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JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS
as a Theoretical and as a
Practical Critic

by

Herbert Matthew Schueller

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The problem of this dissertation is to determine the nature of the literary criticism of John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) both in theory and practice; the ultimate purpose being to estimate the worth of his critical and aesthetic views and of his writings,--chiefly those on the literature of the English Renaissance.

The dissertation undertakes 1) to systematize Symonds' aesthetic theories and assumptions, and the critical theories and assumptions which stem from them; 2) to examine his works on the English Renaissance as illustrations of the applications of these theories and assumptions; 3) to place his theories in the context of those produced by writers of the 18th century, and more especially by his "Romantic" predecessors and his comtemporaries; and 4) to place his works on the English Renaissance in two contexts: a) that of his own writings on the Italian Renaissance, and b) that of his predecessors in the Romantic movement who wrote on the English Renaissance.

This analysis shows 1) that philosophically Symonds embraced a religious mysticism modified or merely accompanied by "scientific" optimism, the entire complex of basic ideas being based on a personal disposition or temperament less philosophical than literary, aesthetic, and psychological; 2) that his views in part derive from Plato, in part from writers like Hegel, Darwin, and Herbert Spencer who stress the idea of development, but primarily from writers vaguely termed Romantics - Shelley, Goethe (in part), and Whitman; 3) that his tone is emotional and that his ideas are the general ones supported by experience; 4) that some of his views - those concerning the autonomy of art, the hierarchy of the arts, progress, and demoratic art - are not psychological, but depend upon psychological and personal considerations with respect to the artist, the art-work, and the critic; 5) that his practical criticism is primarily psychological and impressionistic; 6) that in addition he advocates "scientific" criticism based in his theory as well as in his practice, on the concept of the milieu and a kind of evolutionism.

The conclusions are that in the light of modern scholarship Symonds' theory and practice must be judged defective; that he is "a paler replica of the Romantic age"; that his historical writing is in the "dramatic" strain of Carlyle; that he aims at the understanding of art-works rather than at the judgment of them, at

sympathy rather than at scientific precision; that his contribution to the study of the English Renaissance is not his provision of newly discovered material as a manner of looking at art against the backdrop of history; that his dependence here is largely on the more thorough of his Romantic predecessors like Hazlitt; that as a practical critic he largely uses the a priori method; and that, for the rest, he is "scientific" only in a way which by 20th century standards is inadequate.

Symonds did not reconstruct history; he repeated others' reconstructions. He was primarily an eclectic dependent on borrowed ideas and methods. His best work is found in his theoretical discussions of art and literature, but even here his observations on sympathetic appreciation and on the psychology of the critic must be regarded as at best a series of elementary essays. He does through his "scientific" criticism stress the effect of "knowledge about" on "judging of;" but in the end his real aim is a kind of transfer of the critic's ego into the imagined past. Not a particularly deep thinker, he presents ideas in outline rather than in full development. He represents the decay of Romantic criticism.

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INTRODUCTION

I The General Neglect of Symonds' Work

In the field of criticism the opinions of the writers who lived during the second half of the nineteenth century have received less scholarly attention than have the opinions of earlier men. This present study is in part concerned with the chief tendencies in English criticism after 1850. The focal point of the essay, however, is the critical writing of John Addington Symonds (1840-1893), a lesser Victorian who wrote after 1860 and whose critical work has not heretofore been thoroughly examined.

Indeed, Symonds' criticism has suffered the fate of all of his work: in recent years practically no interest has been shown in it. Certain publications, especially

those of his letters and papers[1] and of a biographical work by his daughter Margaret[2], have not mitigated scholarly indifference to his literary output. The most recent critical study of him appeared as long ago as 1914, and that work--a psycho-analytical biography by Van Wyck Brooks[3]--has not, so far as I know, been superseded; it is the only full-length study of its subject. I do not know that there exists a single discussion of any special aspect of Symonds' critical writings.

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[1] Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds, collected by Horatio F. Brown (New York, 1923). This book will hereafter be referred to as Letters and Papers.

[2] Margaret Symonds (Mrs. W. W. Vaughan), Out of the Past (New York, 1925).

