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## *Symbolism in the work of André Gide*

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Symbolism in the work of André Gide

by

A.J. Cunningsworth

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List of abbreviations used in the footnotes

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## INTRODUCTION

In the formative years of his literary career, Gide was deeply influenced by the symbolist poets, and above all by Mallarmé. Gide's early admiration for Mallarmé is shown by the fact that he presented him with a copy of his first published work, Les Cahiers d'André Walter. This work, together with the aid of Pierre Louÿs, gained him admittance to the salon of Mallarmé and the circle of the symbolists with whom he maintained contact for some ten years, corresponding to the last decade of the nineteenth century. The influence of the symbolists was marked during the first three years of Gide's literary career, but in the year 1894 Gide made a break with the literary artifices used by the symbolists, and revolted against the claustrophobic atmosphere of their salons. However, by this remarkable volta-face Gide by no means freed himself completely from the influence of his early writing career and continued on a less extensive scale to make use of literary techniques he had learned with the symbolists. Nor does Gide lose interest in the concept of the symbol, indeed he played a major part in giving a more general significance to the idea of the symbol. The aim of this thesis is to show the symbolist influence in the earliest works of Gide and to trace the remains of the influence in the later works, at the same time investigating Gide's changing concept of the symbol and its expression in his literary works.

The main problem, raised by the need to define symbolism and

the symbol, was that of terminology. Symbolism as practised by the symbolist poets of the end of the nineteenth century can be defined, or at least described, in terms of literary history, but symbolism in the broader sense and the term symbol posed a greater problem. In fact, as the concept of the symbol developed during Gide's lifetime, and developed precisely because of Gide's own ideas on the matter (1), it proved to be impossible to lay down one definition of the symbol. It was therefore decided to take a pragmatic approach to the problem of the symbol by approaching the work of Gide with a wide definition of the symbol as a literary technique in which an image, event or character represents, directly or through a process of generalisation, an idea or emotion, and attempting to obtain a more precise idea of the symbol at each stage in Gide's career.

At this stage, certain attempted definitions of the symbol were found to be helpful, although they by no means resolved the problem. The three most useful were the following: 'Symbole: objet ou fait naturel de caractère imagé qui évoque, par sa forme ou sa nature une association d'idées 'naturelle' (dans un groupe social donné) avec quelque chose d'abstrait ou d'absent'. (2) 'Le symbole représente une réalité agissant en son lieu et place, se substituant à elle dans ses fonctions, faisant siennes ses valeurs:

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(1) See Lehmann, p.302.

(2) Dictionnaire Robert.

le symbole recueille la réalité substituée dans son essence...'(1)  
'The aesthetic unity of created art - which is indifferently unity of form and unity of content', (2)

In practice it was found useful to consider symbolism in different categories: firstly the symbolism of image and event, secondly, the symbolism of character, and thirdly, symbolism as formal unity in the work of art. The first two categories of symbolism are found throughout most of Gide's literary career, although the nature of the symbolism changes considerably at the turn of the century when Gide begins to use the symbol in a very much more realistic way than he had done previously. He had begun by considering that the symbol should manifest an absolute reality or an essence, and should completely efface itself before its significance. Thus the symbol should be, according to the young Gide, completely transparent and have no existence of its own apart from the essence which it is manifesting. This concept of symbolism is considered in chapter 1, and the reaction against symbolism, first given expression by Gide in Paludes, is examined in chapter 2.

The dramas represent an intermediate stage in which a greater element of reality is introduced, particularly on the level of character, although the atmosphere of the setting remains distant in time and somewhat unreal. This stage in Gide's development

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(1) G. Bettetini, 'Signe, Symbole, Vie et Langage', Table Ronde, No.189 (1963), p.119.

(2) Lehmann, p.302.

will be investigated in chapter 3 of this work. The sense of reality reaches its highest expression in the récits in which the symbol as a means of artistic expression becomes more closely connected with the generalised meaning which can be attributed to it. The symbol appears natural and, within the context of the work of art, exists in its own right. A character from one of the récits can be regarded quite simply as a literary creation in its own right, but can also be seen as symbolic of a more general attitude towards life. Gide presents the reader with realistic or semi-realistic characters and leaves him with the opportunity to generalise from the character outwards and give the character a more universal significance. Consequently La Porte étroite, to take one example, may be read and enjoyed simply as a sad love story, but may also be seen to have a more general significance as a criticism of excessive asceticism. The symbolism of the récits is considered in chapter 3.

The third category of symbol, that of the symbol as formal unity in the work of art, will find its purest expression in Gide's only novel, Les faux monnayeurs, and will be considered at the end of this thesis.

There would appear to be no critical work solely devoted to a study of Gide's symbolism, nor any work which examines fully the development of Gide's ideas on the symbol. Certain points of interpretation have either not been dealt with previously, or have been included in works not expressly aiming at a study of

Gide's use of the symbol. The most useful critical works of those consulted were Germaine Brés's, André Gide, l'Inimitable Protée, which follows up certain aspects of Gide's symbolism, particularly in the early works, and includes a fairly full critical account of the early, symbolist works; and Gunter Krebber's, Untersuchungen zur Ästhetik und Kritik André Gides, which deals fully with Gide's aesthetic ideas, including his early platonic ideas on symbolism. Other useful works on Gide's symbolism include R. Kane's article, 'Gide's early attitude to the symbol', and, on the mythological works; Helen Watson-Williams' article 'Gide and Heliosism'. However, no comprehensive study of Gide's symbolism has been published, and the responsibility for many of the interpretations found in the present work must be with its author.

I wish to express my thanks to Professor D. J. Mossop for his invaluable help and encouragement, and also to Dr. E. J. Kearns for allowing me to consult his thesis.

1. Les Cahiers d'André Walter.

Les Cahiers d'André Walter is Gide's first published work, written in 1890, before Le Traité du Narcisse. In retrospect Gide disliked the work and criticises the importance given to the struggle of the soul against the sinful desires of the body, a struggle which was brought about in the young Gide by his puritan upbringing. He also criticises the style and namely 'certains allongissements de phrases, certaines inversions et tout ce que j'appelais plus haut des complaisances...' (1)

The whole of the work is disconnected and is composed of lyrical effusions held together loosely by a background of action including the death of André Walter's mother; his renunciation of Emmanuèle; his resolve to write his novel Allain on the subject of his renunciation of Emmanuèle and of his inward struggle between body and soul; and his final madness. This framework, which appears flimsy and lacks any semblance of reality, is merely used by the writer to allow him to express his feelings in lyrical and romantic effusions. As Germaine Brée points out in her book, André Gide, l'insaisissable Proteus, 'Gide, à l'époque des Cahiers, tend... à faire passer dans sa phrase lyrique, prose ou vers libre, les procédés de rhétorique romantiques dont la poésie, avec Rimbaud, s'était violemment débarrassée'. (2) Brée

(1) In the preface to 1930 edition of the Cahiers, s. . . , p.11.

(2) op. cit., p.10.

quotes Gide's own reactions to the exaggerated, romantic nature of his lyrical language: 'Quand je rouvre aujourd'hui mes Cahiers d'André Walter, leur ton jaculatoire m'exaspère.

J'affectionnais en ce temps les mots qui laissent à l'imagination pleine licence, tels qu'incertain, infini, indicible'. 'Il en est d'autres,' adàs Brée, 'pseudo-romantiques ou décadents, dont Gide ne s'est au fond jamais dépris, mots qui visent à exprimer des élans de la sensibilité: les adanguissements, les brûlures, les ferveurs et les pleurs'. (1)

The work presents the reader with an inner panorama of images, emotions and lyrical outbursts; the whole is directed away from the outside world of objects and people to the inner world of André Walter, to the expression of his aspirations, struggles and final despair and madness. Everything in the book is subservient to his intense desire for self-expression, a desire which, one feels, torments him throughout the length of the Cahiers. The solipsism inherent in the work shows itself, for example, in the use made of imagery. The final paragraph of the Cahiers contains an image of snow:

Comme c'est blanc la neige! - j'ai voulu compter les flocons, mais c'était trop long; - la terre est toute blanche, - comme c'est beau! Je me rappelle:- hier, Emmanuèle en a pris pour mettre sur mon front, - mais elle fondait toute... Comme on y serait bien pour

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(1) Brée, p.38.

dormir - c'est frais; - on dit qu'on y fait de beaux rêves. La neige est pure. (1)

In this paragraph the snow has significance only in relation to André Walter, it is of no interest in itself. It reminds him of Emmanuèle and expresses something about his stage of mind. Even Emmanuèle hardly exists as a full character in the work, she, too, only lives in the mind of André Walter. The snow, then, is not snow in the objective sense, but is used by Gide purely as a symbol representing André Walter's état d'âme and may be interpreted as being symbolic of his vain desire for purity of soul which leads him to madness and so to emptiness, to a kind of spiritual bankruptcy. So the last image of the book: 'La neige est pure', is a tacit acceptance that the sort of ascetic purity Walter was seeking for is both empty and unattainable.

Other images used by Gide in this work, no less centred on himself, are less precise, more evocative and suggestive symbols of his état d'âme. At the beginning of Le Cahier Blanc we find the two lines:

Berceuses, escarpolettes, barcarolles,

Le chant des pleureuses alanguit les cautes. (2)

The images are imprecise and unconnected grammatically, but the combined effect of the images and of the languid, rhythmic sound of the words is to recreate the state of mind in which André

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(1) A.W., p.185.

(2) A.W., p.17.

Walter finds himself. The aim of the image is not simply to express the state of mind, but to recreate it in the mind of the reader. At this point Gide, although at the time of writing the Cahiers he was still outside the symbolist movement, comes very close to one of the major features of the technique of the symbolists of his time, which is precisely the use of images to suggest and evoke rather than to express directly. Michaud writes in Le Message poétique du Symbolisme, 'le langage poétique ne cherche pas à décrire ni à expliquer, mais à suggérer. C'est là une des grandes découvertes du Symbolisme'. (1) Verlaine had already written in L'art poétique:

Il faut aussi que tu n'aïlles point  
Choisir tes mots sans quelque méprise:  
Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise  
Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint. (2)

Verhaeren wrote in Impressions, III (1887) about the technique of symbolism: 'On part de la chose vue, ouïe, sentie, tâchée, goûtée, pour en faire naître l'évocation et la somme par l'idée'. (3) In other words the concrete image is used as a starting point only, from which can be created the evocation, the suggestion which is typically symbolist. Verhaeren continues by giving an example: 'Un poète regarde Paris fourmillant de lumières nocturnes, émaillé en une infinité de feux et colossal d'ombre et d'étendue. S'il

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(1) Michaud, p.773.

(2) Stanza 2.

(3) pp. 113-5, quoted by Michaud, pp. 753-4.

en donne la vue directe, comme pourrait le faire Zola, c'est-à-dire en le décrivant dans ses rues, ses places, ses monuments, ses rampes de gas, ses mers nocturnes d'encre, ses agitations fiévreuses sous les astres immobiles, il en présentera, certes une sensation très artistique, mais rien ne sera moins symboliste. Si, par contre, il en dresse pour l'esprit la vision indirecte, évocatoire, s'il prononce: 'une immense algèbre dont la clef est perdue', cette phrase ne réalisera, loin de toute description et de toute notation de faits, le Paris lumineux, ténébreux et formidable'.

Similarly Gide's

Berceuses, escarpolettes, barcarolles,

Le chant des pleureuses alanguit les chutes.

suggests rather than describes; it is less epigrammatic than Verhaeren's example because it refers to a state of mind rather than to a city, but the approach is the same. Verhaeren wrote the above in 1887, three years before Gide wrote the Cahiers; although Gide was not introduced into symbolist circles until after the publication of his first work (indeed it was the publication of the Cahiers which gained him Mallarmé's esteem) it is reasonable to assume that his literary attitude was affected by the symbolist atmosphere of the time.

This symbolist relationship between the objective image and the subjective, poetic response it evokes is expressed clearly by Gide in the Cahiers. He writes: 'Pas le paysage lui-même:

l'émotion par lui causée. - Le coucher des soleils disparus; l'apaisement des soirs emplît encore mon âme. O la paix des rayons sur la plaine!' (1) At this early stage in Gide's literary career we find in embryonic form an expression of the symbolist technique which he is to use widely in Les Poésies d'André Walter and Le Voyage d'Urien. It is not the décor but the emotion caused by it, he writes, and although he is referring to the real countryside filling him with emotion, it is a short step from that to the use of a literary décor to evoke emotion.

Connected with the evocative use of images is, as we have seen the evocative use of sounds. This takes the form of both the sonority of words and the musicality of the phrase. We read in the Cahiers: '-Les noms seuls, ces noms grecs aux terminaisons larges, éveillaient en nous des souvenirs si splendides, que d'avance ils soulevaient des enthousiasmes latents aux éclats de leurs sonorités'. (2) This taste for the sound value of words and the exploitation of it in literature forms part of the symbolist tradition in poetry which came from Verlaine through to the vers-libristes. Gide uses the vers libre widely in the Cahiers and also in Les Poésies d'André Walter which were written after the Cahiers had been published. Martino writes about the vers libre: 'Le vers libre, tel qu'il apparaît, à travers les oeuvres et les théories de l'époque symboliste, fut le terme de l'évolution qui tendait à rendre aux mots, en poésie, toute leur valeur

(1) A.N., p.31.

(2) A.N., p.28.

sonore'. (1) The vers libre tended to be liberated from the traditional rules of scansion which were visual rather than aural, and developed its own rhythm according to the sound and cadence of the words. Martino continues: 'Le symbolisme, poussant à bout la grande idée baudelairienne de la musique poétique, essaya de rendre aux mots du vers leur valeur sonore, et au vers une ligne musicale créée par l'harmonie des sons'. (2) By being aware of the sound value of words, Gide in 1890 consciously or unconsciously attached himself implicitly to one stream of the symbolist movement of the time.

Closely connected with an awareness of the sound value of words is a feeling for music in poetry. Gide was an excellent musician and made many references in the Cahiers to music and the musicality of words and phrases. The interest in music and the desire to combine it with poetry falls into the symbolist tradition. Verlaine in his Art Poétique of 1874 writes:

De la musique avant toute chose

This poet of vague suggestion and evocation, the precursor of the later symbolists known as the décadents and the vers-libristes was well aware of the evocative value of musicality in the poetic line. S. Bernard writes of 'la tentation verlainienne vers l'anti-conceptualisme, l'impressionnisme et la fluidité'. (3) She goes on to say that Verlaine's poetry contains 'le résidu musical qui

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(1) P. Martino, Farnesse et symbolisme, Armand Colin, Paris, 1958, p.158.

(2) op. cit., p.158.

(3) S. Bernard, Maillarmé et la musique, Nizet, Paris, 1958, p.13.

survit au sens précis, le halo de suggestion qui agit non plus sur notre intelligence mais directement sur notre sensibilité... Il (Verlaine) veut rompre contre l'intellectualisme et la poésie descriptive, rendant aux mots leur valeur suggestive, et à la phrase, en brisant la syntaxe... une fluidité qui correspondra mieux au devenir mouvant, toujours fuyant, de la vie affective'. It is because of the suggestive value of music that the symbolists held it in such high esteem and, influenced by the example of Wagner, strove to combine it with poetry. Michaud writes: 'On comprend qu'en mettant l'accent sur le caractère essentiellement suggestif du langage poétique, le Symbolisme ait été conduit à rapprocher la poésie de la musique'. (1)

Mallarmé, too, attempted to produce a fusion of poetry and music. His aim was to reduce the distinction between the two. He wrote in 1895 (four years after the publication of the Cahiers): 'oublions la vieille distinction entre la musique et les Lettres'; (2) he continues, 'la musique et les Lettres sont la face alternative... d'un phénomène, le seul, je l'appelais l'Idée'. (3) Here poetry and music are both bound up with the Idea, a concept which will be considered later, but ultimately Mallarmé and other symbolists who were similarly disposed had to choose between poetry and music, and decided to give first place to poetry as a higher, more abstract art.

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- (1) Michaud, p.777.  
(2) Quoted in Michaud, p.779.  
(3) Bernard, op. cit., p.38.

Gide's predilection for sound, resonance and musicality is shown by several references to music in the Cahiers. He seems to connect music with a certain platonic sympathy or union between souls, and particularly between his and Emmanuel's. It is as though for him music expressed an emotion which could not be expressed in words, there is in the Gide of the Cahiers a desire to go beyond words. On the subject of his projected novel, Allain, he writes: 'Et non point tant l'harmonie des mots que la musique des pensées ... car elles ont aussi leurs allitérations mystérieuses'. (1) Music, to André Walter, is a means of expression through which two pure souls can attempt to understand each other: 'L'harmonie plutôt - la musique! La musique propage l'ondulation de l'âme jusqu'à l'autre âme'. (2) It is also a means by which the soul can understand itself: 'De la musique, - de la musique: en les plaintes de l'harmonie, ton âme étonnée reconnaîtra les siennes et les sanglots jailliront, si longtemps contenus'. (3)

Gide views music in the Cahiers from a stylistic as well as from a spiritual point of view. He sees poetry as reaching upwards in purity towards music and is enthusiastic about the fluidity of verse and music: 'J'écris parce que la poésie déborde de mon âme, - et les mots n'en sauraient rien dire: l'émotion plane sur la pensée; - l'harmonie seule...

alors des mots, des mots sans suite, des phrases frémissantes,

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(1) A.W., p.96 note.

(2) A.W., p.70.

(3) A.W., p.75.

quelque chose comme de la musique'. (1) In this passage it is possible to see the progression from words to the musical phrase ('phrases frémissantes'), to harmony and to music. Later in the Cahiers he opposes musicality in poetry to 'la plastique', this being possibly a reference to the Farnassiens whose poetry was based on formal, plastic beauty. Once again Gide desires a fluid, musical line: 'Pour le style, que la saveur s'en précise - et, puisque ce n'est pas la plastique, que la musique alors s'affirme; - la strophe même - pourquoi pas?' (2)

To understand Gide's concept of musicality in poetry we must take account of a passage written much later than the Cahiers and published in 1947 in Nouveaux Prétexes: 'Musical! veuille ce mot ici n'exprimer point seulement la caresse fluide ou le choc harmonieux des sonorités verbales par où le vers peut plaire même à l'étranger musicien qui n'en comprendrait pas le sens; mais aussi bien ce choix certain de l'expression, dicté non plus seulement par la logique, par quoi le poète musicien arrive à fixer, aussi exactement que le ferait une définition, l'émotion essentiellement indéfinissable'. (3) One doubts whether Gide would have been capable at the time when he wrote the Cahiers of producing such a succinct description of his concept of musicality, but it corresponds essentially with the approach to music found in the Cahiers in that musicality is opposed to logical, discurs-

(1) id., p.36.

(2) id., p.66.

(3) Nouveaux Prétexes, 1947, p.130.

ive writing, and is seen as an attempt to grasp and express by suggestion and harmonic evocation what is ineffable. The whole of the earnest and intense striving towards an expression of the purest aspirations of the soul would seem likely to reach its final goal in the form of a musical phrase.

