L.: 'Rimbaud par un autre', Tel Quel 6 (1961), pp. 47-52

248. Jourdan, Pierre-Albert: 'L'Ecriture comme nuée', L'Arc 66 (1976) pp. 67-70

249. Kalb, Henry E.: 'Bonnefoy and Douve. "Le Froid secret"', Modern Language Review 73 (1978), pp. 525-31

250. Kanes, Martin: 'Bonnefoy, Architect', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 440-46

251. Karaulac, M.: 'Le Jardin essentiel. Notes sur Bonnefoy', Bulletin des jeunes romanistes 1 (June 1960), pp. 20-21

252. el Kayem, Henri: 'Rencontres avec trois poètes: Schéhadé, Jouve, Bonnefoy', La Revue du Caire 178 (March 1955), pp. 87-110

253. Kemp, Friedhelm: 'Dans le leurre du seuil', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 37-40

254. Lang, Susanna: 'The Word and the Place Between', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 417-20

255. Lawall, Sarah: 'Yves Bonnefoy and Denis Roche: Art and the Art of Poetry', About French Poetry from Dada to Tel Quel (Detroit, 1974), pp. 69-111

256. Lawall, Sarah, and Mary Ann Caws: 'A Style of Silence: two readings of Yves Bonnefoy's poetry', Contemporary Literature 16,2 (1975), pp. 193-217

257. Lawall, Sarah: 'Poetry, Taking Place', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 411-17

258. Lawler, James R.: 'Celebrating the Obscure', World Literature Today 53,3 (1979), pp. 405-10

259. Leclair, Yves: 'Bonnefoy dans le leurre du seuil', Recherches sur l'imaginaire dans la littérature contemporaine de 1850 à nos jours (Angers, 1980), pp. 152-6

260. Madeleine-Perdrillat, Alain: 'L'Arrière-pays et la patrie inconnue de Vinteuil', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 48-55

261. Magny, O. de: 'Bonnefoy', Ecrivains d'aujourd'hui, ed.Pingaud (Paris, 1960), pp. 127-36

262. Martin, Graham Dunstan: 'Yves Bonnefoy and the Temptation of Plato', Forum for Modern Language Studies 10,2 (1974), pp. 95-108

263. Martin, Graham Dunstan: 'Bonnefoy's Shakespeare Translations', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 465-70

264. Martin, Graham Dunstan: 'Evoking the "objet profond": the poetry of Yves Bonnefoy', The Language of Poetry: crisis and solution, studies in modern poetry of French expression, 1965 to the present, ed. Bishop (Amsterdam, 1980), pp. 69-92

265. Maurin, Mario: 'On Bonnefoy's Poetry', Yale French Studies 21 (1958), pp. 16-22

266. Munier, Roger: 'Le Pays', Critique 30 (1974), pp. 515-28

267. Munier, Roger: 'Le Cri', L'Arc 66 (1976) pp. 16-23

268. Mus, David: 'Stances on Love' /on Dans le leurre du seuil/, Poetry (Chicago) 128, 3 (June 1976), pp. 163-77

269. Paris, J.: 'Introduction', Anthologie de la poésie nouvelle (Monaco, 1956), pp. 30-35

270. Picon, Gaëtan: 'Les formes de l'esprit: l'expérience d'écrire', Le Monde (26 March 1968), p. 11

271. Picon, Gaëtan: 'La parole survivante', Le Monde (7 May 1975), p. 11

272. Picon,Gaëtan: 'S'il est aujourd'hui une poésie . . .', L'Arc 66 (1976), p. 41

273. Piroué, Georges: 'Bonnefoy, Shakespeare et la tragédie', Mercure de France 340 (1960), pp. 732-6

274. Piroué, Georges: 'Rimbaud par lui-même', Mercure de France 342 (1961), pp. 700-703

275. Pons, Christian: 'Les traductions de Hamlet par des écrivains français', Shakespeare en France, Etudes anglaises (1960), pp. 116-129

276. Pons, Christian: 'Transposition et traduction: à propos du Hamlet d'Yves Bonnefoy', Etudes anglaises 17 (1964), pp. 536-48