[3] John Addington Symonds: A Biographical Study (London). In this book Brooks was already using the device later employed to marked effect in The Flowering of New England (1936) and, more recently, New England: Indian Summer (1940)--that of incorporating into his text without benefit of footnote exact words and phrases taken directly from the works of his subject. Brooks overstresses Symonds' failure as a critic, historian, poet, and philosopher; in this way his work is of a piece with his studies in frustration--The Ordeal of Mark Twain (1920) and The Pilgrimage of Henry James (1925). Moreover, the biography is marred by a feeling of Weltschmerz, and by a nostalgic pleasure in contemplating the repression and decay of the end of a great historical period.

The reasons for the neglect which has been shown Symonds' work are not hard to find. He has long been considered a member of the "aesthetic school," and the aesthetic school of English writers, when it is not dismissed with contempt, offers for study more commanding literary personalities, such as Ruskin, Pater, Wilde, and Swinburne. Furthermore, there has always been a suggestion of the decadent or abnormal about Symonds. His enthusiasm for erotic poetry, and his love of adolescent male beauty, whether it appears in literature or in art or in real life, have repelled his readers. He has consequently been charged, as have Wilde and Swinburne, with an unhealthy type of paganism. Also, his style has had no appeal for many readers, varying as it does from a grey flatness to the hectic picturesque. His subject-matter has not helped his reputation, either. His chief concern is with history, a subject difficult for the layman and one which becomes quickly "dated." There is, too, a great <u>variety</u> of subject-matter in the great body of his writing. Like Arthur Symons and the American, James Huneker, he is a critic of the seven arts. Though the appeal of subject-matter, because of its variety, should be great, the number of his readers is small. The specialist too easily finds flaws in his work, and the layman is too easily discouraged by its sheer volume and by the apparent weighty erudition of its author.

II The Variety and Nature of His Work; Its Popularity and Probable Influence

The first characteristic of Symonds' work which even a superficial glance discloses is the variety of his material. Disregarding for the time being his translations[4] and his many articles, most of which were reprinted in collections, we find that Symonds' books fall into four broad groups--poetry, "picturesque" and literary prose essays, biography, and history. The poetry[5] need not detain us. Nor need we discuss the "picturesque" prose[6]-found chiefly in descriptive essays of places which Symonds has visited in Italy and Greece.

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[4] The Sonnets of Michael Angelo (1878); Wine, Women, and Song (1884); The Life of Benvenuto Cellini (1888); The Memoirs of Count Carlo Gozzi (1890). These are the chief publications of this kind; there are shorter items also, but most of them were incorporated into the larger works. I may say at this point that I am fortunate in being able to use Percy L. Babington's Bibliography of the Writings of John Addington Symonds (London, 1925).

[5] Many Moods (1878); New and Old (1880); Animi Figura (1882); Vagabunduli Libellus (1884).

[6] Sketches in Italy and Greece (1874); Sketches and Studies in Italy (1879); Italian Byways (1883); Our Life in the Swiss Highlands, with Margaret Symonds (1892); In the Key of Blue (1893). It is interesting to observe that these books of essays become progressively less "picturesque," though parts of Our Life in the Swiss Highlands retain that quality. The occasional literary essay, however, becomes increasingly more prominent. These changes are not so marked that a genetic study of Symonds seems to be of any special value; nor are these changes much more than those of style or manner.

The biographies are usually of Renaissance figures.[7] The exceptions are the biography of Shelley (1878) and that of Walt Whitman (1893), the latter a biography only in part. The biographical and historical writings, however, are not in many respects distinguishable. Much of the Renaissance in Italy, for instance, is in the nature of a series of biographical sketches.

The historical note predominates in Symonds' work. His first published work was an essay on the Renaissance. This period, its Italian phase and its English,[8] is the subject of most of Symonds' historical writing. His posthumously printed Blank Verse (1895), all of which had been previously published, is also to some degree historical in nature.

Four of Symonds' books do not seem to fall into the same classifications as his other works; there are An Introduction to the Study of Dante (1872), Studies in the Greek Poets (1873-6), A Problem in Greek Ethics (1883), and Essays Speculative and Suggestive (1890). The first two of these books are only superficially different from the works belonging to the four types I have mentioned,

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[7] Sir Philip Sidney (1886); Ben Jonson (1886); Michelangelo (1893); and Boccaccio (published posthumously, 1895).

[8] "The Renaissance," an essay (1863); "The Renaissance of Modern Europe," a lecture (1872); The Renaissance in Italy, 7 Volumes (1875-1886); Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama (1884).

because, like most of the things Symonds wrote, they are historico-critical works devised to arouse an appreciation in the reader for the works of the writers under discussion. A Problem in Greek Ethics concerns homosexuality, and though related to Symonds' other work, treats of a subject unrelated to this thesis. The Essays Speculative and Suggestive, on the other hand, is noteworthy as a depository of Symonds' philosophical and aesthetic ideas.