Another strong element of symbolism found in the Cahiers is the belief in the role of poetry as the purely symbolic representation of greater truths or more generalised emotions. Precisely what the poem is expected to symbolise is rather vague, it is described as the Idea, l'Idée; Mallarmé's conception of pure abstraction or essential truth, of the expression of the essence, of 'l'absente de tous bouquets' is probably the closest description of what the Idea is. At all events the expression of l'Idée became the aim of poets in the second half of the 1880's and influenced Gide's first three prose works. Moréas in his Manifeste Littéraire, published in Le Figaro in 1889, writes about the subservience of symbolist poetry to the Idea: '... la poésie symboliste cherche à vêtir l'Idée d'une forme sensible qui, néanmoins, ne serait pas son but à elle-même, mais qui, tout en servant à exprimer l'Idée, demeurerait sujette. L'Idée, à son tour, ne doit point se laisser voir privée des somptueuses sinarres des analogies extérieures... Ainsi dans cet art les tableaux de la nature, les actions des humains, tous les phénomènes concrets ne sauraient se manifester eux-mêmes; ce sont là des apparences sensibles destinées à représenter leurs affinités

ésotériques avec les idées primordiales... Pour la traduction exacte de sa synthèse, il faut au Symbolisme un style, archétype et complexe... (1) René Guil wrote his Traité du Verbe in the same year and in it he writes of the Idea as being Truth; it is, as with Moréas, through appearances that we approach the Idea and the Truth:

L'Idée, qui seule importe, en la Vie est éparse.

Aux ordinaires et mille visions (pour elles-mêmes à négliger) où l'Immortelle se dissémine, le logique et méditant poète les lignes saintes ravisse, desquelles il composera la vision seule digne: le réel et suggestif LYMOIS d'où, palpitant pour le rêve, en son intégrité nue se lèvera l'Idée primè et dernière, ou Vérité. (2)

Mallarmé, too, wrote of the Idea and considered it to be pure abstraction, or essence. It is not surprising that, written in a literary atmosphere in which such respect was paid to the Idea, the Cahiers make reference to it and to the necessity of manifesting something.

'Les phénomènes sont le langage divin... au delà de leur multiplicité transitoire paraissent les vérités qui, par eux, s'expliquent et se développent'. (3) ...les imaginations des poètes font mieux saillir la vérité idéale, cachée derrière l'apparence des choses'. (4) 'Les phénomènes sont des signes, un

(1) Fig. no Littéraire, 18 Sep. 1889, quoted by Michaud, p.725.

(2) quoted by Michaud, p.779.

(3) A. L., p.132.

(4) A. L., p.35.

language des volontés derrière eux. Elles seules important, il faudrait les comprendre'. (1) In all of these quotations is to be found the same relationship between appearances and phenomena and the ideal truth which lies beyond, which the poet must seek to understand and pass on. The words and ideas are there already in the Cahiers, what is lacking before Gide can enter fully into the sacred world of the symbolists is the sense of awe and reverence, the composure needed before entering the temple of the Idea or the Essence, the words are there in the Cahiers but they are not yet spelt with a capital letter.

The need to manifest something is also present in the Cahiers, it is a vague need and even less precise is the knowledge of what has to be manifested - probably the essence - but the need is there: 'Nous vivons pour manifester' (2) (this is taken up word for word in the explanatory note to Le Traité du Narcisse) and, 'C'est là qu'est la souffrance: ne pas pouvoir se révéler'. (3)

The basic elements embodied in the symbolist movement are to be found in embryonic form in Gide's first work. There is a certain vagueness and indecision about them, but they spring forth in their fullness, modified slightly by Gide's personal interpretation, in his second work, Le Traité du Narcisse, a true hymn to be sung in the Symbolist Temple.

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(1) A. . ., p.60.  
(2) id., p.131.  
(3) id., p.61.

## 2. Les Poésies d'André Walter.

Gide, looking back on his early works, was far more tolerant towards Les Poésies d'André Walter than he was towards the Cahiers. He writes in a footnote to his 1930 Preface: 'Par contre, je relis avec plaisir certaines de ces Poésies que je redonne avec les Cahiers. Je les écrivis presque toutes en moins de huit jours, peu de temps après la publication des Cahiers...' (1) This information allows us to place the date of composition in 1891, which makes the Poésies Gide's third work.

Germaine Brée criticises the poetry for its weak and unoriginal imagery (2) and writes: 'Gide est resté à la conception romantique de la poésie, cherchant à exprimer directement l'émotion qui l'anime, plutôt qu'à la recréer chez le lecteur par l'intermédiaire du poème'. However she also writes of 'l'aventure spirituelle, dans les Poésies' which 'se fait à travers des paysages intérieures, paysages d'âme qui oscillent entre la montagne glaciale et le polder d'ennui...' (3) It is the aim of this section, in following the internal adventure of the Poésies, to investigate the use made of imagery and other poetic techniques and to relate them to the contemporary technique of the symbolists.

Mallarmé had written in 1891: 'C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole: évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d'âme, ou, inversement, choisir un objet et

(1) A. G., p. 9.

(2) Brée, p. 47.

(3) id., p. 46.

en dégager un état d'âme, par une série de déchiffrements'. (1)

This technique of using an image to evoke or suggest the poet's own emotion is typically symbolist and contrasts strongly with the directness of Romantic lyricism. Gide makes use of the technique in the Poésies and later will use it far more widely in his work which describes a long, spiritual journey through differing states of mind, Le Voyage d'Urien. He is aware of a certain correspondance between himself and nature, and it is for this reason that the images in the loésies which evoke états d'âme are largely nature images. As Brée remarks, they are conventional, and they lack any real originality, but they are used indirectly to recreate an emotion in the symbolist manner, rather than directly and explicitly as with the Romantics.

Gide wrote in his Journal in 1891: 'Le "paysage", au lieu de me distraire de moi-même, prend toujours désespérément la forme de mon âme lamentable'. (2) And in a letter from Gide to Valéry dated 16.1.1891, we read: 'chacune de ces lettres serait quelque subtil paysage d'âme, plein de frissonnantes demi-teintes et de délicates analogies s'éveillant comme des échos aux vibrations des harmoniques'. (3) He was, then, in 1891 well aware of the technique of the evocation of poetic emotions indirectly by using images, and because of his predilection for nature images, we can speak of the relationship in his work between the paysage and the

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(1) In Huret's Enquête... quoted in Richaud, p.774.

(2) J.I., p.22.

(3) Corr., p.43.

état d'âme. The technique was used widely by symbolist poets of that period, one may quote as an almost random example Verhaeren's Le Moulin where a description of the windmill's laborious, repetitive task, followed by a description of the grey, monotonous plain on which it is situated, does far more than simply present the reader with a realistic description; by its suggestive use of imagery and rhythm, the poem conveys, or more precisely, creates in the reader a feeling of melancholy and fatigue.

Gide manages to arrive at the same effect, although on a more banal, less original level. The last two lines of the fourteenth poem, Solstice, are:

Ah! voici déjà les feuilles mortes de l'automne  
qui tourbillonnent dans le vent au soir. (1)

and the last two lines of the nineteenth, Promontoire:

L'eau tiède faisait un clapotement triste  
Le long de la grève solitaire. (2)

In both of these extracts we find a rather banal nature image which is however far more than it would appear to be, as it expresses the melancholy, desolate emotion of the poet, who appears himself earlier in each of the two poems. Holders, the seventeenth of the twenty poems, consists of a number of nature images describing the sky, the plain, and the sheep on it. The only direct reference to the poet's feelings is contained in the line:

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(1) *Ibid.*, p.214.  
(2) *Ibid.*, p.215.

Et notre tristesse s'éplore (1)

and yet the poem is one of the best in the collection and re-creates well the state of sadness that the poet found himself in. Several other examples of Gide's use of the relationship paysage - état d'âme could be referred to were it not for the danger of repetition.

Gide also used certain individual words in an evocative manner, exploiting their natural rhythm and sound value. In L'Avenue (XII) we find the lines:

Se prolonge sous le crépuscule indéfiniment.

and:

Où ma pauvre âme s'égarait solitairement. (2)

The final word of each line (both lines are at the end of a stanza) with its resonant sound increases considerably the atmosphere of despair and hopelessness. (3)

The influence of the décadents on Gide is to be found in the use of facetious rhyme, both inside the line and between separate lines, and in the odd lapse into a colloquial style. We find the colloquial tone in the third stanza of the first poem:

Tu m'as dit: "Tiens! Voici l'Automne.

Est-ce que nous avons dormi?

S'il nous faut vivre encore parmi

Ces in-rollo, ça va devenir monotone. (4)

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(1) A.V., p.217.

(2) id., p.209.

(3) cf. Verhaeren in La Boulin.

(4) A.V., p.189.

and again in the third poem:

Oh! de toujours lire, tu sais,  
J'en ai vraiment mal à la tête. (1)

There are several examples of facetious (and oft. . humorous) rhymes, for example in the second poem:

Et l'on entend fair dans la nuit le bruit (2)

and in the third the rhyme between abstraite and à la tête. (3)

In the fourth poem we find the line:

Si cette lune t'importune (4)

and in olders:

L'eau somnolente qui s'égoutte,  
S'écoute couler. (5)

This last example is rather less humorous and more the result of an exaggerated attempt to achieve onomatopoeic effect. The humour contained in these rhymes is beneficial in the extent to which it enlivens the poetry and prevents the development of a too oppressive atmosphere which would otherwise be created by these poems which are mainly melancholic and despairing.

There is a certain allegorical content in some of the poems, and notably in XV (Le Parc) and XX. The theme of the unattainable park, avidly desired by the lovers but separated from them by an unscalable wall is sketched out in Le Parc and taken up

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- (1) A. . ., p.194.  
(2) id., p.191.  
(3) id., p.194.  
(4) id., p.193.  
(5) id., p.191.

later to be developed in greater detail in La Tentative Amoureuse. The park and its attractions symbolise an ideal which cannot be reached, it remains one of the unfulfilled aspirations of the Poésies and as an ideal tends towards the same pole - the upward pole - as Montagnes (XVI), i.e. towards a certain spiritual exaltation which contrasts with the poet's more usual state of sadness as found in such poems as Polders. In XX, a poem written largely in rhythmic prose, we find the image of a church door which is closed:

...Pour arriver devant une porte fermée - de l'église énorme.  
Et ne pas être vus, puisque nos lampes sont éteintes. (1)

This image, like that of the park, is a more intellectual type of symbol and tends towards allegory - it no longer creates an emotion, it expresses a preconceived idea and is at the service of that idea. In the case of the closed door, the idea lying behind it is one of failure, of the inability to reach a spiritual goal, symbolised by the church.

Although the Poésies have no great literary value, they are of interest in the literary development of the young Gide through the way in which they demonstrate, together with the Cahiers and the Traité du Narcisse, the considerable influence of symbolist thought and technique on him in his most formative years.

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(1) *ibid.*, p. 220.

### 3. Le Traite du Narcisse

Le Traité du Narcisse was written in 1890 and first published on 1 January 1891 in Entretiens politiques. The profoundly symbolist nature of this work reflects the influence, direct or indirect, of Mallarmé. Gide had presented the master with a copy of Les Cahiers d'André Walter which was well received, and met Mallarmé for the first time in 1891 when he was introduced into the salon in the rue de Rome by his school friend, Pierre Louÿs.

In Le Traité du Narcisse Gide investigates the nature of symbolism, associating the symbol with the Platonic idea of the archetype and the Mallarméan idea of the essence - this archetype or essence Gide calls the Idea, l'Idée. He combines the myth of Narcissus (modifying it to suit his own purposes) with the biblical myth of Adam, giving Adam however a non-biblical, neo-platonic significance as the 'hypostase de l'Elohim'. The concept of Adam as creator is also neo-platonic, he corresponds to the lowest hypostasis as defined by De Burgin in The Deceit of the Ancient World, it is the universal soul which 'generates the world of sense in the light of the forms, the intelligible archetypes of things of sense'. (1) This description corresponds to the function ascribed to Adam by Gide when he writes 'pour lui, par lui, les formes apparaissent'. (2)

Gide puts forward the concept of the archetypal world, the

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(1) Secula Books, Harmondsworth, 1953, p.349.  
(2) Id., p.9.

pure world of perfect forms, and adds to it the idea of the manifestation and effacement of both the individual and the work of art. Appearances should, according to the doctrine contained in the traité, efface themselves before the Idea, therefore the work of art should efface itself in relation to the ideas it reflects or points to, it should become transparent and not obscure what it represents. The whole work has no value or justification in its own right but solely in relation to the symbolic meaning which lies behind it: 'les paroles se font transparentes...'

Just as the work of art should be transparent so the individual must efface himself before what he represents. Gide states in his explanatory note to the treatise, 'Nous vivons pour manifester'. (1) This echoes ideas already expressed in Les Cahiers d' André Walter. (2) In the treatise Narcisse's potential role, the role he attempts to fulfil, only partially succeeding, at the end of the work is to contemplate the ideal world and, as a poet, to attempt to recreate it.

In the Cahiers we have seen the young writer's enthusiastic desire to manifest, the vague but powerful desire to represent something. Narcisse knows more precisely what he has to manifest: he has to observe the perfect world of archetypal forms and attempt to recreate it, at least partially, through the work of art. Gide describes the work of art as a 'paradis partiel ou

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(1) I.I., p. 5.

(2) A.W., p. 131.

l'Idée refléurit en sa pureté supérieure...où les phrases rythmiques et sûrs, symboles encore, mais symboles purs, où les paroles se font transparentes et révélatrices'. (1)

The theme of manifestation is continued into Gide's next work, Le Voyage d'Urien; while they are imprisoned in the river of boredom and introspection, Urien declaims to his companions: 'On se met en route un matin, parce qu'on a trouvé dans l'étude qu'il faut manifester son essence, on s'en va chercher par le monde des actions révélatrices...' (2)

This insistence in three of the early works on the words 'manifest' and 'reveal' points to one of the most important pre-occupations of the young Gide which leads us directly to his aesthetic and his moral beliefs. In this context Krebber in his Untersuchungen zur Ästhetik und Kritik André Gides shows the connection between Gide's aesthetic and moral values and points to the Platonic doctrine of ideas as their source. (3) Krebber writes that 'Gide interpretiert das Paradies...als...philosophische Vollkommenheit'. Narcisse dreams of the perfection that lies beyond the river of time or relativity, and can only reach it by going beyond appearances or by fusing appearances with their true meaning and significance. This can only be done through the work of art, through a set of aesthetic values in which the word or image is a symbol which leads the reader on to the ideal world,

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(1) *ib.*, p.10.

(2) *ib.*, p.45.

(3) Krebber, p.20 et seq.

or the world of essence.

Gide approaches the problem from the aesthetic point of view, but combines the aesthetic with the moral in that, according to Gide's ideas, the relationship between the ideal and appearances corresponds to that between being and appearing, and if appearances give a true account of being, as symbols of reality, a moral harmony is established. It is, of course, not only a moral harmony, but also an aesthetic harmony - the two are combined in the work of art, everything is what it appears to be, and the Idea contained in each part of the work of art gives order and unity to the whole.

In Le Traité du Narcisse, Gide leaves a certain ambiguity surrounding his concept of the Ideal World - does he believe in a paradise in the full Platonic sense of the word? The quotation from Le Voyage d'Urien, published only one year later, points rather to a belief in an ideal world of essence, such as Mallarmé postulated. This is borne out by Michaud: 'C'était donc une profession d'idéalisme platonicien que, sous le nom de Symbolisme, les deux admirateurs de Mallarmé (Gide and Valéry) affirmaient en même temps, l'un dans une lettre, l'autre dans un court traité (Le Traité du Narcisse)' (1) In the same way as Urien and his fellow travellers seek to manifest their essence, Narcisse, the contemplative and the poet, manifests his essence: he manifests his own true self, his own idea by becoming the symbol of the poet.

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(1) Michaud, p.390.

In the Journal for 1890, the year in which the treatise was written, Gide writes about the relationship between the author and his work under the heading: 'Morale'. 'Se considérer soi-même comme un moyen; donc ne jamais se préférer au but choisi, à l'oeuvre... Songer à son salut: égoïsme. Le héros ne doit pas songer à son salut. Il s'est volontairement et fatalement dévoué, jusqu'à la damnation, pour les autres; pour manifester'. (1) So, in the same way that the word or image effaces itself, being the symbol of an archetype or essence, so the poet is subservient to his work which in turn effaces itself before what it manifests. In the case of the Narcissus of the treatise the poet not only manifests through the symbolism of his work - he himself is a symbol.

Closely connected in the treatise with Gide's ideas about the poet and his artistic creation are his thoughts on the subject of self-awareness. Both Adam, the creator, and Narcisse, the poet, desire to see themselves, to be aware of themselves. While Paradise is a harmonious unity and he is part of it, Adam cannot be completely aware of himself because he cannot operate the necessary detachment of himself from his own powers of perception. The necessary detachment of his critical sense from the rest of himself, so that he could see himself as others would see him, cannot be carried out without the destruction of the unity and of the mathematical harmony. Narcisse, in a similar plight,

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(1) J.I., p.13 (Fin novembre).

wanders aimlessly in his contourless, colourless universe. Both of them must have a latent desire for self-awareness, because both secretly yearn for it, even while they are part of the primordial unity; they are vaguely aware of themselves before the break. Of Adam we read: 'A force de les contempler, il ne se distingue plus de ces choses' (1) and of Narcisse: 'Il veut connaître enfin quelle forme a son âme.' (2)

Adam's break with the Unity is symbolised by his breaking a branch of the logarithmic tree, Ygdrasil, an element of Scandinavian mythology borrowed by Gide. This overt action triggers off a dramatic chain of events in which the harmony of Paradise is destroyed and unruly forces are unleashed. Narcisse's break with the Unity takes place within himself and is not dramatically overt. He comes across a river, the symbol of time, and therefore relativity, and sees in it distorted reflections of the Paradise lost by Adam's action. He also sees himself reflected. He realises that he cannot grasp the reflections that he sees, and becomes aware of his role as poet to treat appearances as symbols (A-t-on compris que j'appelle symbole - tout ce qui paraît (3)), to see perfect forms through them and to recreate the harmony of the lost paradise through the unity of the work of art. After Paradise has been destroyed it must be partially recreated by man; Paradise has been lost, but much more has been gained - man's

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(1) Pl., p.6.

(2) Pl., p.3.

(3) Pl., p.9 note.

awareness of himself as a contemplative and an artist.

Retrospectively Narcisse's newly-gained self-awareness, and his realisation of his essence through his artistic activity can be connected with certain modern theories concerning the role played by language in the development of self-awareness in man. E.Kearns, in his thesis entitled 'L'image dans la poésie symboliste française', points to certain theories of the development of language in primitive society according to which the first use of words was not discursive or designative but was associated with an experience, any utterance was linked with one particular subjective experience; the word was then freed from its immediate context and could be used generally in relation to a concept or an object. This process depends on an ability to abstract and to relate a symbolic element, a word for example, to an abstraction or a concept. Language develops from a general tendency to interpret reality symbolically.

The word, then, is a symbol; it is also the expression of a subjective experience: 'la signification d'un nom est la prise de conscience de l'expérience vécue à propos de l'objet qui porte ce nom'. (1) Therefore the word is a means of self-expression and when it is considered itself by its user, it becomes an instrument of self-awareness, of self-consciousness.

Narcisse wants to become aware of his own essence. As he bends over the reflections in the river of time, seeking the per-

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(1) Kearns, op. cit., Ph.D. thesis, Reading, p.61.

fect forms beyond them as a poet should, he sees himself, his own reflection. Through the use of words, i.e. poetic creation, he can abstract himself from the Unity and in this way he is able to contemplate himself and the universe. He is only able to see himself, that is, to be aware of himself, when he remains separated from the surface of the water, he cannot grasp his own image: 'mais Narcisse se dit que le baiser est impossible, -il ne faut pas désirer une image; un geste pour la posséder la déchire'. (1) This separation or abstraction from self<sup>is</sup> achieved by the poet through the use of words, resulting in self-knowledge and self-awareness. Narcisse, seeing his image in the river, would correspond to the poet seeing himself in his works, and in more general terms, to mankind achieving self-awareness through its ability to interpret reality symbolically. It is thanks to the symbol, whether it be word, image or work of art, that Narcisse in particular and man in general are able to know themselves, to reach a state of self-awareness.