277. Poulet, Georges: 'Un idéalisme renversé', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 58-66

278. Price, John D.: 'Yves Bonnefoy. The Sense of Things', Sensibility and Creation, Studies in twentieth-century French poetry, ed. Cardinal (London, 1977), pp. 204-19

279. Prothin, Annie P.: 'The Substantive Language of Bonnefoy', Sub-Stance 20 (1978), pp. 45-58

280. Reda, Jacques: 'Bonnefoy, Yves: Pierre écrite', Cahiers du Sud 383-4 (1965),pp. 172-3

281. Renard, Marie-France: '"Vrai nom" de Bonnefoy', Cahiers d'analyse textuelle 18 (1976), pp. 66-76. Reprinted in L'Analyse textuelle. Théorie et pratique, ed. Delbouille and Legros (Liège, 1978), pp. 132-42

282. Richard, Jean-Pierre: 'Bonnefoy, entre le nombre et la nuit', Critique 17 (May 1961), pp. 387-411. Reprinted in Onze études sur la poésie moderne (Paris, 1964), pp. 207-32

283. Roudaut, Jean: 'Le lit de la poésie', Critique 24 (1968), pp. 635-47

284. Roudaut, Jean: 'Yves Bonnefoy: Rome 1630', Les Cahiers du chemin 13 (October 1971), pp. 138-47

285. Roudaut, Jean: 'Les Arrière-livres', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 56-7

286. Saillet, M.: 'Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve', Les Lettres nouvelles 9 (November 1953), pp. 1166-72. Reprinted in Sur la route de Narcisse (Paris, 1958), pp. 189-97

287. Saint-Aubyn, F.C.: 'Yves Bonnefoy: first existentialist poet', Chicago Review 17, 1 (1964), pp. 118-29

288. Simon, Pierre-Henri: 'L'Arrière-pays d'Yves Bonnefoy', Le Monde (3 June 1972). Reprinted in Parier pour l'homme (Paris, 1973), pp. 329-33

289. Stamelman, Richard: 'The Allegory of Loss and Exile in the Poetry of Yves Bonnefoy', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 421-9

290. Stamelman, Richard: 'The Syntax of the Ephemeral' [on Giacometti, Bonnefoy, Dupin and du Bouchet] Dalhousie French Studies 2 (1980), pp. 101-17

291. Stamelman, Richard: 'Landscape and Loss in Bonnefoy and Jaccottet', French Forum 5 (1980), pp. 30-47

292. Starobinski, Jean: 'La prose du voyage', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 3-8

293. Starobinski, Jean: 'Bonnefoy, la poésie entre deux mondes', Critique 35 (1979), pp. 505-22. Reprinted in an English translation by Mary Ann Caws, World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 391-9

294. Starobinski, Jean: 'Eloge de M. Bonnefoy', Stiftung F.V.S. zu Hamburg. Verleihung des Montaigne-Preises 1978 (1979), pp. 27-40

295. Sullivan, Adèle, and Cagnon, Maurice: '"Devenir" (et "avenir"). Thèmes-clés dans l'évolution poétique de Bonnefoy', Ethique et esthétique dans la littérature française du vingtième siècle, ed. Cagnon (Saratoga, Cal., 1978), pp. 41-58

296. Tak, Marjan: 'Bonnefoy et Rimbaud', Rapports 49 (1979), pp. 59-61

297. Trottier, P.: 'Bonnefoy ou la poésie n'est pas un art', Liberté 2 (1960), pp. 118-24

298. Vernier, Richard: 'Un Récit d'Yves Bonnefoy', The Romanic Review 63, 1 (1972), pp. 34-41

299. Vernier, Richard: 'Prosodie et silence dans un recueil d'Yves Bonnefoy', Studia Neophilologica 45 (1973), pp. 288-97

300. Vernier, Richard: 'Dans le leurre du seuil', The French Review 49 (1975-76), pp. 439-40

301. Vernier,Richard: 'Locus Patriae', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 9-15

302. Vernier, Richard: 'Dans la certitude du seuil. Bonnefoy, aujourd'hui', Stanford French Review 2, 1 (1978), pp. 139-47