Despite the historical cast of Symonds' work, his books areusually of a very mixed nature. The Studies in the Greek Poets is a series of appreciative essays only superficially historical as to content. The Renaissance in Italy is historical in nature and intent, but it also contains appreciative essays, short biographies, descriptive passages decidedly "purple" in tone, and even digressions on the nature of criticism.[9] The biographies of necessity have historical background material, but

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[9]Some of these digressions are reprinted in other books, the most noteworthy example of such a practice being the "lifting" of part of Book VII, Chapter XIII, for use in the Essays. Symonds' mind seem to have had a peculiarly static quality, with the result that he is able to transfer entire paragraphs from one book to another. He himself gives us evidence of a certain lack of development in his intellectual life: In 1887, when he was thinking about the Essays, he wrote to Horatio F. Brown: "The odd thing is that one has so little to say upon subjects which have occupied a lifetime. I often find that what I wrote between twenty and twenty-five is no shallower than what I can arrive at now" (Letters and Papers, p. 203). This statement gives further evidence for the inconclusive result which would probably obtain from a strictly genetic study of Symonds' work.

they often become merely rhapsodical accounts of the virtues of the subject or of the beauties of his work. In short, Symonds' books cannot be said to belong to any one type. Rarely is a book entirely history, or biography, or criticism. The student of his historical method, therefore, will have to read considerable material in the field of literary and art criticism, and the student of his criticism will have to read much historical writing.

The question may be raised as to the popularity of Symonds' work in his own day. The existing reviews of his books testify that the latter must have attracted more than a little attention, for these reviews are many, and in the main enthusiastic. That Symonds was popular as a writer seems beyond a doubt: The Dictionary of National Biography, for instance, indicates that commissions thronged upon him.[10] And in June, 1886, he was able to write:

> Literary work, fortunately, does not fail me, and I am always having invitations to do more. Fancy being asked to produce a new translation of "Cellini's Autobiography" for an illustrated edition de luxe!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I have promised to do selections and introductions to Webster, Tourneur, and Heywood for a series started by Havelock Ellis. He also wants me to write a short general introduction on the

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[10] LDV, LV, p. 274

> Elizabethan Drama. Sometimes my hand gets tired with writing, and English words fail me.[11]

Similarly, In January, 1879, he wrote to his sister:

> I have a great deal to be grateful for. When I review the last eight years--say from Feb., 1871, when our father died--they seem to have been crowded with more than I ever expected from my chosen line of work. I published my first book in September, 1872, and am now printing my twelfth (a collection of 'Italian Studies and Translations'). One of my books is out of print (the 'Dante') and will not be republished. One (the 'Greek Poets,' 1st series) has had a second edition. Of another ('Sketches in Italy') I am preparing now a second edition. Of yet another ('Fine Arts in Italy') I am now revising the Italian translation. Each new review of my poems shows a steady advance in the popular favour given to them, and encourages me to yet another venture in verse. All this has happened rapidly--roughly speaking in less than seven years.[12]

I may add that the Studies of the Greek Poets made such an impression upon readers that by 1925 Margaret Symonds was able to record that the book had gone into three editions and had been twice reprinted.[13]

About Symonds' actual influence it is more difficult to speak. To make definite statements about influence is, of course, hazardous at best, and certainly one cannot be confident in making such statements about a writer like Symonds, whose work is in large part popular in tone. His greatest influence, it is safe to say, was exerted by the

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[11] Letters and Papers, p. 192.

[12] Margaret Symonds, op. cit., p. 20.

[13] Ibid., p. 20, note.

Renaissance in Italy, in which, more thoroughly than in any English work of its time, Italian art and literature were discussed. In the world of scholarship it appears that Symonds has a certain, though perhaps an insecure, position. His scholarship could no doubt have been thorough, and he might have contributed to the sum of scholarly discovery. It is worthy of note that A. W. Ward, whose History of English Dramatic Literature (1875) was one of Symonds' sources in his Elizabethan studies, saw fit in the second edition of his book (1899) to give recognition to Symonds' work on the English drama. Schelling,[14] too, has mentioned such contributions to the history of English Renaissance drama as he feels that Symonds has made. On the whole, however, Symonds' influence has been in the direction of encouraging popular appreciation of works of art and literature rather than in that of shaping scholarly thought.