It is clear that Le Traité du Narcisse deals with symbolism on a number of different levels. We have seen how symbols lead to self-awareness and how every appearance, everything that we see, is a manifestation of the perfect form it represents. The work of art, too, is a manifestation of a greater reality. Gide wrote to Valéry in a letter dated 3 November 1891: 'mon Narcisse est fini... Toujours l'effort pour l'écrire n'est pas perdu, car

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(1) Fl., p.19.

Il m'a débrouillé toute mon esthétique, ma morale et ma philosophie. L'oeuvre n'est qu'une manifestation de cela'. (1)

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(1) CORR., p.134.

#### 4. Le Voyage d'Urien and La Tentative Amoureuse

Le Voyage d'Urien was Gide's attempt at a symbolist novel, the attempt is largely unsuccessful and the impression left by the work is one of artificial literary technique and one is aware of the lack of any real depth of feeling. Much of the description, and most of the dialogue is affected and precious - this trait is typical of Gide, but is more noticeable in this work than in his others: the tone of the work is over-enthusiastic, rather too fine and self-righteous. Here, as in the Jeune Femme, Gide in his early twenties seems to be taking himself and his literary creations too seriously. The emphasis of the work is on the stylistic level; Urien in his narrative to his companions speaks of the voyage as 'une progression calculée, et dirai-je bien: esthétique' (1) and the seriousness with which this aesthetic adventure is treated creates an atmosphere of literary artifice, a weakness to which the symbolist movement as a whole was particularly prone. Gide himself, some thirty years later, was aware of the dangers of preciousness and unreality which the symbolist movement had run when he spoke in a lecture delivered in 1920 about the salutary effect Verhaeren had had on the movement: 'Verhaeren, avec sa belle robustesse flamande vint au moment où le mouvement symboliste risquait de s'immobiliser dans une attitude, devenait contemplatif et se désintéressait de la vie'. (2) The situation is redeemed in part by the ironic tone

(1) Fl., p.45.

(2) G.G., volIX, p.7.

of the Envoi which is turned against the work and the possible deception which it might have caused in the mind of the reader.

Because of the emphasis laid on the stylistic nature of the work, critics have tended to consider it as a purely stylistic exercise which is of little importance in the mainstream of Gide's work. The author admits in his Journal that he felt no inner compulsion to write the work, but adds the proviso that he has none the less put a lot of himself into it (it would be difficult to imagine a work by Gide in which the author was not in some way, artistically or intellectually, intimately concerned). We read in an entry for 1910: 'Je n'ai écrit aucun livre sans avoir eu un besoin profond de l'écrire: le Voyage d'Urien seul excepté; et encore il me semble que j'y ai mis beaucoup de moi, et que, pour qui sait lire, il est, lui aussi révélateur'. (1) This justifies an examination of the work not only from the point of view of style and literary technique, and for our particular purpose the demonstration of the results of symbolist influence, but also from the point of view of the ideas it contains. 'Pour qui sait lire' - the problem of interpretation is precisely in deciding which way to approach the work, in what way to read it, and how much to read into it. The work is obscure and difficult to interpret fully and surely in that every event, every image, every description has a potential symbolic value. The meaning is implicit rather than explicit and there is considerable ambigui-

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(1) J.I., p.306.

ty in many of the symbolic elements, leading the critic to a purely personal interpretation which he may find difficult to justify. Before le Voyage d'Urien we are in danger of finding ourselves facing an enigma, a literary maze of symbols, real or imaginary. One is also faced with the problem of how to take the potential meaning of the symbols, of just what one can read into the work. It would seem that the method offering the least danger of misinterpretation is to consider the work in its broad outline, taking up the major symbols connected with the three phases of the voyage and relating them to the ideas of Gide himself or to more general, abstract ideas which it is, after all, the function of the symbol to express.

It is proposed, in this section, firstly to consider le Voyage d'Urien from a stylistic point of view and secondly to attempt an interpretation of the ideas contained in it. The style of the work creates, as has already been stated, an atmosphere of mièvrerie. However, certain passages are more vigorous and rhetorical in nature, and look back to the Cahiers and forward to les Nourritures Terrestres. Typical of this style of incantation are the following phrases taken from the seventh chapter of Irénide: 'Terrasses! miséricordieuses terrasses des Bactriennes, aux soleils levants! jardins suspendus, jardins d'où l'on voit la mer! palais que nous ne verrons plus, et que nous souhaitons encore! - comme nous vous eussions aimés si ce n'eût été dans cette île!' (1)

(1) Il., p. 32.

Of prime importance in the work are the various kinds of country through which the travellers pass. In his preface to the second edition of 1894 Gide makes some important remarks concerning the relationship between the emotion and the paysage which expresses the emotion. He wrote: 'Cette émotion... parce que pour la montrer, je l'ai mise en des paysages, vous n'avez vu là que descriptions vaniteuses. - Pourtant, il me semble encore juste qu'une émotion que donne un paysage puisse se resservir de lui - comme d'un mot - et s'y reverser toute entière, puisqu'elle en fut à l'origine enveloppée. Émotion, paysage ne seront plus dès lors liés par rapport de cause à effet, mais bien... par cette association du mot et de l'idée; du corps et de l'âme; de Dieu et de toute apparence... Ne comprendrez-vous si je vous dis que le manifeste vaut l'émotion, intégralement? Il y a là une sorte d'algèbre esthétique... qui dira émotion dira donc paysage; et qui dit paysage devra donc connaître émotion'. (1) From this we can see an equivalence in Gide's mind between the emotion itself, which is the prime mover, and its symbolic expression. The emotion and its expression become connected together and then fuse, they become interdependent, and each one always evokes the other. Of considerable importance is Gide's comparison between the literary symbol and the word; what he is saying in effect is that the literary symbol is the word attached to, i.e. the name of, an emotion, and just as in thought processes words and ideas are

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(1) quoted in *ib.*, p.1454.

inseparable, so in literary creation emotions and symbols are interdependent, each being necessary. The paysage is explicitly related to the expression of the soul in the voies; Nélieu, one of Urien's companions on the voyage, says, when they question one another about the purpose of the journey: 'Ou si nous cherchons des pays pour raconter nos belles âmes?' (1)

In the first paragraph of the work Urien says: 'Je m'aventurai dans le val étroit des métépsychoses'. (2) It would be difficult to interpret métépsychose here as the migration of the soul to another body. A more likely interpretation, although it changes the meaning of the word, is that of different states of mind in the same body, which would correspond to the three stages of Urien's voyage and its eventual, disappointing, but at least acceptable end. And in each stage Urien, like André Walter and Narcisse, must manifest something, an idea, an attitude, an emotion:

- Qu'en pensez-vous, Urien. me dit Naguire.

Et je répondis:

- Il faut toujours représenter. (3)

Later in the work Urien tells his companions: 'On se met en route un matin, parce qu'on a trouvé dans l'étude qu'il faut manifester son essence...'(4)

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(1) Fl., p.18.  
(2) id., p.15.  
(3) id., p.19.  
(4) id., p.45.

Mystically, symbolically, each sort of country he passes through manifests his feelings, his thoughts. The exotic, luxuriant islands set in a warm, sensuous sea represent a tendency towards sensuality and sexual liberty which appears to fascinate and horrify Urien at the same time. The grey, featureless marshlands of the Sargasso Sea and the river symbolise the languid boredom which overcomes Urien and reminds us of the monotony of Narcisse's existence before he discovered the river of time. The cold, harsh polar lands are forbidding, they symbolise an attitude in Urien, a tendency towards ascetic purity, a desire to reach the inhuman heights of total purity of soul. Finally the unfrozen lake is of neutral emotional value and symbolises a certain liberty of the emotions after the purging experiences of the voyage. It is, then, possible to see each new décor as being intimately linked with an emotion, and this was Gide's wish. The various décors can also be interpreted on the level of ideas, seen in relation to the complete action of the work, and they will be considered in this light in a later paragraph.

A strong feeling of unreality runs through the voyage. This unreality obviously goes hand in hand with the symbolic structure of the work, in which, avowedly, things do not mean what they appear to mean on the surface. As the ship sails away from the busy, exotic port of embarkation, one of the travellers, Fradelineau, trying to explain the reason for the voyage says: 'Nous avons quitté nos livres parce qu'ils nous ennuyaient, parce qu'un souvenir inavoué de la mer et du ciel réel faisait que nous

n'avions plus foi dans l'étude'. (1) He speaks of the ciel réel and one cannot help wondering whether the irony was intentional or not, for what could be more unreal, more purely literary, than the décor through which they pass? At this stage it would seem that reality for Gide lies in the world of the essence and of the symbolist aesthetic. There is no feeling for physical reality, no involvement in life whatsoever - the whole work is typical of symbolist unreality.

Everything serves the symbolic aim, nothing is firm or palpable. The city described in the second chapter of Prélude is typical; it is a mirage, it appears and disappears at will, it has no physical existence. Similarly there are no real bodily needs present in the voyagers, not is there any real suffering (Gide seems to be unable to present any real physical suffering in his works), the illnesses described, the plague and the scurvy, are of greater interest for their exotic value, and for their symbolic value than for any human suffering that they may cause. And because of this lack of awareness of suffering, there is a lack of sympathy for the victims, the sufferers from the plague, for instance, get no sympathy from Urien and those of his friends who have remained uncorrupted. There is nothing physically real in le Voyage d'Urien, there is only the reality that lies behind the symbols.

Certain images contained in the work recur, either in the

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(1) Fl., p.18.

same work or in others, and are endowed with a particularly significant symbolic value. At the beginning of the Voyage we find the image of the casement-window, also to be found in André Walter and some later works, and symbolising a desire for freedom, for escape from studies and other less tangible fetters. In le Voyage d'Urien we read: 'devant l'aube s'était ouverte ma croisée',<sup>(1)</sup> this is an answer to the fervent wishes of André Walter.

The image of perfume is used in the Voyage in connection with the floating islands, and is symbolic of sensuality and desire. Gide will use the image again later in Les Nourritures Terrestres. In the Voyage the perfumes are dangerous and to be avoided: 'mais les parfums étouffants qui montaient de toute l'île et que le vent rabattait vers nous, les parfums qui déjà nous troublaient de vertige, nous eussent, je crois fait mourir'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Fruit, too, is an image symbolic of desire. When part of the band return to the ship after spending the night with the local women, they are carrying 'd'admirables fruits écarlates, saignant comme des blessures'.<sup>(3)</sup> Urien and his stronger companions, when tempted by the queen Hiatalnefus, resisted, among other things, 'ce désir des fruits qui désaltèrent'.<sup>(4)</sup> Lost in the boredom of the Sargasso Sea, the voyagers long for the desires they left behind, here fruit is equated with desire and temptation: 'Fruits de cendre où nous eussions mordus; désirs où

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- (1) Pl., p.15  
(2) id., p.20  
(3) id., p.25  
(4) id., p.33.

se fussent flétries nos gencives; ô tentations déplorées'. (1)

In contrast to the blatant sensuality of the fruit is the cleansing power of the clear glacial water described in the sixth chapter of Prélude: 'elle a lavé la flétriessure des fièvres, et sa délicate vertu a glissé jusqu'à nos pensées, comme d'une eau lustrale'. (2) This image of pure cleansing water echoes that of L'Eau Lustrale in Les Poésies d'André Walter. (3) Connected with purity are the images of ice and snow found in the third part of the Voyage. Similar images are found in the Cahiers to symbolise a desire for purity and asceticism.

The image of mud and dull, flat marshland is very common in Gide's early works. It is found in Le Traité du Narcisse (4) and has already been discussed in this context, similarly in the case of the Poésies, where the image is found in Polders. (5) It is found in the second part of Le Voyage d'Urien and, in common with its use in the previous two works, evokes an atmosphere of melancholy and lethargy. The image: 'Les rives ternes, vert-de-grisées' (6) used in the Voyage recalls a similar image in Polders:

Un ciel gris, de la vase verte  
Et de l'herbe vert-de-grisée. (8)

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- (1) Pl., p.41.  
(2) id., p.38.  
(3) A. T., p.211.  
(4) Pl., p.3.  
(5) A. T., p.217.  
(6) Pl., p.43.  
(7) A. T., p.217.

The image of the marsh will be taken up again in Épaves to symbolise a state of lethargy and total contentment.

In the preface to the second edition, Gide tells us that the work as a whole can be interpreted as symbolising a journey through life. He wrote: 'Mais l'émotion centrale de ce livre n'est point une émotion particulière; c'est celle même que nous donna le rêve de la vie, depuis la naissance étonnée jusqu'à la mort non convaincue'. (1) Within the work itself the idea of the voyage as a journey through time is important, and is referred to several times. This corresponds to the idea of a voyage through life - the travellers are continually looking to the future and to the accomplishment of their destinies. On more than one occasion they deliberately turned their backs on the past, even though it seemed more inviting than the future. At the beginning Urien is already looking forward to his future destiny: 'Sur tes flots! sur tes flots, pensai-je, voguerons-nous, mer éternelle, vers nos destinées inconnues.' (2) And at the moment when the ship is about to leave the port, we read: 'alors, ayant goûté dans ce jour des promesses de toutes les futures histoires, cessant de regarder le passé, nous tournerons nos yeux vers l'avenir'. (3) At a later stage in the journey, when the ship is imprisoned in the polar ice and the warm seas of the past seem more desirable than the harsh snows of the future, the travellers

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(1) Cited in Fl., p.1465.

(2) *id.*, p.15.

(3) *id.*, p.17.

are still drawn on into the future: 'nous pouvions encore, rompant la glace, fuir l'hiver et partir vers où le soleil avait fui; mais c'eût été vers le passé. Donc préférant les rives les plus dures, pourvu qu'elles fussent futures, c'est vers la nuit que nous marchâmes, notre jour étant accompli'. (1) There can be little doubt then that the journey is one which takes place through time. The travellers are in search of the future, but not simply the future in general, they are seeking their future, their particular destiny and in order to learn their destiny they must learn to know themselves. The voyage is basically one of self-discovery.

The stages of self-discovery correspond to the stages of the voyage. The first stage is that of resistance to temptation, a trying-out of the power to resist, an exercise of the will. The temptations were sensual and sexual by nature, and the greatest of them was the temptation afforded by the queen Hâïatalnefus while she kept the travellers imprisoned. These temptations are symbolic of anything which weakens the will and saps the courage, Urien and his friends are adamant as far as their will and valour are concerned and they are always on the defensive against any attack by sensuality, which they see as an attempt to weaken them. In fact through resistance their courage increases: 'nos courages ...s'étaient accrus par l'aliment que leur faisaient nos résistances'. (2) Not only does their courage increase through

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(1) *Id.*, p.58.

(2) *id.*, p.45.

resistance, but, what is more important, so does their self-knowledge. Having resisted the snares and temptations of women, Urien writes: 'et, sentant très vivement ce que nous ne voulions pas être, nous commençâmes de savoir ce que nous étions'. (1)

The most intense period of self-awareness comes during the second stage of the voyage when the boat shrinks and becomes narrower (symbolic of the travellers' state of being turned in on themselves) and sails up the river of boredom. The dull, grey, monotonous and featureless river and landscape symbolise the introspection of the travellers. Boredom is associated with the contemplation of one's own soul: 'L'ennui! c'est donc vous, mornes études de notre âme, quand autour de nous les splendeurs, les rayons défendus se retirent'. (2) During the journey up the river Urien comes up against his past, symbolised by Ellis who embodies his own earlier thoughts and attitudes. She reads and distributes books, and in particular moral tracts, which are all part of the past he has rejected. After meeting Ellis, Urien seizes the books she is reading and admits to himself: 'je sentais le passé revenir'. (3) Later in the journey, Ellis still irritates him and he explicitly relates her and her books to the past: 'Son ombrelle d'abord m'a déplu, puis son châle; puis m'ont irrité tous ses livres. On ne voyage pourtant pas pour retrouver ses vieilles pensées'. (4) Finally Urien leaves behind Ellis,

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(1) *ib.*, p.27.

(2) *ib.*, p.41.

(3) *ib.*, p.43.

(4) *ib.*, p.50.

whom he recognises to be a false Ellis, because she is hindering him. The journey into the future must continue at all costs. The most important thing gained from the period of boredom was the free development of the soul together with an awareness of the fact. As they approach the glacial sea Urien addresses his friends in the following words: 'Les dures épreuves sont passées. Maintenant sont loin les berges moroses où nous pensions mourir d'ennui, plus loin encore les plages aux joies défendues; sachons nous dire heureux de les avoir connues. On ne peut arriver ici que par elles; vers les cités les plus altières vont les routes les plus pénibles; nous allons vers la cité divine... sans les résistances d'abord se sont senties nos volontés; et le désœuvrement sur les pelouses grises ne nous fut pas, lui non plus, inutile, car le paysage, en fuyant, laissait nos volontés toutes libres; à cause de l'ennui, nos âmes indéterminées dans les campagnes ont pu se développer très sincères. Et quand nous agirons, maintenant, ce sera certes selon nos voies'. (1) The emphasis on sincerity reflects the desire for self-knowledge. The trials and hardships of the journey up to this point have been necessary as a preparation for the third stage, the approach towards divine purity.

The snow, ice and physical rigours of the polar region symbolise the struggle of the soul towards an ascetic ideal, an attempt to approach the divine or the absolute. The eskimos who

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(1) *ib.*, p.52.

live in the region are symbolic of metaphysicians and theologians; the atmosphere of the third part of the voyage is metaphysical and idealistic. Ellis reappears, but this time it is the true Ellis, and she is not associated with the past, but with the nameless ideal which Urien is striving for. When he sees her he senses that she is connected with his goal, his destiny: 'ignores-tu quelle triste histoire j'ai vécue depuis que je t'avais perdue?... ah! pardonne! je t'ai si longtemps souhaitée. Où me mèneras-tu désormais dans cette nuit proche du Pôle, Ellis! ma sœur!' (1) Her reply is: 'Je t'attends au delà des temps, où les neiges sont éternelles'. (2) This puts her in eternity and outside the grasp of Urien - she becomes a perfect, unattainable ideal and as such is relegated to beyond the end of time.

The journey continues and eventually Urien and his companions arrive at the wall of ice containing a preserved corpse with a sheet of paper in its hand, and, beyond, the small unfrozen lake. This forms the real end of the journey, the goal towards which the companions have struggled, through numerous mental hardships. It is rather disappointing, but it is not the goal that matters, it is the effort made to reach it: 'nous avons remercié Dieu de nous avoir caché le but, et de l'avoir à ce point reculé que les efforts faits pour l'atteindre nous donnassent déjà quelque joie, seule sûre'. (3) It is not the goal itself which is important,

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(1) II., p.60.

(2) III.,

(3) II., p.64.

but the souls of the travellers when they reach it, and the souls of the travellers have been tried and allowed to develop in their own way, they have become aware of themselves and are sincere. The blank paper in the corpse's hand and the lake itself symbolise for each of the travellers his own existence, an existence which is now free and disponible, which, having proved itself in the trials of the past, is now open to the unknown future.