303. Vernier, Richard: 'Bonnefoy and the Conscience of Poetry', Sub-stance 23-24 (1979), pp. 149-56

304. Vernier, Richard: 'Words like the Sky: the Accomplishment of Yves Bonnefoy', World Literature Today 53, 3 (1979), pp. 384-91

305. Vigée, Claude: 'L'Enfant qui porte le monde', L'Arc 66 (1976), pp. 27-36. Reprinted in L'Art et le démonique (Paris, 1978), 13-27

306. Wevill, David: 'Death's Dream Kingdom', Delos 4 (1970), pp. 235-41

307. York, R. A.: 'Bonnefoy. Aspects of Poetic Structure', Forum for Modern Language Studies 15 (1979), pp. 380-91

308. York, R.A.: 'Bonnefoy and Mallarmé: Aspects of Intertextuality', Romanic Review 71, 3 (May 1980), pp. 307-18

III OTHER WORKS CONSULTED

A Philosophy

309. Bréhier, Emile: La Philosophie de Plotin (Paris, 1928)

310.‡ Shestov, Lev: Chekhov and other essays (Dublin, 1916). Reprinted, with introduction by S. Monas, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1966

311. Shestov, Lev: All things are possible, trans. S.S. Koteliansky (London, 1920)

312. Shestov, Lev: In Job's Balances, trans. Coventry and Macartney (London, 1932)

313. Chestov, Léon: Athènes et Jérusalem, trans. Boris de Schloezer (Paris, 1967)

‡ All works by Léon Chestov (Lev Shestov) are grouped together by date of publication, irrespective of transliteration.

314. Chestov, Léon: Le Pouvoir des clefs, trans. Boris de Schloezer (Paris, 1967)

315. Shestov, Lev: A Shestov Anthology, ed. Bernard Martin (Athens, Ohio, 1970)

316. Cornford, F.M.: Plato and Parmenides. Parmenides' Way of Truth and Plato's Parmenides translated, with an introduction and a running commentary (London, 1939)

317. Dodds, E.R.: 'The Parmenides of Plato and the origin of the Neoplatonic "One"', Classical Quarterly 22 (1928), pp. 129-42

318. Hegel, G.W.F.: La Phénoménologie de l'esprit, trans. J. Hyppolite (Paris, 2 vols, 1939-41)

319. Henry, P., S.J.: 'The Place of Plotinus in the History of Thought', preface to Plotinus, The Enneads, trans. MacKenna (London, 1962), pp. xxxv-lxx