III Symonds' Reading

The mixed nature of his work that I have pointed out may have been caused by the variety of his interests and the breadth of his reading. If there ever was a bookish man, Symonds was one. He is an eclectic of the

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[14]Felix E. Schelling, Elizabethan Drama: 1558-1642 (Boston and New York, 1908).

most extreme type--a literary eclectic. Thus arises the impression that one of his greatest weaknesses was what Frederic Harrison called the "purely literary aspect" of his work.[15] He himself felt that his preparation for criticism was incomplete because his training was too entirely literary.[16] And, indeed, there seems to be much justification for this view. He seems to have read everything, but his attention was centered on the Greek and Roman classics, the Elizabethan dramatists, the English and German Romantics, and his contemporary Victorians.

Symonds' sister, Mrs. T. H. Green, testifies that in 1853, when he was thirteen and on his way to Harrow, he was precocious in booklearning.[17] And so he seems to have been. He also appears to have had a fairly wide knowledge of art and artists. He was surprized, for instance, that one of his schoolmates did not know the works of Chaucer, Cowley, Chatterton, Southey, Hood or Cervantes, and that the boy did not know the works, though he knew

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[15] "John Addington Symonds," Nineteenth Century, XXXIX (June, 1896), p. 992.

[16] Horatio F. Brown, John Addington Symonds: A Biography Compiled from his Papers and Correspondence, First Edition, 1895. The edition which I use is the second (London, 1903). For the reference see pp. 127-8. This biography is made up of selections from Symonds' diaries, his notebooks, an autobiography, a miscellaneous collection of papers and letters, his entire correspondence with Horatio F. Brown. The latter comments on the material and connects with transitional remarks the autobiographical passages from the various sources I have mentioned. There is in reality more autobiography than biography in this work.

[17] Margaret Symonds, op. cit., pp. 22-3.

the names, of Poussin, Dürer, Vandyck, Salvator Rosa, Dryden, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Claude Lorraine, and Wordsworth.[18] Surely an imposing list of writers and artists for a boy of thirteen or fourteen to be acquainted with.

The person immediately responsible for Symonds' knowledge of books and works of art was his father, always one of the profound influences of his life. A minor figure of the Victorian age, Dr. John Addington Symonds (1807-1871) was a great lover of the classics. He rose at six every morning to study Greek and Latin literature and modern poetry or to write his own poems, translations, essays, and lectures, before he began his day as a medical practitioner.[19] His translations are many, and are frequently, I am sure, attributed to his son. John Addington Symonds, _père,_ always carefully added the title "M.D." to his signature, and it is by that appellation that his work may be recognized. He was greatly interested in art, and in 1857 he published a treatise on aesthetics called _The Principles of Beauty,_[20] a work which

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[18] _Ibid._, p. 32.

[19] _Ibid._, p. 9.

[20] London, 1857. "The following brief Treatise originated in a Lecture which the author delivered at the annual meeting of the Canynge Society,--a society formed for the purpose of promoting the restoration of the beautiful Church of St. Mary, Redcliffe, Bristol" (Preface, p. xi).

is surprizingly more "scientific" in method, though by no means more valuable, than his son's theoretical writings on art.

Dr. John Addington Symonds kept the members of his house supplied with books of every kind, and at an early age the son became fond of them. He read Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" before he was ten years old. "It gave form" he said in later years, "form, ideality, and beauty to his visions."[21] Books of ballads, of murder stories, books on scientific and semi-scientific sources worked potently and, he thought, injuriously on his brain. But he found himself naturally drawn to literature.[22]

He began learning Latin with his grandfather some time before he was five years old, and when he was eight, he was given into the hands of a tutor, The Reverend Mr. William Knight, who remained with him until he went to Harrow, and who introduced him to the Greek and Latin classics.[23] This man introduced Symonds to the Aeneid, to Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses,[24] to Horace's Odes, and to a large part of the Iliad. And, as I have indicated, Symonds was acquainted with many of the English poets before he left home.

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[21]Brown, op. cit., p. 10

[22]Ibid., pp. 10-11

[23]Ibid., p. 31

[24]Ibid., Surely a curious book to sandwich in among the classics. Symonds testifies that a chapter of this book "opened dim and shadowy vistas for dreaming thoughts."