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La Tentative Amoureuse is basically a love story which takes place in harmony with the seasons. In order to emphasise how natural and simple the action is, Gide wrote the story in an ingenuous style in which every event and decision seems to come automatically without any serious thought on the part of the protagonists. However the naive style gives the impression of being artificial and affected. This weakness is remedied in part, as in the case of le Voyage d'Orien, by the detachment of the writer; the ironic tone struck by the anvoi to the Voyage is found in la Tentative Amoureuse, not in an anvoi, but in a number of comments interspersed by the narrator which allow him to keep himself separate from the story and dominate it. He looks down on his own fiction in an ironical, half-amused manner. For instance he discusses his characters in the light of his own personality: 'Puis, non! Luc n'était pas ainsi; car c'est une dérisoire manie que de faire toujours pareil à soi, qui l'on invente. - Donc Luc posséda cette femme'. (1)

(1) Fl., p. 74.

The development of the love between Luc and Rachel follows closely, and is aesthetically integrated with the passing of the seasons. The relationship begins in spring, the scene is set for a pastoral idyll: 'Chargé de fleurs, Luc sortit du bois encore nocturne et transi un peu de fraîcheur matinale... Luc attendait tout le bonheur, confiant, et pensant qu'il viendrait comme un essaim volant se pose... L'aurore frémissait d'une joie infinie et le printemps naissait d'un appel de sourires'. (1) This, then, is the décor, and as though it were the most natural thing imaginable a group of girls enters into the unreality of the world of pastoral symbols: 'Des chants vibrèrent et parut une route de jeunes filles'. (2) There is a close correspondance between Luc and Rachel and the countryside they live in. Just as, earlier, Gide had used the relationship between paysage and état d'âme, he now uses a variant of the same technique and relates the stages in the development of the love to the countryside as it is gently altered by the seasons. The narrator himself says: 'J'ai voulu raconter un rapport de saisons avec l'âme'. (3) So when Luc and Rachel come together, their love is expressed in the work by the décor in which it takes place. Once again the narrator interposes his comment: 'Comment dirai-je leur joie, à présent, sinon en racontant, autour d'eux, la nature pareille, joyeuse aussi participante'. (4) To suggest the atmosphere of the freshness and

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(1) Pl., p.73.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) Pl., p.82.

(4) *id.*, p.74.

beauty of a new-found and vigorous love Gide naturally draws on imagery taken from spring, and it turns out to be rather banal nature imagery: 'Une allée de lilas menait à sa demeure; puis c'était un jardin plein de roses, enclos d'une barrière basse'; (1) 'Ils se lavaient dans une source claire, qui coulait du jardin, et Luc regardait Rachel se baigner nue sous les feuilles'. (2)

Rather more original is the image of the casement-window: 'L'air était devenu plus tiède, les nuits si belles, qu'ils ne fermaient plus la croisée: ils dormaient ainsi sous la lune'. (3) The image of the open window, characteristic of Gide, symbolises freedom and the fulfillment of desires.

As spring becomes summer, so the love develops and becomes riper and there is a moment of complete consummation and unity between the two lovers: 'Il y eut alors un instant où leurs vies vraiment se fondirent. C'était au solstice d'Eté'. (4) Once more a total correspondance between love and the seasons. After mid-summer, when the season begins to decline, and autumn makes its appearance, so the love becomes weaker and eventually dies. The first hint of it comes with a breath of cold wind: 'Et Rachel soudain eut une inquiétude: elle sentit que Luc commençait à penser. Un vent plus froid soufflait, un frisson les saisit...'

(5) and with the full arrival of autumn they leave each other:

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- (1) Pl., p.74.  
(2) id., p.75.  
(3) ibid.  
(4) Pl., p.77.  
(5) id., p.78.

'Racontez-moi l'automne, dit Rachel. - L'automne, reprit Luc, ah! c'est la forêt toute entière et l'étang brun près de l'orée. Les cerfs y viennent et le cor retentit. Taïaut! Taïaut!... Allons revoir l'étang tranquille, où tombe le soir. - Votre histoire est stupide, dit Rachel;... Ce fut bientôt après qu'ils se quittèrent; adieu sans larmes ni sans sourires; tranquille et naturellement; leur histoire étant achevée. - Ils songeaient aux choses nouvelles'. (1)

The story of Luc and Rachel's love ends, but the narrator continues; he begins to look for love, adventure and travel in his own life. But now it is autumn, not spring, which is associated symbolically with action and love. He dreams of an imaginary love begun in the autumn and prolonged into winter. The décor is quite the opposite, nature is excluded and the windows are closed: 'Maintenant vous seriez près de moi dans la chambre; du feu; les rideaux clos, et toutes nos pensées'. (2) The image, 'les rideaux clos' is in striking contrast to that of the open window. The symbolic motif is continued, but in a directly opposite way. The symbolic harmony of the seasons is reversed and spring, which traditionally puts love into men's hearts, is replaced by autumn. This may be a sort of symbolic counterpoint on Gide's part, or more probably an ironic procedure in keeping with the narrator's other interpolations, which points to an increasing boredom with

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(1) Pl., p.83.

(2) id., p.84.

the techniques of symbolism such as he had used up to that stage.

Certain symbols in the work are used in an allegorical manner and have something of a medieval flavour about them. The park which Luc and Rachel visit twice symbolises a desire which cannot be satisfied. Gide wrote in the Journal in 1893, 'Luc et Rachel aussi veulent réaliser leur désir; mais, tandis que, écrivant le mien, je le réalisai d'une manière idéale, eux, rêvant à ce parc, dont ils ne voyaient que les grilles, veulent y pénétrer matériellement; ils n'en éprouvent aucune joie'. (1) At the time of the first visit to the park the love is strong and the lovers believe in the impossible happiness symbolised by the park - therefore they cannot enter - the happiness remains unattainable. However on the second visit their love is dying and they no longer believe in their ideal, therefore the park no longer symbolises it. They enter and find it deserted.

The episode of the two knights is also medieval in character. The separation of the two knights who no longer need each other looks forward to the separation of Luc and Rachel.

In this work Gide's attitude to the symbol remains in one respect very much the same as it was in le Traité du Narcisse. It is still the function of the symbol to efface itself before its meaning: 'Notre but unique, c'est Dieu; nous ne le perdrons pas de vue, car on le voit à travers chaque chose. Dès maintenant nous marcherons vers Lui; dans une allée grâce à nous seuls

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(1) Quoted in Pl., pp.1468-9.

splendide, avec les oeuvres d'art à droite, les paysages à gauche, la route à suivre devant nous'. (1) The symbol is the representation of an absolute order, as in Narcisse, but now the artist is dynamic, he does not contemplate, he makes his own way towards the absolute. The narrator, near the end of the work, says: 'J'agirai! j'agirai; je vis', (2) and his reversal of the symbolic significance of the seasons reveals a certain dominance of the symbols he uses, which contrasts strongly with the subservient attitude of Narcisse in relation to the symbols which revealed the archetypes.

One of the most noticeable examples of the author's more active and dynamic relationship with his work is found in: 'Tant pis pour eux, Luc et Rachel s'aimèrent; pour l'unité de mon récit, ils ne firent même rien d'autre'. (3) Here Gide for the first time speaks of the unity of a work of art and not simply of its representational value as a collection of symbols. He was later to view construction and unity as being of supreme importance in the work of art and as a major aesthetic condition to be fulfilled. The concept of active aesthetic creation is developing in Gide, he is becoming aware that the artist must forge and fashion his work and not simply reproduce mythical archetypes.

The considerable ironical element and the detachment of the author from his material marks a development in Gide's literary

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(1) Pl., p.85.  
(2) id., p.84.  
(3) id., p.77.

outlook and a moving away from the reverential attitude he had taken towards the symbolists. The irony will be extended and turned directly against the symbolists in Gide's next work, Paludes.

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CHAPTER 2 : THE REACTION AGAINST THE SYMBOLISTS AND  
THE PROBLEM OF SELF-AWARENESS

1. Paludes.

La Tentative Amoureuse shows a certain irony in Gide's attitude to symbolism as a literary movement, but it is in Paludes that he makes a definite break with the symbolists. His voyage to North Africa in the winter of 1893-4 left him disenchanted with the artificial and claustrophobic atmosphere of the symbolist salons in which he had spent the first few years of his literary career. He writes in Si le grain ne meurt..., 'Je rapportais à mon retour en France, un secret de ressuscité, et connus tout d'abord cette sorte d'angoisse abominable que dut goûter Lazare échappé du tombeau. Plus rien de ce qui m'occupait d'abord ne me paraissait encore important. Comment avais-je pu respirer jusqu'alors dans cette atmosphère étouffée des salons et des cénacles, où l'agitation de chacun remuait un parfum de mort?' (1)

Gide was occupied with Paludes during the winter of 1894-5, after his first African journey and immediately preceding his second. His changed attitude towards the symbolists is immediately apparent in the work. A stifling atmosphere of affectation and small-mindedness is created; both the décor and the action are very banal and are of no interest in themselves and yet even the most insignificant event is taken up and its importance mag-

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(1) Quoted in Pl., pp.1471-2.

nified out of all proportion by the characters who are remarkable only for the inanity of their conversation. The best and most obvious example of Gide's satire of the symbolists' lack of proportion is the description of the journey made by the narrator and Angèle. The preparations for the journey take place for two days beforehand and as the expectation increases the journey takes on, in the imagination, epic proportions. One expects it to be the climax of the work, a symbol of a long sought-after freedom finally gained, but in fact the journey is a failure, a miserable anticlimax. Gide evokes the atmosphere of the journey, in a satire on symbolist technique, by the ridiculous image: 'Chemin bordé d'aristoloches'. (1)

It is in this way, by using symbolist techniques, but exaggerating them to the point of futility, that Gide marks his break with the symbolists and ridicules, not only the remaining symbolists and their literary style, but also his own earlier works. The earnest, hallowed atmosphere of le Traité du Narcisse is already a thing of the past, Gide is now no longer concerned with the relationship between appearances and their archetypes, and if he is still concerned about sincerity (and he will remain so throughout his life) he does not express it in terms of the platonic theory of Ideas.

'-Votre livre est trop plein de symboles. -C'est pour me moquer des symboles'. (2) Gide explicitly reveals the aim of his

(1) Pl., p.138.

(2) In Postface pour la deuxième édition, Pl., p.1477.

use of symbols in Paludes in these terms; it is proposed to examine some examples of this satirical use of symbolist methods in the present chapter. The narrator is writing Paludes, a symbolist work which, although we are only given extracts of it, appears to be concerned solely with the evocation of Tityre's emotional state. For this, naturally enough, the method of correspondence between paysage and état d'âme is used. We read in one passage: 'Entre tous, les grands paysages plats m'attirent, - les landes monotones, - et j'aurais fait de longs voyages pour trouver des pays d'étangs, mais j'en trouve ici qui m'entourent. - Ne croyez pas à cela que je sois triste; je ne suis même pas mélancolique; je suis Tityre et solitaire et j'aime un paysage ainsi qu'un livre qui ne me distrait de ma pensée. Car elle est triste, ma pensée; elle est sérieuse, et, même près des autres, morose; je l'aime plus que tout, et c'est parce que je l'y promène que je cherche surtout les plaines, les étangs sans sourires, les landes. Je l'y promène doucement'. (1) On the subject of his book, the narrator says to Angèle: 'Angèle, Angèle, quand donc comprendrez-vous, je vous prie, ce qui fait le sujet d'un livre? - L'émotion que me donna ma vie, c'est celle-là que je veux dire: ennui, vanité, monotonie'. (2) And the narrator even more explicitly refers to the paysage - état d'âme technique: 'C'est même un peu cela qui m'a donné l'idée d'écrire Paludes; le sentiment d'une

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(1) Pl., p.103.

(2) id., p.95.

inutile contemplation, l'émotion que j'ai devant les délicates choses grises'. (1) When he speaks about the expression of ideas he says: 'A présent que j'ai commencé de chercher les équivalents des pensées, pour les rendre aux autres plus claires - je ne peux cesser'. (2) As far as the narrator is concerned his Paludes is a serious work, it is also, for him, an important project calculated to force people out of their stupor. It is only when the narrator's Paludes, and his ideas (which are disproportionate to his actions) are viewed by the reader in relation to reality and to the more normal values which hold in the outside world, and not in the stifling symbolist atmosphere of Paludes, that the element of ridicule and satire becomes apparent. The example of the journey to the country is relevant in this case. Within its own restricted logic, the journey may be viewed seriously, but seen in the light of the reality of the average reader's experience the disproportion between the narrator's pretensions and his actual achievement makes the whole excursion appear ludicrous.

At certain points Gide introduces a satirical, mocking tone into the work, the humour is all the greater because the protagonists are unaware of it. For instance we can detect an ironical tone in the following:

-Attente morne du poisson; insuffisances des amorces, multiplication des lignes (symbole) - par nécessité il ne peut rien prendre.

-Pourquoi ça?

(1) Pl., p.103.  
(2) id., p.125.

-Pour la vérité du symbole.

-Mais enfin s'il prenait quelque chose?

-Alors ce serait un autre symbole et une autre vérité. (1)

Similarly in this parody of poetic language: 'Ah! de quelle morne grisaille et de quelle veille affritée, cendre amère, ah! pensée - sera-ce ta candeur, et qui se glisse inespérée, aube, qui nous délivrera? - La vitre où le matin ruiselle... non... le matin où pâlit la vitre... Angèle - laverait... laverait...

Nous partirons! je sens que des oiseaux sont ivres!

-Angèle! c'est un vers de Monsieur Mallarmé! - je le cite assez mal...' (2)

Mallarmé himself, the respected master of the symbolists, is ridiculed, not only in the passage quoted above, but on two other occasions. Speaking of the duck shoot, the narrator compares the sound of his gun to the sound of one of Mallarmé's lines of poetry: 'elle ne faisait pas d'autre bruit que celui, dans les airs, d'une chandelle d'artifice à l'instant de son éclosion - ou que le son plutôt de 'Palmes!' dans un vers de Monsieur Mallarmé'. (3)

The element of ridicule comes from the fatuous context in which Mallarmé is mentioned, for although the duck shoot (and the preceding panther hunt story) can no doubt be given a serious symbolic role, it seems more probable that they are included simply to help in creating the absurd atmosphere in which the action takes

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- (1) Pl., p.94.  
(2) id., p.136.  
(3) id., p.135.

place. The other occasion on which Mallarmé is ridiculed is when he is included in a sort of literary menu: 'Bonbonne d'eau d'Evian (selon Monsieur Mallarmé)'. (1)

Symbolist techniques are also mocked by their inclusion in a dream which the narrator has. The dream is quite irrational and is composed of comparatively unrelated images and sensations. The Paludes that he is writing enters into the dream and we are given the image of the marshy ground accompanied by a frivolous pun: 'ce terrain, disais-je, est horriblement élastique!... la marais-chaussée...' (2)

It is of some interest to consider for a moment the use made of the image of the open window in Paludes. We have already seen that in a number of the previous works it symbolised a desire for freedom and discovery; in le Voyage d'Urien it held the promise of adventure in exotic lands. Until Paludes the image had been used idealistically, but in this work there are two examples of the image used in a more realistic and even cynical manner. While waiting for the journey to the country to begin, the narrator becomes impatient and shouts to Angèle: 'Ahl l'on étouffe ici; ouvrons, voulez-vous, la fenêtre! Je suis extrêmement agité. Allez vite dans la cuisine. En voyage on ne sait jamais où l'on dîne. Emportons quatre pains fourrés, des oeufs, du cervelas et la longe de veau qu'hier au souper nous laissâmes'. (3) The image

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- (1) Pl., p.115.  
(2) id., p.127.  
(3) id., p.136.

of the open window is followed by the most basic and unimaginative considerations, and seen in this context the image has lost its former evocative power.

The second example is even more disenchanting and is accompanied by a strong note of realism, the image is used in this case in the atmosphere of disillusion which follows the abortive journey: 'que de fois, cherchant un peu d'air, suffocant, j'ai connu le geste d'ouvrir les fenêtres - et je me suis arrêtée, sans espoir, parce qu'une fois, les ayant ouvertes...

-Vous avez pris froid? dit Angèle.

...Parce qu'une fois, les ayant ouvertes, j'ai vu qu'elles donnaient sur des cours - ou sur d'autres salles voûtées - sur des cours misérables sans soleil et sans air - et qu'alors, ayant vu cela, par détresse, je criai de toutes mes forces: Seigneur! Seigneur! nous sommes terriblement enfermés!' (1) This last exclamation is the sincere cry of the hero of Paludes, it is his greatest wish to escape from the constricting society in which he finds himself, and yet he is the very embodiment of that society. There is a strong element of humour in the ambiguity of his existence, he is mediocre and restricted and at the same time revolts against everything he symbolises without being aware of the fact that he is in reality ~~fast~~ attacking himself more than anyone else. Gide is more fortunate than his hero, he found his particular freedom in North Africa.

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(1) Pl., p.144.

Certain parts of the work may be endowed with a symbolic meaning and it is possible to interpret some of the more significant ones, although care must be taken not to attribute too serious a meaning to symbols that the author may have used in a semi-humorous manner. The image of the ventilator symbolises and sums up the sort of existence we are presented with in the work. The narrator says to Angèle: 'Je vous demande un peu ce que signifiait votre petit ventilateur! D'abord rien ne m'agace comme ce qui tourne sur place...' (1) The narrator associates the ventilator, always moving but never going anywhere, with the people around him, Hubert, for example: 'seulement le portrait d'Hubert y est mal fait; j'aimais mieux l'autre; il a l'air d'un ventilateur; - ma parole! d'un ventilateur tout craché'. (2)

The Agenda in which the narrator plans his future life symbolises a tie with the past and an inability to face an unknown future; the narrator is constantly attempting to put the stamp of the past on the future, and that is why there is no progression, why, like the ventilator, he is always turning in the same place.

The image of the marsh found in the extracts from the narrator's Paludes can be interpreted as symbolising the emotion felt by the narrator when he views the monotonous spectacle of life as he knows it. It can also be seen as symbolising the barren nature of the literary scene at the time. Gide wrote some years

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(1) Pl., p.124.

(2) id., p.127.

later in Prétextes, 'l'aspect du sol littéraire, aujourd'hui, est assez proprement celui d'un marécage'. (1)

Paludes is, however, by no means wholly critical, and although it takes a negative attitude towards the symbolists it also shows a progression in Gide's thought towards a more dynamic concept of art, not as static symbol, but as form and composition. In Paludes he writes: 'Un livre, mais un livre, Hubert, est clos, plein, lisse comme un oeuf. On n'y saurait faire entrer rien, pas une épingle, que par force, et sa forme en serait brisée'. (2) And in the Postface, speaking of each work: 'J'aime...qu'il soit un tout si clos qu'on ne puisse le supprimer que tout entier...'. (3)

Two passages from the Journal are important in this context. The first is roughly contemporary with Paludes and is taken from Feuillets inserted between the years 1893 and 1894. Gide writes: 'L'idée de l'oeuvre, c'est sa composition.' (4) The second is somewhat later (1897) but continues the same idea: 'En étudiant la question de la raison d'être de l'oeuvre d'art, on arrive à trouver que cette raison suffisante, ce symbole de l'oeuvre, c'est sa composition.