320. Kierkegaard, Søren: Journals, ed. and trans. Hong (Bloomington, 2 vols, 1970)

321. Otto, Rudolf: The Idea of the Holy, trans. Harvey (Oxford, 1925)

322. Plotinus: The Enneads, trans. MacKenna (London, 3rd edition, 1962: 4th edition, 1969)

323. Plato: The Symposium, trans. W. Hamilton (London, 1951)

324. Plato: The Republic, trans. H.D.P. Lee (London, 1955)

325. Plato: The Last Days of Socrates, trans. H. Tredennick (London, 1969)

326. Plato: Timaeus and Critias, trans. H.D.P. Lee (London, 1971)

327. Ross, Sir David: Plato's Theory of Ideas (Oxford, 1951)

328. Schloezer, Boris de: 'Un penseur russe, Léon Chestov', Mercure de France 159 (October 1922), pp. 82-115

329. Soll, Ivan: An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics (Chicago, 1969)

330. Wittgenstein, Ludwig: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. Pears and McGuiness (London, 1961)

B Theory of Literature and Art

331. Abrams, M.H.: The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York, 1953)

332. Béguin, Albert: L'Ame romantique et le rêve (Paris, 1946)

333. Benjamin, Walter: Illuminations (London, 1968)

334. Brooke-Rose, Christine: A Grammar of Metaphor (London, 1958)

335. Cardinal, Roger: Figures of Reality: a perspective on the poetic imagination (London, 1981)

336. Charpentrat, Pierre: Living Architecture: Baroque, Italy and Central Europe, trans. Brown (London, 1967)

337. Charpentrat, Pierre: Le Mirage baroque (Paris, 1967)

338. Coleridge, S.T.: Biographia Literaria (London, 1965)

339. Davie, Donald: Articulate Energy: An Inquiry into the Syntax of English Poetry (London, 1976)

340. Hamburger, Michael: The Truth of Poetry (New York, 1969)

341. Heller, Erich: The Disinherited Mind. Essays in modern German literature and thought (London, 1961)

342. Heller, Erich: Kafka (London 1974)

343. Heller, Erich: The Poet's Self and the Poem (London, 1976)

344. Martin, Graham Dunstan: Language, Truth and Poetry (Edinburgh, 1975)

345. Mossop, D.J.: Pure Poetry (Oxford, 1971)

346. Nowottny, Winifred: The Language Poets Use (London, 1962)

347. Raymond, Marcel: De Baudelaire au surréalisme (Paris, 1933)

348. Renard, Jean-Claude: Notes sur la poésie (Paris, 1970)

349. Rousset, Jean: La Littérature de l'âge baroque en France. Circé et le paon (Paris, 1954)

350. Sartre, Jean-Paul: Qu'est-ce que la littérature? (Paris, 1948)

351. Scarfe, Francis: The Art of Paul Valéry (London, 1954)

352. Wheelwright, Philip: The Burning Fountain (Bloomington, 1954)

353. Wölfflin, Heinrich: Principles of Art History, trans. M. D. Hottinger (London, 1932)

C Other Works

354. Barfield, Owen: Poetic Diction. A Study in Meaning (London, 1928)

355. Baudelaire, Charles: Les Fleurs du Mal, ed. Adam (Paris, 1961)

356. Baudelaire, Charles: Curiosités esthétiques. L'Art romantique et autres oeuvres critiques, ed. Lemaître (Paris, 1962)

357. Blake, William: Poetry and Prose, ed. Keynes (London, 1967)

358. Dante Alighieri: Le Opere, ed. Moore and Toynbee (Oxford, 1924)

359. Hölderlin, Friedrich: Poems and Fragments, ed. and trans. Hamburger (Cambridge, 1980)

360. MacCaig, Norman: A Round of Applause (London, 1962)

361. Mallarmé, Stéphane: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Mondor and Jean-Aubry (Paris, 1945)

362. Mondor, Henri: Vie de Mallarmé (Paris, 1946)

363. Mounin, Georges: Les Problèmes théoriques de la traduction (Paris, 1963)

364. Muir, Edwin: Collected Poems (London, 1963)

365. Ogden, C.K., and I.A. Richards: The Meaning of Meaning (London, 1949)

366. Perse, Saint-John, Oeuvres complètes (Paris, 1972)

367. Polanyi, Michael, and Harry Prosch: Meaning (Chicago, 1975)

368. Ponge, Francis: Le Parti pris des choses (Paris, 1967)

369. Ponge, Francis: Pièces (Paris, 1971)

370. Ponge, Francis: Comment une figue de paroles et pourquoi (Paris, 1977)

371. Racine, Jean: Théatre complet, ed. Rat (Paris, 1960)

372. Rilke, R.M.: Duino Elegies, trans. Leishman and Spender (London, 1948)

373. Rimbaud, Arthur: Oeuvres, ed. Bernard (Paris, 1960)

374. Robinson, Ian: The Survival of English (Cambridge, 1973)

375. Saussure, Ferdinand de: Cours de linguistique générale (Paris, 1965)

376. Shakespeare, William: Hamlet, ed. Dowden (The Arden Shakespeare, London, 1899)

377. Shakespeare, William: Antony and Cleopatra, ed. Ridley (The Arden Shakespeare, London, 1954)

378. Valéry, Paul: Oeuvres, ed. Hytier (2 vols, Paris, 1957)

379. Verlaine, Paul: Oeuvres poétiques, ed. Robichez (Paris, 1969).

380. Whorf, Benjamin Lee: Language, Thought and Reality (Cambridge, Mass., 1956)

381. Wordsworth, William: Poetical Works, ed. Hutchison and de Selincourt (London, 1950)