Une oeuvre bien composée est nécessairement symbolique. Autour de quoi viendraient se grouper les parties? qui guiderait leur ordonnance? sinon l'idée de l'oeuvre qui fait cette ordonn-

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- (1) Prétextes, p.23.  
(2) Pl., p.112.  
(3) id., p.1479.  
(4) J.I., p.49.

ance symbolique'. (1)

Lehmann takes up this Gidian concept of the symbol as composition and form and, on the subject of the symbol as the aesthetic unity of created art, which is indifferently unity of form and unity of content, writes: 'The realization that 'a symbol' is something as elastic as this in literary parlance, leads us forward inevitably to admit the validity of Gide's contention that the 'symbol' is the form - and, of course, the content - of a book or other piece of writing'. (2) Gide, then, does not abandon the idea of the symbol - he leaves behind the techniques of the symbolist school, although many of these techniques will be found to some extent in his later works, and modifies the concept of the symbol to give it its widest and most universal meaning - that of unity. Therefore any literary creation, from the image to the complete work of art, provided it is a unity, is a symbol. A work of art is a symbol because it expresses a complex of ideas or emotions in the same way as a single word or an image expresses less complex ideas or emotions.

Unfortunately this concept of the symbol, precisely because it is all-embracing, becomes very unwieldy when used in literary criticism. As Lehmann says: 'It is borne home on us that what we are enumerating as fields of 'symbols' are nothing more nor less than all the grades and levels and sorts of formal constructs in language'. (3) It will be necessary, therefore, when con-

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(1) J.E., p.94.

(2) Lehmann, p.313.

(3) *ibid.*

sidering Gide's later works in the light of the new concept of the symbol to subdivide and to some extent to limit the meaning of 'symbol'.

Another concept which develops in Paludes is that of a more general, classical view of art. The narrator says: 'L'art est de peindre un sujet particulier avec assez de puissance pour que la généralité dont il dépendait s'y comprenne'. (1) Krebber comments on this, '...stossen wir auf den Begriff der Litotes als formelhafte Bezeichnung für den klassischen Stil: "Le classicisme ...tend tout entier vers la litote. C'est l'art d'exprimer le plus en disant le moins". (2) Here again, though in a rather different sense, we find a conception of the symbol. It is a classical conception and the symbol is quite simply the particular case which lends itself to generalisation. 'Il suffit qu'il y ait possibilité de généralisation; la généralisation, c'est au lecteur, au critique de la faire'. (3) This conception of litotes is put into practice in the récits and in the mythological works of around and after the turn of the century, in that the characters, though strongly depicted in their originality, also lend themselves to generalisation as human types.

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(1) Fl., p.118.

(2) Krebber, p.27, quotation from Gide: OC, XI, p.39.

(3) Fl., p.118 (from Paludes).

2. Les Nourritures Terrestres, Philoctète,  
Le Prométhée mal enchaîné, El Hadj.

Despite the considerable development in Gide's aesthetic ideas in Paludes, there is something of a delay before the new concepts of classical generality and symbolism as form are put into practice. The former will develop in the dramas, Saül, and Le Roi Candaule, before finding full expression in the écrits, whilst the latter will only reach any stage of perfection in Les Faux Monnayeurs. In the four works following Paludes which it is proposed to treat in the present section, the aesthetic view will be largely limited to tracing elements of imagery used in a symbolic way. The imagery used in this way corresponds for the most part to a survival of symbolist technique with the main difference that, with the exception of Les Nourritures Terrestres, the image is used to symbolise rather more an intellectual point of view or attitude than an emotional state of mind. The image also takes on rather less importance than in the earlier, symbolist works, in that it fits into the structure of the work but no longer creates the unity of the work, the work not being created around an image or a search for symbols. Whereas Le Traité du Narcisse is formed around the symbol of Narcissus searching for the archetypes, and Le Voyage d'Urien and La Tentative Amoureuse are based on symbolic imagery representing états d'âme, the works immediately following Paludes, Les Nourritures Terrestres again excepted, are based on intellectual, discursive material and only

make use of symbols to serve their primary, intellectual aim.

Les Nourritures Terrestres is similar to Les Cahiers d'André Walter in its lyrical and apparently fragmentary nature. Gide makes use of imagery very widely and uses the image in a personal way to correspond to his senses and emotions. We find, for example, fruit and scents used to symbolise sensuality. Although many images occur with the same symbolic significance on more than one occasion, the use of symbol is fragmentary and there is no prolonged and continuous use of the same symbol as the basis of the work (as there is in the case of Narcisse for example). From the point of view of one studying the use of symbol, it is not possible to see any aesthetic advance in this direction. Gide considered the work to be separate from symbolism: 'Quand ont paru mes Nourritures on était en plein Symbolisme; j'ai cru que l'art courait de grands risques à se séparer ainsi résolument du naturel et de la vie. Mais mon livre était beaucoup trop naturel pour ne point paraître factice à ceux qui n'avaient plus de goût que pour l'artificiel'. (1) The Nourritures rest not on a symbolic structure, as, for example, a poem may rest on a coherent and developed symbol, but on the lyrical and sensuous effusions of the author. The images, although numerous and important, are appendages. The fruits of the earth symbolise the underlying tendency in the work towards total acceptance of all experience and an attempt to embrace every possible experience, but the symbol is a super-

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(1) Quoted in Pl., p.1486.

structure, it is essential to the work, but does not form the constructional basis on which it is built.

The author is very much the centre of the work - the numerous images, lyrical and evocative, in some cases symbolic in that they symbolise the state of mind or attitude of the author, all refer back to Gide himself. In evoking a varied and rich nature Gide is manifesting himself in relation to it. The work is similar to symbolist works in that the image refers to the artist indirectly - but it differs in that the writer himself is absent in the case of symbolist works where the work is a unity in itself and the whole can refer back to the poet although it need not do so, whereas the first person is very much in evidence in the Nourritures. Some of the images may be indirect presentations of ideas or emotions, but the work as a whole cannot be considered as a symbolic unity indirectly presenting the ideas or emotions of its author.

In the three works which follow the Nourritures there is a considerable development in Gide's ideas, particularly in a field of thought which concerned him at this time and had already been approached by him in Le Voyage d'Urien and Faludes, that is the problem of freedom and awareness, two states which, in Gide's mind, are closely connected and can only be reached through a rather long and arduous process of self-discovery. The aim of the main part of this section is to connect Gide's ideas expressed in the three works with the elements of symbolism employed in their expression.

Parts of Philoctète were begun in 1894 or early 1895. Gide mentions 'Philoctète, que j'ai achevé de préparer dans l'Engadine et dont j'ai écrit des passages', (1) in a letter written to Marcel Drouin during the winter of 1894-5. It may have been the Swiss mountain scenery in which he was living at the time that gave him the source of the décor of Philoctète. In fact the traité was not published until 1898, but the use made of a purely symbolic setting in the full symbolist tradition of Le Voyage d'Urien would suggest an earlier date of composition. The décor of the treatise is quite unreal and can only be understood in relation to the ideas and emotions of Philoctète as he progressively discovers his freedom in his lonely island home. The setting at the beginning of the first act is: 'Ciel gris et bas sur une plaine de neige et de glace'. (2) It is quite simply the symbolic representation of Philoctète's state of mind. We find in the second act that Philoctète says: 'le froid donne à l'eau même, gelée, la forme de mes logiques pensées'. (3) The atmosphere of thought and striving towards virtue in which Philoctète lives makes itself felt on Néoptolème as he and Ulysse approach the island; again the atmosphere is expressed through the décor: '...et maintenant, arrivés sur cette île inhospitalière, sans arbres, sans rayons, où la neige couvre les verdure, ou toutes choses sont gelées, et sous un ciel si blanc, si gris, qu'il

(1) Quoted by Y. Davet, Autour des Nourritures Terrestres, Gallimard, Paris, 1948, p.55.

(2) *ibid.*, p.103.

(3) *ibid.*, p.124.

semble au-dessus de nous une autre plaine de neige étendue, loin de tout, loin de tout...il semble que ce soit là déjà la mort, et, tant ma pensée à chaque heure devenait plus froide et plus pure, la passion s'étant abandonnée, qu'il ne reste ici plus qu'au corps à mourir'. (1) The décor symbolises not only Philoctète's thoughts and ideas but also the essence of his existence. In striving towards a virtue based on renunciation, his life becomes cold and barren. The lifeless absolute existence he is moving towards contrasts with the warmth and vigour brought by Néophtolème. Philoctète says to him: 'Enfant, laisse ma main flatter ton front si beau... Voilà longtemps, longtemps que ma main n'a touché que des corps froids'. (2)

The décor also symbolises Philoctète's emotions in a conventional paysage - état d'âme relationship. Speaking of the bleakness of the island, he says, 'la nature pareille à ma tristesse', (3) and at the end of the treatise when he finds his full freedom, arriving at a state of true dénuement, the setting, magically, or rather symbolically - for it is a symbolic island that he lives on - changes; this is the result, not the cause, of his final happiness:

#### CINQUIÈME NOTE

Philoctète est seul, sur un rocher. Le soleil se lève dans un ciel parfaitement pur. Au loin sur la mer fuit une

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- (1) Ret., p.105.  
(2) id., p.121.  
(3) id., p.122.

barque. Philoctète la regarde longuement.

PHILOCTÈTE

PHILOCTÈTE, murmure très calme.

Ils ne reviendront plus; ils n'ont plus d'arc à prendre  
... -Je suis heureux.

Sa voix est devenue extraordinairement belle et douce; des fleurs autour de lui percent la neige, et les oiseaux du ciel descendent le nourrir. (1)

M. Lioure in his book Le Drame writes that the symbolists were not interested in verisimilitude but saw the action and characters of their work as the facade of a deeper reality; 'Une esthétique symboliste... exige le dépassement de l'apparence dramatique et un perpétuel approfondissement du signe vers le signifié'. (2) He continues: 'l'action et les personnages du drame symboliste ne sont souvent que l'expression dramatique d'une idée ou d'un sentiment, la traduction d'une pensée morale ou métaphysique'. (3) While it is not suggested that Philoctète is a symbolist drame in the full sense of the word, certain points of similarity with Lioure's description are evident. Philoctète himself symbolises a certain moral attitude and his surroundings echo it. He is devoting himself to an ascetic ideal of purity and renunciation, he is struggling towards pure virtue and the

(1) Ret., p.145.

(2) M. Lioure, Le Drame, Armand Colin, Paris, 1963, p.87.

(3) Id., p.38.

spiritual regions of the absolute. All this is symbolised by the icy surroundings. However the ice also symbolises barrenness - Philoctète's life is barren because of his desire for pure, abstract virtue and it is only when he becomes aware towards the end of the work that he is devoting himself, even sacrificing himself to something outside himself that he renounces his 'virtue' and at the same time his pride: 'L'orgueil qui me soutient chancelle et cède; je fais de toutes parts... Ce que l'on entreprend au-dessus de ses forces, Néoptolème, voilà ce qu'on appelle vertu. Vertu... je n'y crisos plus, Néoptolème'. (1) His virtue lay in renunciation for its own sake and led to the motionless, isolated sterility of the island. He renounces his ideal of virtue when he achieves in fact the final renunciation, symbolised by the drinking of the draught and the surrender of his bow, and, refusing to sacrifice himself to an ideal any longer, becomes happy.

Philoctète's ideal involves a large element of self-effacement which reminds one of the role of Narcisse. Speaking of his virtue, Philoctète says: ' - et je voudrais mes actions de même toujours plus solides et plus belles; vraies, pures, cristallines, belles, belles, Ulysse, comme ces cristaux de clair givre, où, si le soleil paraissait, le soleil tout entier paraîtrait au travers. Je ne veux empêcher aucun rayon de Zeus; qu'il me traverse, Ulysse, comme un prisme, et que cette lumière réfractée fasse mes actes

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(1) Ret., p.142.

adorables. Je voudrais parvenir à la plus grande transparence, à la suppression de mon opacité...' (1) It is very evident that in the context of the work the character of Philoctète does efface itself before the moral attitude it embodies. It is the attitude, moral or aesthetic, symbolised by his characters that Gide puts forward in all of the works considered up to this point. The characters themselves have no reality, no existence or function apart from the attitude or postulation they symbolise, and their only purpose is to manifest, not themselves, but the truth that lies beyond them, the truth of which they are a symbol. In Littérature et Morale, inserted in the Journal after the year 1896, we read: 'Tu apprendras à considérer l'humanité comme la mise en scène des idées sur la terre.

Nous n'avons de valeur que représentative'. (2)

This is to remain Gide's attitude to character up to the writing of his two dramas, Saül and Candaule.

The problem of freedom and awareness is taken up again in Le Prométhée mal enchaîné, but in this work, although the characters are transparent symbols of Gide's ideas, there is not the same symbolist décor and background as in Philoctète, indeed the very absence of interest in the décor gives the reader a greater awareness that the work exists in the region of pure ideas and abstractions. As a result of the function of the work as a vehicle to express ideas, the characters are thin and have not the remotest

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(1) Ret., pp.125-6.

(2) J.I., p.92.

resemblance to real beings. Germaine Brée makes this point: 'Il (Gide) tend à intellectualiser son monde qu'il pousse vers l'abstraction. Le Prométhée mal enchaîné a une structure abstraite et schématique à l'intérieure de laquelle se meuvent des figures allégoriques, et manque d'ampleur et de résonance... Le grand problème de Gide, dans le roman, sera de remplir ce schéma intellectuel et complexe, et d'y verser un contenu humain'. (1) The very action of the work seems to be automatic and there is no doubt whatsoever that Gide is openly manipulating his characters in order to express his ideas. The characters themselves are so subordinate that they only exist as transparent and lifeless symbols. The following quotation from an early part of the work shows the automatic manner in which the characters act: 'J'attends maintenant que Monsieur me demande: Que cherchent-ils, parce que Monsieur va voir ce que je vais lui répondre.

Alors Prométhée demanda:

- Que cherchent-ils?' (2)

With a certain voltairian élan, this development gives the impression of an externally imposed sequence of events acted out by puppets. At this stage in his career, only a short time before the dramas are published, Gide is far from producing realistic characters, and in as far as 'transparence du mot' was a key word of Le Traité du Narcisse, 'transparence du caractère' could be applied to Le Prométhée mal enchaîné.

(1) Brée, p.119.

(2) Pl., p.304.

Prométhée is the symbol of a man who has become aware of himself and yet because of his awareness has sacrificed himself to something outside himself, to an abstract idea or principle, a belief in progress, for example, which goes beyond him and reduces his freedom. The external ideal to which man sacrifices himself is symbolised by the eagle. Prométhée says in his first public speech: 'Messieurs, je vous l'ai dit, je n'ai pas toujours vu mon aigle. Avant lui j'étais inconscient et beau, heureux et nu sans le savoir'. (1) He is intimately connected with the emergence of awareness in men. He continues in his speech, speaking of men in general, '- Et j'ai tant fait pour eux qu'autant dire que je les ai faits eux-mêmes, car auparavant qu'étaient-ils? - Ils étaient, mais n'avaient pas conscience d'être'. (2) However the state of awareness seems to be unavoidably connected with the state of dévouement, of self-sacrifice. With awareness the eagle was born. Similarly when Damoclès and Coclès become aware of the gratuity or absurdity of the conditions of human existence, they begin to suffer because one begins to seek causes, and the other insists on searching for effects. However the state of self-awareness must be reached in order for men to be men, but Prométhée's mistake was to accept the attendant eagle as inevitable and even desirable. Only when the eagle is rejected does the individual attain to real freedom. At Damoclès's funeral Prométhée was 'gras, frais, souriant; souriant à ce point que sa conduite

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(1) Pl., p.323.

(2) id., p.324.

fut jugée presque peu décente'. (1) We learn the reason for this in the ensuing speech made to the public in which he declares: 'j'ai tué mon aigle...' (2)

The eagle symbolises anything that man considers more important than himself and is willing to sacrifice himself to. Prométhée's early relationship with the aigle is one of complete self-giving: 'Il faut qu'il croisse et que je diminue'. (3) The fact that the eagle is connected with awareness and an ensuing conscience (both meanings being contained in the French work conscience) is shown by the public outcry upon the appearance of the eagle: 'Ça... un aigle! Allons donc!! tout au plus une conscience'. (4) The eagle is anything which limits man, which ties him down and restricts his full development. It prevents his awareness of the gratuitous nature of existence and therefore takes away his freedom. However Prométhée's choice to give himself to the eagle is a free choice, there is no compulsion, no real sense of punishment or inescapable destiny. His relationship with the eagle is in effect the product of his own mind - it symbolises an attitude towards existence. The same attitude, the same desire for self-sacrifice had already been expressed in Paludes, where the narrator speaks of an idea which grows in his head: 'On tient une petite idée... - maintenant l'idée est énorme - et qui m'a pris - pour en vivre; oui, je suis son moyen d'exist-

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- (1) Fl., p.334.  
(2) id., p.335.  
(3) id., p.317.  
(4) id., p.314.

ence; - elle est lourde - ...' (1) He ends with a phrase which is taken up almost word for word in Prométhée:

"Il faut qu'elle croisse et que je diminue". (2)

Zeus symbolises the incomprehensible and unsympathetic conditions of human existence. He has no responsibility and amuses himself by watching mortals struggling with the palpable contingencies of real life. He does not suffer - 'Mais je n'ai pas d'aigle, Monsieur'. (3) - neither does he oblige men to suffer. They may suffer as a result of his actions, but this is largely due to their own attitude; Prométhée is quite at liberty to kill his eagle. In so far as Zeus represents the incomprehensible in life, he is an ancestor of the existential absurd.

The story of Tityre repeats the story of Prométhée, Tityre passing through the same stages of development. The development of society with progress corresponds to the eagle in that it is a limiting force, something to which the individual is sacrificed. It is similar in its effect to conventional religion which Gide objects to in the Nourritures with the cry: 'Commandements de Dieu... jusqu'où rétrécirez-vous vos limites?' (4) Tityre began by sacrificing himself to the needs of society, but this had the same effect on him as the eagle on Prométhée. 'Tityre disait à Angèle: - Tant d'occupations me tueront; je n'en puis plus; je sens l'usure; ces solidarités activent mes scrupules; s'ils aug-

(1) Fl., p.126.

(2) *ibid.*

(3) Fl., p.330.

(4) *id.*, p.215.

mentent, je diminue. Que faire?' (1) The answer is that he must kill his particular eagle. 'Et peu de temps après, ayant bien éprouvé que, somme toute, les occupations, responsabilités et divers scrupules, non plus que le chène, ne le tenaient, lityre sourit, pris le vent, partit...' (2) He meets Koelibée, the symbol of carefree freedom.

The whole work is concerned with the problems of existence and the attitude to be taken by man in the face of his human condition: the implacable, harsh and incomprehensible facts of existence represented by Zeus. Gide is aware of the presence of suffering in humanity; he regards it on an intellectual level and sees the cause of it as an incorrect attitude in relation to the human situation. His Zeus both looks forward to the absurd of the existentialists and reflects the order of things which caused the sufferings of Aeschylus' Prometheus as described by C. Kerényi: 'And suddenly it becomes clear that the order to which this measure (3) belongs is to blame for the sufferings of Prometheus, who has done nothing more than men are compelled to do. He puts himself in our place - the place of men - and his actions and sufferings were the inevitable consequence...' (4) Gide however accepts the order of things without considering the problem of blame. He passes no moral judgement on Zeus, who is an unquest-

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(1) *id.*, p.337.

(2) *id.*, pp.337-8.

(3) The condemnation of Prometheus for his theft.

(4) C. Kerényi, Prometheus. Archetypal Image of Human Existence, Thames and Hudson, London, 1955, p.83.

ionable force, but rather poses the pragmatic question of how men should act under the given external circumstances. The only change which can take place lies within the individual. Prométhée can change his attitudes and beliefs, his personal freedom is not interfered with by Zeus and the responsibility for his state lies within himself. He is free to change the effects of the external circumstances by changing his attitude towards them and relationship with them.

The structure of El Hadj is broadly speaking parallel to that of Le Prométhée mal enchaîné. There is the necessity of a journey for awareness and self-knowledge to develop. The tribe leaves its city, which symbolises the normal existence of the people, and in so doing becomes aware of it:

La ville que nous avons quittée  
Est, était, riche, grande et belle.  
Si nous ne l'avions pas quittée,  
Nous ne l'eussions jamais nommée,  
Car nous n'en connaissions pas d'autres. (1)

The journey brings awareness, but also suffering, therefore the journey must be abandoned when it becomes impossible to go any further, when a certain limit, symbolised by the Chott, is reached. On returning to the town, to the normality of their existence, the people of the tribe abandon their suffering but retain their awareness. El Hadj brings his tribe back to the freedom of norm-

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(1) Fl., p.347.

ality and knowledge after the journey of discovery which was not altogether fruitless.

The Prince is seeking outside himself for an ideal, symbolised by the lands of the north and a future wife, and because of the ideal he and his people suffer. He corresponds to Prométhée feeding his eagle. When the Prince fades into nothingness and El Hadj assumes the leadership of the tribe, the state of affairs corresponds to Prométhée killing his eagle. Whereas the Prince led his people in search of an external ideal, El Hadj leads them back to the city, to themselves. Gide is here expressing an idea already found in the Hourritures, that man must find the satisfaction which springs from within himself outwards to the external world and not vice versa: 'Si ce que tu manges ne te grise pas, c'est que tu n'avais pas assez faim'. (1)

Gide uses a number of images connected with the environment through which the tribe passes in a symbolic way. The desert itself, barren and disappointing, symbolises the aridity and emptiness of the hope which spurred the people on to follow the Prince. In the light of L'Immoraliste and La Porte étroite it will be seen as the aridity which results from an excess in any direction: 'Il me semblait que m'envahît, qu'en moi s'étendait, s'ouvrait une désolation sans larmes, plus vaste encore et aussi morne que le désert'. (2) This image corresponds to the image of Michel living in his lonely house in the High Plains of Algeria and of Alissa

(1) Hourritures Terrestres, Pl., p.167.

(2) El hadj, Pl., p.358.

dying needlessly in a bare clinic room. Each of these three related images expresses the emptiness which results from excess.

The marsh or Chott symbolises a limit beyond which one cannot go - a limit to excess and a point at which one must return to normality, to the centre. That the tribe has reached this limit shows that the Prince was mistaken. The fact that El Hadj forbids the people to go to the Chott is used by Gide as an attack on the restriction, current in many religions, which prevent people from knowing the truth. It is also an attack on the idea of communal guilt, El Hadj using the idea of guilt as an excuse for the failure of the journey.

The image of the mirages which appear in the desert is used to symbolise the illusory hopes of the Prince. El Hadj doubts whether the mirages have any significance: 'Je sais bien qu'il en est qui disent que ce ne sont point là des irréalités, et que les objets sont ailleurs, et qu'on finira par les trouver, - dont voici la flottante apparence, d'eux par quelle chaleur détachée, - qui se propose, plus voisine, fallacieusement à nos prises. Mais puisque nous ne pouvions les saisir, Allah! pourquoi la proposer?'

(1) Here it is possible to see a renunciation of the doctrine contained in Le Traité du Narcisse, Gide no longer looks for an ideal reality which lies beyond appearances. As his works following El Hadj become more realistic in nature, he ceases to think of reality as lying beyond a symbolic work of art and conceives

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(1) . . . . ., pp.351-2.

rather of a reality which lies both within and, by a process of  
generalisation, around the work.

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CHAPTER 3 : DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THE CLASSICAL  
CONCEPT OF SYMBOLISM

1. The Dramas.

As Krebber points out, the writing of the two dramas, Saül and Le Roi Candaulé, coincides with a development of interest on the part of Gide in psychology and character. (1) Gide's characters are no longer pure symbolic representations of ideas or emotions, they become more realistic and within the context of the work of art they have an existence of their own, in their own right, with development and conflict. Krebber writes: 'Die frühen Schriften Gides empfingen Gefüge und inneren Rhythmus von der Idee des Werkes... Die auftretenden Figuren waren daher Funktion der von ihnen repräsentierten Werte (oder Unwerte) und des kompositionellen Schemas. Nun aber soll ein wirklicher Charakter, mit einer ihm eigentümlichen Problematik, Entwicklung, Lösung oder Verstrickung dargestellt werden... solche Überlegungen begleiteten die Entstehung der beider um die Jahrhundertwende geschriebenen Dramen, des Saül und des Roi Candaulé'. (2)

H. Watson-Williams in her thesis, André Gide et la fable antique, makes a similar point about the development of characters: 'En installant, en effet, au centre de la scène, ses personnages... de Saül et du Roi Candaulé, il (Gide) révélait la capacité du mythe antique de porter une nouvelle signification à la fois per-

(1) Krebber, p.52.

(2) *ib.*, p.23.

sonnelle et générale. Ses héros sortaient des nuages et des jeux de nuances symbolistes, pour mener leurs nouvelles vies en pleine lumière.' (1)

The increased importance given by Gide to the role of the character in the work of art is evident from his writings at about the turn of the century. In the Lettres à Angèle, published in 1900, he wrote: 'Une idée au théâtre, ce devait être un caractère, une situation'. (2) The character then, and his actions should manifest the idea, that is the essence or meaning of the play. The idea does not lie beyond the character, but in him. This represents an important change in what is the centre of interest of the work of art. In Gide's earlier works the interest had passed through the characters to their symbolic significance, now the interest is squarely placed in the characters themselves. There is no need to look beyond them for they contain the idea in themselves, at the same time allowing the reader or audience to generalise from the particular case of the individual character. Gide equates the drame with character: 'qui dit drame dit caractère.' (3) In a letter to Valéry dated 22 October 1898, Gide shows that he considers the character to be the centre of the drame, around which the action is constructed: 'Si je continue à faire du drame, j'en voudrais bannir les hasards extérieurs; je voudrais que tous les mouvements, péripéties, catastrophes naissent du seul caractère de chacun, de sorte que chacun fasse et

(1) Watson-Williams, op.cit., thèse universitaire, Paris, 1958, p.2.

(2) Lettres à Angèle, in Prétextes, p.72.

(3) O.C., IV, p.213.

défasse son histoire'. (1)

The character of Saül embodies a conflict resulting from an ambivalent attitude towards the future - a desire to know it and at the same time a fear of it. This is connected with a tendency to accept and desire what will bring his downfall, that is to say his homosexual desire for David which brings a moral disintegration resulting from total surrender to physical desire.

There is a certain sense of destiny in Saül's downfall, which is emphasised by those around him: 'Les démons ne sont là que pour miner le monologue; David n'est là que pour figurer le drame intime qu'est tout vice: accueillir, aimer ce qui vous nuit'. (2) The destiny is psychological and springs from the interior of the character rather than from an external source. Writing of destiny in Considérations sur la mythologie grecque, Gide minimised the importance of external forces which were explained by the Greeks as destiny and gave greater weight to an interior psychological force which could also be called destiny.

Saül could by no means be called a symbolist drama, it remains far too close to reality for that classification to be valid, yet there are many symbolic elements in the play on the level of action, setting and character. The use of a setting from the Old Testament is well suited to the atmosphere created by the play - one of magic, prophecy and sensuality. The settings in which we

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(1) Corr., p.338.

(2) *ibid.*

see Saül alone are symbolic of his mental state. In act 2, scene 9 we see Saül in his room: 'La scène représente la chambre de Saul. Elle est mal éclairée par une seule lampe fumeuse'. (1) The gloomy scene in the room corresponds to Saül's increasing moral weakness, and in act 5, scene 5 the scene inside Saül's tent where the demons are tormenting him and a state of confusion reigns represents his mental and moral state as he rapidly approaches his final downfall. The décor of the grotto of the witch of Endor together with the pitiful character of the witch herself (2) symbolises the mixture of horror, fear and fascination with which Saül approaches the future, half knowing and half ignorant.

As a contrast, act 4, scene 1, between Jonathan and David, one of love and affection, is played out in a rustic, idyllic décor: 'Il fait nuit, mais pas très sombre; la scène assez étroite représente un jardin où une colline vient brusquement finir; à gauche, une source ruisselle; des cyprès plantés régulièrement l'entourent'. (3) This setting is reminiscent of the gardens described in the Nourritures. As Brée points out, the various décors only have any significance in relation to the characters and the development of the action: 'La juxtaposition des tableaux à travers laquelle se réalise le mouvement même du drame est toujours chez Gide...ce qui manifeste le plus clairement la présence du "soutien inconscient" du personnage. La succession

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(1) *Th.*, p.58.

(2) *id.*, p.87 et seq.

(3) *id.*, p.107.

inexplicable des tableaux ne se comprend qu'en fonction de cette force irréductible qu'est une personnalité, et une personnalité qui se découvre'. (1)

The development of the character of Saül is accompanied by a number of symbolic elements in the action of the play which correspond to Saül's inner state. His fear of the future is expressed symbolically by the killing of the soothsayers (2), by the killing of the queen (3), and by his search for the asses:

'Ecoute: mes ânesses! tu sais bien, mes ânesses..., eh bien! je sais où elles sont!!! Veux-tu? Nous allons les chercher ensemble! ... (Ils sortent) Nous nous échapperons!!...' (4) This latter example symbolises a desire in Saül to return to childhood, as well as being symptomatic of his madness.

But as Saül attempts to fight off the future, it comes closer, impacably. As early as act 1, scene 11 David tries on the king's helmet. He decides to fight without it, but the fact that he has had it on his head is symbolic of the future state of affairs. The many images of the royal attire - robes, sceptre, crown - reflect Saül's decline as a king. The sceptre, robes and crown are presented in the first scene as symbolic of Saül's kingship - the demons take these three symbols (5), this looks forward to Saül's future downfall. In act 2, scene 9 the demons

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(1) Dree, p.130.

(2) Th., p.16.

(3) Saül, Act 2, sc.3.

(4) Th., p.128.

(5) id., p.15

increase their control over Saül and he becomes weaker and less of a king: 'Saül: Ah cette couronne me gêne... (Il la jette de loin sur son lit et retourne s'asseoir: sa pourpre tombe un peu de ses épaules).' (1) In act 4, scene 2 Saül appears in the desert without his royal robes; his kingship has deserted him:

SAUL

entre par la droite, nu tête, un bâton noueux  
à la main; il n'a pas le manteau royal mais  
seulement les vêtements de dessous. (2)

The crown is heavy, but its literal weight has more far-reaching metaphorical significance. Jonathan cannot bear its weight: 'Si vous saviez combien cette couronne est pesante!' (3) and puts it on David's head: 'Elle a meurtri mon front... N'est-ce pas qu'elle est lourde... Oh! mets-la, dis. (Il la pose sur le front de David)' (4) So the crown and the royalty is transferred to David:

Démon: Et où as-tu laissé ton sceptre - dis?

Saül: A David. C'était trop lourd. (5)

At the end of the play, after Saül's death, David assumes the burden of kingship and symbolically takes the crown and puts it on: 'Il a fait retomber de tout son poids cette couronne sur ma tête. (Il se penche vers Saül et prend la couronne qu'il avait

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- (1) Th., p.62.  
(2) id., p.112.  
(3) id., p.73.  
(4) id., p.75.  
(5) id., p.114.

fait d'abord remettre auprès de Saül - il la pose sur sa tête),<sup>(1)</sup>

As Saül loses his kingship and his strength of will, the hold of the demons over him becomes greater. These allegorical creatures are purely an external symbol of Saül's own mind, they are part of him. Gide wrote to Valéry in 1898, 'ce qui fait différer mes démons des autres, c'est qu'ils ne sont pas extérieurs à Saül. Je le vois réplissant à l'égard de Saül le rôle de l'orchestre pour la ballerine d'après Mallarmé, c'est-à-dire expliquant ses silencieux monologues... Et puis il faut comprendre que Saül tout entier n'est qu'un vaste monologue, tout ne concourant qu'à l'explication de son caractère...' (2)

Le roi Candaule deals with the problem of freedom and limitations in the field of human relationships. Candaule is rich and has an abundance of everything. Because of this he wants to be generous and give his most precious possession, his wife, to Gyges. He takes his generosity to its limits: 'Risquer! c'est l'autre forme du bonheur; celle des riches... C'est la mienne... Je suis si riche, Phèdre! et si vivant...' (3) In search of a friend he takes his generosity too far. Gyges is free because he has no possessions, Candaule attempts to be free by risking what he has. But in being generous to Gyges he imposes himself on him and limits his freedom, the final result being that Gyges is forced to kill him. Candaule, like the prince in El Hadj, has gone to an

(1) Th., p.151.

(2) Corr.; p.327.

(3) Th., p.197.

excess and suffers as a result of it.

In his preface to the first edition, Gide warns the reader against searching for symbols in the work, but encourages a tendency towards generalisation: 'Et cette tragique histoire de Candaule, peut-être sied-il de ne voir, avec l'historien grec, que l'avènement du premier des Mermnades sur le trône de Lydie. Mais peut-être pourtant n'est-il pas impossible d'y voir aussi la défaite, le suicide presque, d'une aristocratie que ses trop nobles qualités vont démanteler à son aise, puis s'empêcher de se défendre... N'importe! qu'on n'aille pas voir ici de "symboles" mais simplement une invite à la généralisation. Et que le choix d'un tel sujet, du caractère exceptionnel de Candaule, trouve ici son explication, son excuse'. (1)

Thus justified by the author, we may see in the character of Candaule a tendency to go to an excess in his relations with other people, to impose himself on them to the extent that he limits their freedom. Gyges both makes this possible and punishes Candaule for it. He comes from the sea which represents the unknown, the vague limit which Candaule wishes to approach. The magic ring found in the fish sent by Gyges makes it possible for Candaule to venture into the unknown regions of human relationships, to be generous to Gyges to an unlimited degree. But the unknown proves to be dangerous and if Candaule makes a friend, he loses his life.

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(1) *Id.*, p.150.

## 2. The récits.

With his four récits (1), published between 1901 and 1919, Gide takes his interest in character further than anywhere else in his literary production. This does not mean that he is interested in character to the exclusion of expressing ideas, nor that he writes works of psychological analysis, but rather that nowhere else in his work are his characters fuller or more realistic. Although, as was the case of *Sidi* and *Candaule*, they may lend themselves to generalisation in a classical sense, they do not invite the reader to look through them. But they are not there simply for their own sake, Gide was far from ever writing a realist work, the récits are primarily intellectual and treat of varying attitudes towards life which are carried to excess. Gide found in Dostoyevsky an artistic combination of ideas and reality: 'Dostoïevsky n'observe jamais pour observer. L'œuvre chez lui ne naît point de l'observation du réel; ou du moins elle ne naît pas rien que de cela. Elle ne naît point non plus d'une idée préconçue, et c'est pourquoi elle n'est en rien théorique, mais reste immergée dans le réel; elle naît d'une rencontre de l'idée et du fait, ...de sorte que les scènes les plus réalistes de ses romans sont aussi les plus chargées de signification psychologique et morale; plus exactement, chaque œuvre de Dostoyevsky est le produit d'une fécondation du fait par l'idée'. (2) Although Gide's

(1) L'Immoraliste (1901), La Porte étroite (1909), Isabelle (1912), La symphonie pastorale (1917).

(2) *...*, II, p.217, quoted in Arebber, p.102.

critical work on Dostoyevsky appeared after the récits, we find in them something similar: he expresses his ideas realistically. The characters are realistic and so is the setting, and time is the present, therefore there is not the same distance between the work and the reader as in the case of the dramas. The récits at the same time contain considerable symbolic elements, in the action, the characters and the images. Brée writes, on the subject of La Porte étroite, of 'les symboles discrets mais présents dès le début, consistants jusqu'au bout et soigneusement exploités', (1) and Guerard writes of Gide's use of imagery in L'Immoraliste: 'Gide's significant images also serve as casual images - and so serve because never explained. No single image or experience, but the cumulative effect of them all, drives us very slowly to an awareness of Michel's trouble... The minutiae of style and technique thus disguise an economy as extreme as any in modern fiction'. (2) The symbol plays an important part in the action and in the style of the récits, but it is not immediately recognisable because it is a realistic symbol. Gide has arrived at a point where, aesthetically, symbolism and a sense of reality meet.

It is outside the scope of a work of this size to attempt a full and comprehensive survey of the symbolism present in each of the récits. This would entail a detailed analysis of each of the works and a critical evaluation of each symbolic element in relat-

(1) Brée, p. 99.

(2) A.J. Guerard, André Gide, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1951, p. 117.

ion to other symbolic elements and to the whole work. An example of this approach may be seen in the article by J. and H. Bonheim, 'Structure and Symbolism in Gide's La porte étroite'. (1) The authors isolate a number of symbolic images and details and relate them to the structure of the novel, finding that essentially each symbol is related to one of two major tendencies present in the work: that of Lucile Lucolin towards freedom and sensuality, and that of Jérôme and Alissa towards asceticism and restriction. Thus the tension in the work is created by the interplay of these two sets of symbols. Similarly in L'immoraliste, the structure of the work may be seen in terms of an opposition between a movement towards sensuality and immorality, symbolised by the sun and the warmth of the south, and a movement towards order and control, symbolised by the gentle countryside of Normandy, controlled and exploited by man. The possibility of extending the meaning of the symbols is immense, for instance the imagery contained in L'Immoraliste could be related to Michel's subconscious, could also be seen in terms of Michel's future suppressing his past, and also in terms of a tendency towards life and a tendency towards death. The field for interpretation is very wide, and all the richer as Gide leaves these meanings implicit rather than explicit.

In this present work it is not proposed to attempt a systematic analysis of the closely knit structure of the  récits, but rather to pick out selectively a number of characteristic symbol-

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(1) French Review, 20, 1950.

ic elements in order to illustrate the use of symbol in the works.

The characters all offer the possibility of generalisation and are indeed vehicles through which Gide criticises varying attitudes towards life which are carried to excess. Michel and Alissa are diametrically opposed, both go to extremes and as a result find their lives useless and arid. The pastor in La Symphonie Pastorale allows Gide to criticise self-deception, a theme which is supported aesthetically by a correspondance between Gertrude's physical blindness and the pastor's mental blindness. Isabelle, which is the slightest of the four récits, contains an implicit criticism of the romantic sensibility of its novelist hero, Gerard Lacase.

The imagery and symbolic events of L'Immoraliste are largely grouped around one of the two main directions, towards freedom or towards control, with a third group of images connected with barrenness and sterility. As the work is mainly concerned with investigating the change in Michel's state of mind it is not surprising that we should find examples of imagery in the symbolist tradition of paysage - état d'âme. In fact this is so and both landscape and the seasons are used.

The sun and the warmth of the south symbolise life and health for Michel. And it is on life and health that he bases his new conception of what is good and what is bad. For him, what is healthy and vital is good, and what is weak and sickly is bad. Thus the sun is adored as a giver of life, and the southern lands, particularly North Africa, are for Michel the birthplace of his

new existence, for it is there that he recovered from his illness and awoke to a new revolutionised life. While he is convalescing in Biskra he takes an interest in what is going on around him, for the first time he sees things and actions, and no longer lives in a world of ideas. At this point we find the image of the sun: 'Je ne fais rien. Je la regarde. O Marceline!... Je regarde. Je vois le soleil...' (1) Even as he drags the dying Marceline through Italy to North Africa he is possessed by the idea of liberation which he connects with the south: 'Le souvenir et le désir du Sud m'obsédait'. (2) As Fowlie writes in his study of Gide: 'The sun, first in Italy, and then in Africa, is both the reality and the symbol of Michel's resurrection'. (3)

The rejection of his inhibitions and limitations leads Michel to a total acceptance, even adoration of his body. The image of his naked body on the rocks in Italy takes on a symbolic value when seen in relation to the change in his nature: 'Je me trouvais, non pas robuste encore, mais pouvant l'être, harmonieux, sensuel, presque beau'. (4) The increase of sensuality, and the growth of Michel's worship of health accompany each other. Speaking of Dachir, an Arab boy, he says: 'J'ai le besoin de toucher', and 'C'était là ce dont je m'éprenais en lui: la santé. La santé de ce petit corps était belle'. (5) The admiration of health

(1) Fl., p.381.

(2) id., p.464.

(3) J. Fowlie, André Gide, his life and art, Macmillan, New York, 1965, p.51.

(4) Fl., p.432.

(5) id., p.382.

remains with Michel even as Marceline is dying and causes him to be hostile towards her for her illness. It is only after her death that the illusion is shattered: 'La brutalité de la passion y prenait encore à mes yeux un hypocrite aspect de santé, de vigueur'. (1)

Paradoxically, the image of night and darkness is closely connected with that of the south and the sun. The symbol of Michel's nightly wanderings in Naples represents the uncontrolled part of his being given full rein; the night, full of unknown mysteries, corresponds to the obscure forces inside him which push Michel onwards in his flight from the restrictions of his early life. The night is equated with the same feeling of freedom and sensuality as the sun: 'La nuit elle (Marceline) se couchait tôt, ... je la surveillais s'endormir... puis... je me relevais sans bruit, je me rhabillais sans lumière; je me glissais dehors comme un voleur.

Dehors! oh! j'aurais crié d'allégresse! Qu'allais-je faire? Je ne sais pas... Je regardais tout d'un oeil neuf; j'épiais chaque bruit, d'une oreille plus attentive; je humais l'humidité de la nuit, je posais ma main sur des choses; je rôdais'. (2)

Michel's earlier attempts at poaching on his own land in Normandy, during which he again engages in nightly wanderings, have the same significance. The night symbolises the passion and the desire in the depth of his mind, tendencies that were repressed in the clear-

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(1) Pl., p.463.

(2) Id., p.461.

er light of his previous mode of existence, but which are freed in the anonymity of darkness. Similarly, his interest in the peasants on his land, earthy beings who live close to their immediate desires, symbolises his rejection of his earlier life. In speaking of his own desires and his final subservience to them, Michel uses explicitly the adjective ténébreux: 'Ce n'est plus, comme avant, une souriante harmonie... Je ne sais plus le dieu ténébreux que je pers'. (1)

In connection with Michel's new-found moral freedom we find the image, by now characteristic of Gide, of the open window: 'L'aube entra librement par notre croisée grande ouverte'. (2) This image, as has already been shown, is frequent in the early works, and is always symbolic of freedom, not a physical freedom so much as a moral and mental freedom. Also associated with Michel's moral freedom and his delight in life is the image of almond blossom used during Marceline's illness and the final, disastrous journey. The blossom symbolises the arrival of spring and the birth of new life in nature. 'C'était le premier mars... Les paysans ont dépouillé de ses rameaux blancs la campagne, et les fleurs d'amandiers chargent les paniers des vendeurs'. He buys some and decorates the house with it. But Marceline, who is dying, cannot tolerate this symbol of new life: 'L'odeur de ces fleurs me fait mal, dit-elle...'. (3)

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(1) 11., p.467.

(2) 10., p.405.

(3) 14., pp.460-1.

A number of incidents in the action of the récit also symbolise Michel's new morality. His tacit acquiescence to the stealing of the scissors (1), his symbolic action in cutting off his beard (2), and the incident in which he saved Marceline in the run-away carriage (3) all point towards his changed attitude towards life. It was after the last mentioned incident that he first possessed Marceline, and therefore overcame his sexual inhibitions.

In contrast to Michel's new morality, the countryside of Normandy represents the old order of strictly controlled living, to Michel it represents a harmony which he vainly hopes will help him to control the obscure, unruly forces which have been awakened in him: 'De cette abondance ordonnée, de cette asservissement joyeux, de ces souriantes cultures, une harmonie s'établissait, non plus fortuite mais dictée, un rythme, une beauté tout à la fois humaine et naturelle, où l'on ne savait plus ce que l'on admirait, tant étaient confondus en une très parfaite entente l'éclatement fécond de la libre nature, l'effort savant de l'homme pour la régler'. (4) The period spent in Normandy is in fact a time of happiness and equilibrium. Michel's new morality expresses itself mainly in his studies and has not yet become the destructive, uncontrollable force it is to become later.

But the equilibrium is short lived and Michel is unable to

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- (1) Fl., p.394.  
(2) id., p.402.  
(3) id., pp.404-5.  
(4) id., pp.410-11.

remain in Normandy. His proposal to sell the farm towards the end of the second part of the work corresponds to the disintegration of any hopes Michel may have of retaining and feeling of the harmony and happiness he had experienced in Normandy. The second part of the work, that which takes place in Normandy, also contains the appearance of Lénalque who, although a rebel against society, keeps his lucidity, and therefore control over his own actions. Lénalque says, 'j'y garde ma lucidité'. (1) But Michel is unable to match Lénalque in his lucidity and fails to control his passion.

Michel's changed attitude to his studies reflects his new morality. After his recovery, his studies of history become for him symbolic of an absence of life, of death: 'L'histoire du passé prenait maintenant à mes yeux cette immobilité, cette fixité terrifiante des ombres nocturnes dans la petite cour de Biskra, l'immobilité de la mort'. (2) His interest is transferred from the past to the present: 'A présent, si je pouvais me plaire encore dans l'histoire, c'était en l'imaginant au présent'. (3) Finally Michel's interest comes to rest in the future, in which he puts all his hope, it is at the same time that Marceline abandons hope and succumbs to her illness. Michel traces his development from a passion for the past to a passionate hope in the future: 'Moi qui d'abord ne trouvais de goût qu'au passé, la

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(1) *Id.*; p.426.

(2) *Id.*, p.397.

(3) *Id.*, p.398.

subite saveur de l'instant m'a pu griser un jour, pensai-je, mais le futur désenchante l'heure présente, plus encore que le présent ne désenchanta le passé; et depuis notre nuit de Sorrente déjà tout mon amour, toute ma vie se projettent sur l'avenir'. (1)

Gide uses the seasons and decor to symbolise Michel's state of mind. This technique is used more widely in La Porte étroite and two examples will suffice to illustrate its use in L'Immoraliste. As autumn approaches in Normandy, Michel feels his happiness slipping away: '...mais déjà je sentais, à côté du bonheur, quelque autre chose que le bonheur, qui colorait bien mon amour, mais comme colore l'automne'. (2)

Gide uses the decor to correspond to Michel's état d'âme during the second visit to Sorrente: 'Quatre jours après nous repartîmes pour Sorrente. Je fus déçu de n'y trouver pas plus de chaleur. Tout semblait grelotter... Nous regardions avec étonnement, sous le ciel terne, tout le décor désenchanté, et le morne jardin de l'hôtel qui nous paraissait si charmant quand s'y promenait notre amour'. (3) The changed atmosphere of the setting reflects the internal sadness and tragedy of Marceline and Michel's life.

Finally, an image of considerable importance in L'Immoraliste is that of the desert. It symbolises Michel's complete emptiness and aridity as he begins to realise fully the result of his conduct, and where his new beliefs have led him. In fact

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(1) Fl., p.434.  
(2) id., p.420.  
(3) id., p.461.

they have led him nowhere, except to the desert, dry and infertile. The writer of the introductory letter compares the high plain where Michel has taken refuge to the desert: 'Par la chaleur...cette plaine ressemble au désert'. (1) Michel, in the inhumanity of his actions, prefers the desert to more fertile areas: 'A l'oasis je préfère à présent le désert...L'effort de l'homme y paraît laid et misérable... - Vous aimez l'inhumain, dit Marceline'. (2)

Symbolism in La Porte Etroite has already been treated by J. and H. Bonheim in the article mentioned earlier. It is proposed here simply to note some of the more important images. The images of the door and of the narrow path that leads to paradise have many connotations. Alissa's door is closed to Jérôme, under the pretext that the strait gate to heaven is too narrow for two to pass through together, in fact Alissa is using this explanation to conceal her real motive for fleeing Jérôme, her fear of sensuality. An example of the use of the image of the door is the occasion of the final parting of Alissa and Jérôme. Alissa goes through the door in the wall of the kitchen garden, and is lost to Jérôme for ever: 'Nous étions de nouveau parvenus à la petite porte du potager par où, tout à l'heure, je l'avais vue sortir. Elle se retourna vers moi:

- Adieu! fit-elle. Non ne viens pas plus loin. Adieu, mon

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(1) *ib.*, p.370.

(2) *ib.*, pp.467-8.

ami bien-aimé. C'est maintenant que va commencer...le meilleur.

Dès que la porte fut refermée, dès que je l'eus entendue tirer le verrou derrière elle, je tombai contre cette porte, en proie au plus excessif désespoir... (1) The symbol of the door and the walled garden is characteristic of Alissa's behaviour during the action of the  récit. Her life is restricted and sheltered, she has no experience of the outside world and when Jérôme offers her the opportunity of experience and involvement she turns her back on it. Her final retreat through the door in the wall to the confines of the walled garden and the house symbolises her final withdrawal from life and her sacrifice to the false ascetic ideal which, in her self-deception, she imagines she is striving towards.

Two opposing tendencies in the work, that of Lucile Bucolin's licentiousness and that of Alissa's puritanism, are symbolised by the contrast between brightness and darkness. Lucile's clothes are light (2) and we read that 'un rais de lumière sort de la chambre (de Lucile)'. (3) Juliette too, although not licentious, symbolises happiness and fertility and is associated with brightness. Alissa, speaking of her, says, 'Je songe à ce radieux pays dont me parle Juliette'. (4) Alissa, on the other hand, together with her mother and Miss Ashburton, wears drab, dull clothes and

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- (1) Fl., pp.578-9.  
(2) id., pp.497-8.  
(3) id., p.503.  
(4) id., p.547.

towards the end of the récit exaggerates the coarseness of her clothes and attempts to make herself unattractive.

The décor and seasons play an important part in the work. We find the two closely connected with each other, and with the state of mind of Jérôme and Alissa. The first meeting after Jérôme's military service took place in the autumn and was a failure. Jérôme recognises that the season and décor may have been responsible: 'Celle-ci avait eu tout contre elle: décor, comparses, saison'. (1) It is not suggested that in fact the décor plays an active role in the action, and it seems here that Jérôme is deceiving himself. The décor is rather a reflection, an aesthetic expression of the relationship between Jérôme and Alissa. Jérôme hopes for a new meeting, in the spring (2), it seems as though Jérôme believes that the seasons, in their aesthetic representation of the minds of the protagonists have some control over them, spring being symbolic of new hope and life. However the new meeting does not prove to be much more successful.

Summer is equated with happiness and joy: 'L'été, cette année, fut splendide... Notre ferveur triomphait du mal, de la mort; l'ombre reculait devant nous. Chaque matin j'étais éveillé par ma joie; je me levais dès l'aurore, à la rencontre du jour je m'élançais...' (3) It is similar to the summer spent by Michel and Marceline in Normandy. However autumn approaches and brings

(1) Fl., p.560 (Jérôme is referring to their meeting).

(2) Id., p.560.

(3) Id., pp.515-16.

its sadness. Jérôme finds Alissa in the garden: 'Elle était au fond du verger, cueillant au pied d'un mur les premières chrysanthèmes qui mêlaient leur parfum à celui des feuilles mortes de la hêtraie. L'air était saturé d'automne'. (1) It is at this time that he detects 'cet arrièregoût de tristesse que je sentais au fond de sa voix' (2) The winter follows and symbolises the desolation in Jérôme's heart caused by Juliette's engagement and above all by Alissa's avoidance of him: 'L'épais brouillard d'hiver m'enveloppait; ma lampe d'étude, et toute la ferveur de mon amour et de ma foi écartaient mal, hélas! la nuit et le froid de mon coeur'. (3)

Certain examples of the use of décor are highly symbolic and, like the seasons, provide an aesthetic expression of the relationship between the protagonists. During Jérôme's very last meeting with Alissa the setting in which it takes place is carefully described: 'Le soleil déclinant, que cachait depuis quelques instants un nuage, reparut au ras de l'horizon, presque en face de nous, envahissant d'un luxe frémissant les champs vides et combant d'une profusion subite l'étroit vallon qui s'ouvrait à nos pieds; puis, disparut'. (4) This sunset scene which contains, as a symbol, its own emotive value, corresponds well with the emotion created by the parting of Jérôme and Alissa. In addition, the sequence of events during the sunset reflects the sequence of

(1) Pl., p. 525.

(2) Id., p. 526.

(3) Id., p. 542.

(4) Id., p. 570.

events during the last meeting of Jérôme and Lissa. The sun has been hidden behind a cloud, this represents the separation of the two but always with the hope, on Jérôme's part, of a new meeting. The new meeting occurs and Jérôme experiences a few moments of happiness, this being symbolized by the appearance of the sun. But as he realizes it is the last meeting, his hope disappears and he is left with nothing: the fields are empty and the sun disappears behind the horizon. The use of such symbolism not only increases the aesthetic value of the work, but also generalises the emotions and ideas involved and so puts the work on a wider footing.

The final image with which we leave Alissa, is one of barrenness and futility, like the desert image in L'Immoraliste. In her diary, just before her death, Alissa becomes aware of the uselessness of her sacrifice and of her own self-deception: 'une angoisse...c'est comme l'éclaircissement brusque et désenchanté de ma vie. Il me semblait que je voyais pour la première fois les murs atrocement nus de ma chambre. J'ai pris peur... Je voudrais mourir à présent, vite avant d'avoir compris de nouveau que je suis seule'. (1) So Michel's desert becomes Alissa's bare clinic room, both being the result of the lack of an awareness of limits to our human existence.

The use of symbol in La belle is less extensive and less well developed than in La Porte étroite. Gide makes use of symbolic

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11., p. 15.

décor in describing the château where the action takes place and relating it to the people who live in it. The state of melancholy which pervades the whole building and its inhabitants is reflected by the park and the season: 'que le parc était beau! et qu'il s'apprêtait noblement à la mélancolie de cette saison déclinante'.

(1) Lacase's state of mind is also symbolised by the décor: 'Un mur de pluie me séparait du reste du monde, loin de toute passion, loin de la vie, m'enfermait dans un cauchemar gris, parmi d'étranges êtres à peine humains'. (2)

The image of brightness and darkness already used in La Porte étroite is found again in Isabelle and is used in a similar way. Isabelle, the girl who had run away for love, returns and Lacase sees her in the château: 'Seule parmi les costumes sombres, elle était vêtue en blanc'. (3) When Isabelle's meeting with Mme de Saint-Auréal is over, the latter makes a symbolic and melodramatic gesture, indicating that she has finished with the girl: '- Partez, à présent: nous n'avons plus rien à nous dire, et je ne vous reconnais plus.

Puis ayant été prendre un éteignoir sur la table de nuit, elle en coiffa successivement chaque bougie du candélabre, et partit'. (4)

A later symbol in the work is that of the tree-felling, which

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- (1) Pl., p.637.  
(2) id., p.525.  
(3) id., p.648.  
(4) id., p.657.

takes place in the grounds of the house in order to pay off debts. It is a symbol of destruction and desolation and looks forward to the disappointment and disillusion Lucase will feel when he meets Isabelle and loses his fascinated interest in her. The sight and sound of the destruction of the trees is a strong symbol which will provoke in the reader a similar reaction to that of Gratien: 'Oh les bandits! les bandits! quand je les entends taper du couperet ou de la hache, Monsieur, je deviens fou; leurs coups me portent sur la tête; j'ai envie de cogner à mon tour; j'ai envie de tuer'. (1)

La symphonie Pastorale contains a complex of symbols centred around the theme of blindness. Gertrude's physical blindness represents her unawareness of sin and evil. An awareness of them comes when she gains her sight. It is then that she becomes aware of the pastor's self-deception and his mental blindness in not wanting to realise the real nature of his love for her. With her sight she realises the culpability of the love between them, and drowns herself. The biblical text, 'si vous étiez aveugle, vous n'auriez point de péché', appears in the work as a kind of leit-motiv. The parallel and contrast between the pastor's self-deception and Gertrude's blindness is developed and has full value as a symbol within the work. Brée points out the complexity of the symbolism found in the récit: 'Le sens de l'histoire est formé à travers des incidents concrets, dont la valeur

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symbolique, à triple ou quadruple retournements, est trop appuyée pour qu'elle puisse soutenir la fiction de l'inconscience pastorale; la description de "La Symphonie Pastorale" en est un exemple... Les notes clés subtilement mis en valeur, les versets bibliques à double sens, les conversations tendancieuses, l'hypocrisie inconsciente et évidente des raisonnements, finissent par lasser le lecteur qui se dégage du jeu... Aucune autre des oeuvres de Gide n'avait pas pris à ce point l'allure d'une parabole'. (1)

A number of characteristic images are to be found in La Symphonie Pastorale, of which two examples will suffice. Gertrude's slow awakening from the sub-human state in which the pastor found her is symbolised by the sunrise which, like spring, is associated with the birth of new life and hope in the future: 'Le 5 mars. J'ai noté cette date comme celle d'une naissance. C'était moins un sourire qu'une transfiguration. Tout à coup ses traits s'animent; ce fut comme un éclaircissement subit, pareil à cette lueur purpurine dans les Hautes-Alpes qui précède l'aurore, fait vibrer le sommet neigeux qu'elle désigne et sort de la nuit'. (2)

At the end of the work we find an image which corresponds to the images left with the reader at the end of the three earlier récits, an image of sterility: 'J'aurais voulu prier, mais je sentais mon coeur plus aride que le désert'. (3)

- (1) Bréc, p. 249.  
(2) Fl., pp. 889-90.  
(3) Id., p. 930.

#### CHAPTER 4 : LATER MYTHOLOGICAL WORKS

In an entry in his Journal for 1933 Gide compares his Oedipe with Sophocles' work of the same name: 'vous avez la pièce de Sophocle et je ne me pose pas en rival; je lui laisse le pathétique... je prétends vous laisser voir l'envers du décor, cela dut-il nuire à votre émotion, car ce n'est pas elle qui m'importe et que je cherche à obtenir: c'est à votre intelligence que je m'adresse. Je me propose, non de vous faire frémir ou pleurer, mais de vous faire réfléchir'. (1) Such an elimination of emotion and of the reality of suffering from the play leaves it as a work of purely intellectual interest, similar to Le Prométhée mal enchaîné in the way in which the characters are used in an unrealistic way to symbolise intellectual ideas. The whole work has an abstract character, and as such appears to be lacking in force - it is a pure jeu d'idées. Watson-Williams writes of this weakness in her thesis: 'L'intérêt de la pièce (Oedipe) se trouve dans "le combat des idées" et...le drame se joue sur un autre plan que celui de la tragédie antique... Gide reconnaît bien que la cause de ce "retrécissement" (2) dans la forme vient de son intention volontaire d'élever le côté intellectuel au-dessus du côté émotif'. (3)

Aesthetically, Oedipe marks no advance, the characters have

(1) J.G., p.1151.

(2) The work ending.

(3) Watson-Williams, op. cit., p.159.

not the element of realism found in the récits, and are used in a purely intellectual manner. The character of Oedipe lacks unity, and as an intellectual symbol is less well developed than Prométhée. Bré writes: 'Qu'Oedipe puisse difficilement symboliser le confort spirituel dans l'aveuglement, voilà ce qui d'abord, semble-t-il, échappé à Gide. Il est plus facile de transformer en symboles de la vie courante les chaînes et le vautour de Prométhée que de réduire au quotidien ce geste d'Oedipe'.

(1) There is then a certain lacuna between the symbolic character that Gide has taken and the significance he attempts to attach to it; this results in an incoherence and disunity in the work which detracts greatly from any aesthetic or symbolic value it may have. When the symbol no longer embodies the values of what is symbolised, the aesthetic fusion and unity is lost. This is to some extent the case with the character of Oedipe.

There is no real sense of suffering or of heroism about Oedipe, instead he is an abstract idea. Gide wrote in the Journal: 'Oedipe ou le triomphe de la morale', (2) and described the play as 'la lutte entre l'individualisme et la soumission à l'autorité religieuse'. (3) Oedipe's action in searching for the past and assuming his guilt and responsibility for what he did in all innocence is described by Gide as 'le sacrifice du meilleur'. (4)

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(1) ibid., p. 320.

(2) ibid., p. 337.

(3) ibid., p. 333.

(4) ibid., p. 333.

To Gide he is a hostile character because, in giving in to Tir-ésias who represents the Christian attitude to sin and responsibility, he renounces his humanism, his belief in man, and abandons his happiness. Gide blames him for this; as Brée writes: 'C'est par défaut, par faiblesse, que l'Oedipe de Gide s'est laissé entraîner vers le désastre'. (1)

Opposed to his Oedipe, Gide presented his readers in 1946 with his version of the character of Theseus, a being sympathetic to Gide who has come to terms with the world and the human condition and does not take his scruples too seriously.

Thésée was Gide's last major fictional work, and virtually the only work that ends on a positive note. Because Thésée is able to subordinate everything to his aim, because he presses onwards in his own strength, not hindered by scruples and remorse, he is able to found Athens and create a society which will honour his memory. In this way he gains satisfaction from his life and can look forward to death with equanimity: 'Derrière moi je laisse la cité d'Athènes. Plus encore que ma femme et mon fils je l'ai chérie. J'ai fait ma ville. Après moi saura l'habiter immortellement la pensée. C'est consentant que j'approche la mort solitaire. J'ai goûté des biens de la terre'. (2)

Louis Martin-Chauffier, in his notes to the oeuvres Complètes, writes that Gide was interested in Greek myths not primarily

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(1) Brée, p. 313.  
(2) Id., p. 1453.

because of 'leur propre valeur mythique', but rather because of 'la matière admirablement "préparée" qu'ils fournissaient à des commentaires ou à des interprétations toutes personnelles'. (1) Gide takes his mythical characters and uses them in the expression of his own ideas. This is what he has done all along in his works taken from mythology. His mythological characters are above all representative of his ideas about and his attitude towards the problem of human existence.

Each character symbolises an attitude. Speaking of Icare, Dédale says: 'Mais le temps même n'existe pas sur un autre plan, le vrai, l'éternel, où chaque geste représentatif, selon sa signification particulière s'inscrit. Icare était, dès avant de naître et reste après sa mort, l'image de l'inquiétude humaine, de la recherche et de l'essor de la poésie, que durant sa courte vie il incarne... Ainsi en advient-il des héros. Leur geste dure et, repris par la poésie, par les arts, devient un continu symbole'. (2) Thus the life of the individual is the symbol of a relationship between man and his human condition. Icare, like André Walter, symbolises anguish. The importance placed on the individual's role as manifesting something eternal and more general shows a continuation into Gide's late works of elements of the early symbolist philosophy expressed in Le Traité du Narcisse. Watson-Williams writes: 'Dans cette dernière oeuvre, nous ren-

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(1) *ibid.*; quoted in Fl., p.1605.

(2) Fl., p.1436.

controns l'idée de jeunesse, celle du rôle humain de la "manifes-  
tation", pleinement développée. Le Traité du Narcisse l'annonce  
dès 1891; Thésée dans les parcs de Dédale, le résume'. (1)

Gide is concerned about life as we know it today, life in the  
everyday sense, and it is for this reason that the feeling of  
destiny and the ideal of heroism are absent from the mythological  
works. The Greek myths are used as a starting point to provide  
Gide with the necessary fictional material, are radically trans-  
formed in their content and significance and are brought into,  
and in their new Gidian form made relevant to our century. It is  
however the modern world of ideas rather than of character and  
psychology to which they belong. If Gide's ideas are humanistic,  
they are still ideas; they are of human importance and concern  
human problems but Gide's work is basically situated in the realm  
of abstract ideas.

The character of Thésée represents an attitude towards life.  
It is a healthy attitude which Gide approves of. Thésée is a  
humanist in the same way that Oedipe was before he recognised his  
guilt. We read in the early part of Thésée: 'Les premières et  
les plus importantes victoires que devait remporter l'homme, c'est  
sur les dieux'. (2) Thésée's humanism justifies his belief in the  
means justifying the end. He is prepared to cheat when it is  
necessary to convince Minos that he is the son of Poseidon, by

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(1) Le Traité du Narcisse, op. cit., p.185.

(2) Thésée, p.1417.

hiding the precious stones in his belt and pretending that the god gave them to him as he dived under the sea. Likewise he feels no great remorse when he is responsible for the deaths of his father and his son. Thésée is not a hero in the classical sense - he is quite simply a man of action who succeeds in what he sets out to do. Dédale compares him with hercules: 'J'ai, dans le temps, passablement fréquenté ton prédécesseur Hercule. Il était bête et l'on ne pouvait rien tirer de lui que d'héroïque. Mais ce que je goûtais en lui, comme je goût en toi, c'est une sorte de dévouement à la tâche, de hardiesse sans recul... Hercule était plus appliqué que toi; plus soucieux aussi de bien faire; triste un peu, surtout après l'exploit accompli. Or ce que j'aime en toi, c'est la joie...'.<sup>(1)</sup> Thésée is clever, without allowing his thoughts to control him, everything is subordinated to a practical end, the accomplishment of the task in hand. Dédale says to him: 'Je te louerai de ne point te laisser embarrasser par la pensée'.<sup>(2)</sup>

The meeting of Thésée and Oedipe provided Gide with the opportunity of contrasting two opposite views of life. Oedipe represents the Christian view of sin and punishment, his suffering and renunciation is an example of asceticism, whereas Thésée is fully involved in the material world: 'Je reste enfant de cette terre'.<sup>(3)</sup> Oedipe is seen as having failed in his task: 'De toutes parts, il avait échoué dans son entreprise'.<sup>(4)</sup> He is described as 'ce

(1) *Id.*, p. 1430-1.

(2) *Id.*, p. 1431.

(3) *Id.*, p. 1453.

(4) *Id.*, p. 1450.

vaincu'. (1) Thésée, on the other hand, is a success because he has not the moral and religious vulnerability of Oedipe. He says, 'j'ai réussi', and 'j'avais triomphé...sur un plan...humain'. (2) To Gide at this stage in his life the human plane is of far greater importance than the hereafter, he has no sympathy with the Christian faith which teaches sacrifice in the present in the hope of a future reward. Thésée says: '(Je) ne m'occupe que du présent'. (3)

Oedipe's Christian attitude towards the material world is curiously similar to the idealistic conception of the role of appearances expressed in Le traité du Narcisse. Explaining why he blinded himself, Oedipe says, 'ce que je voulais crever, ce n'était point tant mes yeux que la toile; que ce décor où je me démenais, ce mensonge à quoi j'avais cessé de croire; pour atteindre la réalité'. (4) He continues to say that now he cannot see the material world, he is better able to see God: 'Et ce monde insensible (je veux dire: impréhensible par nos sens) est, je le sais à présent, le seul vrai'. (5) Although Oedipe approaches the absolute, the truth by a suppression of material appearances, and Narcisse approaches it through appearances, the emphasis lies in a similar direction: a distrust of the physical world in which we live and a search for an absolute beyond it.

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- (1) Pl., p.1450.  
(2) id., pp.1450-1.  
(3) id., p.1429.  
(4) id., p.1421.  
(5) id., p.1422.

This belief in a supernatural absolute, or essence, once held by the young Gide who like his double, André Walter, was steeped in metaphysics, is, in Thésée, criticized and held up, to its detriment, in comparison with the real, worldly ideal of Thésée - to be successful in living. Gide's attitudes have evolved greatly from André Walter to Thésée.

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## CHAPTER 5 : TOWARDS A SYMBOLIC NOVEL

Les Faux Monnayeurs was published in 1926 and although earlier than Oedipe and Thésée represents the final stage in the development of Gide's theory of the symbol. Kriebler writes of this work, according to Gide his only novel, '...sind die Faux Monnayeurs die späte - und freilich modifizierte - Erfüllung des alten Traumes vom symbolistischen Roman'. (1) The novel is an example of Gide's concept of the symbol as composition. Les Faux Monnayeurs is a symbolic work in that it is a unity - a complex unity, not linear but existing across time - and as such cannot be analysed or broken down into separate parts without losing its whole character as a work of art. The whole work is like a word or a poem, it expresses an interrelated complex of feelings and ideas: in this sense it is a symbol itself, just as a word is a symbol on a less complex level.

In his conception of this novel, Gide began with an idea of the form the work was to take and moved from form towards content. Greshoff in his article La Structure des Faux Monnayeurs (2) connects this with a distrust of reality which Gide had retained from his early symbolist days. Gide's attitude, based on this distrust of reality, is to abandon the traditional novel with its content of reality and replace it by a new, purified novel. 'Car ce n'est pas ça (3) qui est réel, mais bien ce qu'il y a "derrière"

(1) Kriebler, p.92.

(2) Neophilologus, 1963, p.169.

(3) i.e. the material world.

les objets matériels, derrière ces maisons, ces meubles, ces habits si amoureuxment décrits par tous les romanciers'. (1)

Edouard in Les Faux Monnayeurs expresses Gide's own ideas about the novel. He says: 'Ce que je veux, c'est présenter d'une part la réalité, présenter d'autre part cet effort pour la styliser'. (2) What Gide wants to produce in the novel is a stylised reality, a reality which has nothing to do with realism in the accepted sense of the word but which is inherent in the stylisation of the work of art. The reality is not based on realistic description but on a complex interrelationship within the action and between the characters of the novel. In keeping with this concept Gide departs not from realism, not from the reality of objects but from an abstract pattern of relationships, a schema, as Brée calls it. She writes: 'La définition du roman esquissé dans "le projet de Préface" est curieuse parce qu'elle fait abstraction de la substance même du roman: "une diversité de points de vue, soumise à la diversité des personnages", quoi de plus abstrait? Ce qui intéresse Gide, c'est un schéma dénudé, complexe déjà, portant sur une structure: les "points de vue" sont relatifs aux personnages qui se présentent, non pour eux-mêmes, mais relativement à ces points de vue... Il (Gide) part d'un schéma technique, d'une espèce d'hypothèse littéraire qu'il s'agit d'essayer'. (3)

(1) Gide, *op. cit.*, p.173.

(2) *ibid.*, p.173.

(3) Brée, p.250.

Les Faux Monnayeurs, because it begins as a structure, a form, because it begins as an aesthetic idea in the mind of the author, approaches closely the realm of the pure novel. (1) Gide wanted to purify the novel of all non-aesthetic elements and his novel begins its life as an aesthetic idea rather than on the level of plot or character. An analogy may be made between Gide's novel and Valéry's pure poetry, which in many instances began in the mind of the poet as an aesthetic idea and to which subject matter was later added. In this way, through the fusion of fond and forme and the exclusion of discursive material, an aesthetic unity is created, a unity which, if the smallest part is removed, is destroyed. This corresponds closely to Gide's concept of the symbol as composition and structure and seems to be the ideal he was aiming at when he wrote Les Faux Monnayeurs. The whole novel, considered as an aesthetic unity, if an extremely complex unity, can be seen as a symbol, but a symbol so complex as to defeat any attempt at systematic and comprehensive analysis.

The récits express various attitudes towards life, and show the results of such attitudes taken to the extreme. However, each récit is not complete in itself, but has to be seen in relation to the others. This is particularly true of L'Immoraliste which has to be seen in relation to its complement, La Porte étroite. The récits lack the complete and total unity of the work of art which Gide was striving towards and had already referred to in his Jour-

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(1) See earlier, p.102.

nal during the last decade of the nineteenth century when he wrote of the importance of composition and its value and identity as a symbol. (1)

Gide makes use in Les Faux Monnayeurs of a similar technique to that used in the récits. There is a similar search for limits, a desire to find the precise, and yet unknown point beyond which man cannot go. Olivier says: 'je crois que la plus grande intelligence est précisément celle qui souffre le plus de ses limites'. (2) Armand expresses his wish to discover the limits of existence: 'Cette ligne de démarcation entre l'être et le non-être, je m'applique à la tester partout. La limite de résistance...' (3) The characters of the novel represent different attitudes towards life, different tendencies, similar in their conception to the extremes which Gide implicitly criticises in the récits.

The theme of untruth and hypocrisy is developed in Les Faux Monnayeurs. Strowsitchou is a counterfeit in the literal sense of the word and corresponds, in his distribution of false money, to Passavant who propagates false moral values. Édouard's novel is a counterfeit of reality, therefore he is, as a novelist, the creator of a false literary world. The Pension Vedel, where the young distributors of the counterfeit money are recruited, is a breeding ground of hypocrisy and falseness, negative values which become apparent in the behaviour of its boarders.

(1) op. cit. 2 of this thesis.

(2) ib., p.112.

(3) ib., p.113.

In this same work there is also a desire to find a value, a search for something which is not false. Bernard says: 'je me suis demandé comment établir une règle, puisque je n'acceptais pas de vivre sans règle, et que cette règle je ne l'acceptais pas d'autrui'. (1) He is searching for authenticity, and is not prepared to accept the false, ready-made rules of life offered by society. Edouard replies to this question by referring to the value of the individual, and to the individual's ability to find his own values: 'la réponse me paraît simple: c'est de trouver cette règle en soi-même; d'avoir pour but le développement de soi'. (2)

In this manner Gide obtains a very much more comprehensive view of the attitudes of his characters than he does in the récits, for he combines in Les Faux Monnayeurs a wider variety and greater combination of attitudes than in any one récit, and thus obviates the necessity of writing a number of separate but complementary works. This marks a development in his literary technique towards greater unity and completeness in the individual work of art. Whereas the reader has in his own mind to bridge the gap between L'Immoraliste and La Porte étroite, in Les Faux Monnayeurs Gide himself creates a synthesis which is an essential part of the unity of the novel.

As has already been shown in this chapter, the unity, or form,

(1) 11., p. 119.  
(2) *Idea*.

is a symbol in the widest sense of that word, the sense which Gide himself postulated earlier in his literary career. Although he may not have succeeded fully, perhaps largely because of the unreality of the characters, Gide has gone far in his attempt at creating a symbolic novel. Brée writes that 'la forme... a une valeur de symbole, et cette valeur de symbole s'attache à tous les personnages et à tous les événements du roman'. (1)

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(1) Brée, 35.

## CONCLUSION

Greshoff writes of Gide that 'ses idées littéraires...sont profondément marquées par sa formation symboliste. Et s'il est vrai qu'il se soit révolté contre le symbolisme et contre cette littérature de serre chaude il n'en reste pas moins l'héritier du symbolisme.' (1)

It is evident from a study of Gide's symbolism that the stamp of the first years of his literary career was very strong and that the effect of the influence of the symbolists on his literary production by no means ceased at the end of the nineteenth century. Gide's dislike for realism and his insistence on manifesting the idea or the essence in the work of art remained with him far beyond the end of his period of direct contact with the symbolist school.

For a time he revolted against the atmosphere of artificiality which he found in the symbolist salons. This period corresponds to a stage of moral and sensual liberation in his life, his journeys to North Africa revealed vast new panoramas and possibilities which may have carried him away on the enthusiasm which their novelty engendered in him. As is natural in such periods of reaction, Gide repudiated much of his past, including the literary techniques he had learned at the hands of the symbolists. The reaction however would appear to have been mainly moral in nature, and although it had repercussions in Gide's aesthetic beliefs (for

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(1) Greshoff, op. cit., p.171.

Gide the moral and the aesthetic world were closely connected) it by no means completely destroyed the influence of the symbolists, which can be traced throughout not only the early works, but the entirety of Gide's work. Indeed the depth of the symbolist influence is shown by the violence of Gide's short-lived reaction against it.

Although he never returned completely to the style of his early works, but rather developed his literary creation to a more mature stage characterised by greater realism and a more universal appeal, Gide retained many of the literary techniques he used in his early works, particularly the use of the image to suggest and evoke. At the same time he was not satisfied with clinging to such a passive concept of the symbol as he had accepted in Le Traité du Narcisse, and developed a more dynamic concept of the symbol in terms of classical generality - the expression of the general through the particular - and of formal unity.

The development of Gide's classical ideal is closely connected with the increased realism which became apparent in his work, firstly with the writing of the two dramas, Saül and Le Roi Candaule, and later, but more significantly, with the creation of the récits, where realism and symbolism are to a large extent combined. The importance given to character is also noteworthy. The characters of the récits are realistic in their presentation, and yet are symbols of wider significance than would be suggested by their realistic context in the work.

The result of Gide's view of the symbol as formal unity is seen in the novel, Les Faux Monnayeurs, which is of interest primarily as an attempt to incorporate the aesthetic idea of unity and purity in the novel.

Gide's concept of the identity of the symbol changed during the course of his life from the passive admiration and desire for imitation as expressed in Le Traité du Narcisse to the more active idea of the artist forging his symbol through the creation of unity in the work of art.

The symbolist school of writing died out, perhaps largely due to its artificiality and detachment from reality. Gide makes this point in his lecture on Verhaeren, published in the Ceuvres Complètes. (1) Similarly Gide's early style, one of symbolist artificiality, became greatly modified in his later works. Gide was always to some extent detached from reality, but perhaps never so much as in his early period. With the development of a greater realistic element, and particularly with the portrayal of characters of increased verisimilitude, Gide's style of writing and whole literary creation became firmer and took on a greater relevance. It is perhaps mainly for his récits, though fragmentary and stylistically imperfect, that Gide will be remembered, certainly they are among the most widely read of his works in the present day. The atmosphere of the récits is very different from that of Le Voyage d'Urien, for example, and on first sight it may appear that

(1) O.C.X.

there remains nothing of the symbolist technique in Gide's more mature works. The récits show a wider view, and greater interest in humanity than do Gide's introspective early works, they are also far closer to reality in their presentation. However, a closer examination shows that many elements of Gide's earlier symbolist technique are used in the construction of the récits and that a well developed structure of image and event with symbolic value lies beneath the surface. The symbol may no longer hold pride of place and may no longer be the centrepiece of the work, it is none the less an important and integral part of the work.

Most of Gide's fictional work has been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by his symbolist début. Despite the changes in his attitude towards the symbol, and his reaction against the symbolist school, Gide's interest in the symbol as a means of artistic expression remained with him.

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