In later years Symonds maintained that he was intellectually far in advance of his fellows at Harrow.[25] There he made a friend of his house-tutor and read with him Shelley, Tennyson, and Keats.[26] Near the close of his period at Harrow--he could not have been more than seventeen--he read Cary's Plato--an experience to which he always attached the highest importance. Of the Phaedrus and the Symposium, he says,

> in the 'Myth of the Soul," I discovered the revelation I had been waiting for, the consecration of a long-cherished idealism. It was just as though the voice of my own soul spoke to me through Plato . . . .[27]

Plato quickened Symonds' intellect. He began to devour Greek literature and to study the examples of Greek plastic art in his father's library. Plato came first in his thoughts; but he read Aristophanes, Plutarch, Theognis and the Anthology, Pindar, and Anacreon. At the same time he was reading such pieces of literature as the Confessions of St. Augustine.[28]

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[25] Ibid., p. 48

[26] Ibid., p. 52

[27] Ibid., p. 63. Cary's Plato was a "crib" which Symonds had bought for use in the Sixth Form.

[28] Ibid., pp. 63-5.

During the summer before he went to Oxford, Symonds went on the first of those frequent tours, either in England or on the Continent, during which he read so many books and examined so many works of art. On one of these journeys he read, according to his own account, Shakespeare, Spinoza, and Hegel.[29]

From 1858-to 1862 Symonds was at Oxford--Balliol was his college--as a student and for several short periods thereafter as a university fellow. When he entered the university, two forces were vying for mastery among Oxford intellectuals--rationalism and Catholicism. The rationalist campwas divided into two groups--the Comtists and the Hegelians.[30] With the former group Symonds was familiar, but to the latter group he belonged. His special friends were Thomas Hill Green and Benjamin Jowett.[31]Knickerbocker

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[29]Margaret Symonds, op. cit., p. 44.

[30]William S. Knickerbocker, Creative Oxford (Syracuse, New York, 1925), pp. 185-7.

[31]Green married his sister Charlotte, and Jowett was his tutor. There is no doubt but that Symonds benefited by having an enormous number of acquaintances, a list of whom reads like a catalog of the important literary men of Victorian England. In the Letters and Papers these are mentioned: Tennyson, Gladstone, Holman Hunt, Woolner (the sculptor), Frank Palgrave, Henry Sidgwick, Horatio F. Brown, Courthope, Rossetti, Norton of the North American Review, Frederic W. H. Myers, Conington (whose work he edited), Roden Noel (whose poetry he publicized), Swinburne, T. H. Green, Leslie Stephen, R. L. Stevenson, Henry James, Rider Haggard, Frank Harris, Gosse, and others. Frederick Harrison, W. B. Yeats, and Roger Fry may also be added to this list of men whom he knew. He was, of course, not

makes the point that the Oxford of Victoria's day was "remarkably similar to the [scene of] Renaissance Italy when the winter of dogma thawed. Oxonians like Symonds and Pater were keenly aware of the resemblance.[32]

Symonds' reading at Oxford must have been enormous, though there is little evidence in his autobiographical writings as to what it included. But the training at Oxford included an intensive study of the classics;[33] he studied Plato with Jowett and came under the influence of Arnold, who was at Oxford as Professor of Poetry when Symonds was a student there and who recommended Symonds for the Newdigate Prize (1860) for an English poem on the Escorial.[34] There is frequent reference in his autobiography to Ruskin, and I assume that he read Ruskin's work, though he could not have known him at Oxford.[35] If he did not read

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[31]footnote continued
intimately acquainted with all of these, but he knew them when he was in England or he entertained many of them at his home at Davos, Switzerland. A recent article which describes in a rather journalistic fashion the friendships of Symonds, and which, so far as I can see, is a summary of material in the Letters and Papers and in the life by Brown, is the anonymous, "J. A. Symonds (1840-1893)--The Historian of the Renaissance--A garland of Victorian Friendships," Times Literary Supplement (London), No. 2018 (October 5, 1940), pp. 506 and 510.

[32]Op. cit., p. 192.

[33]Ibid., p. 185.

[34]Brown, op. cit., p. 78.

[35]Ruskin matriculated at Oxford in 1836 and won the Newdigate Prize in 1839; he came back as Slade Professor in 1870. By 1870 Symonds had, of course, been gone for some years.

Comte--and he surely must have done so--he knew Comte's ideas, as he must have known the ideas of Newman, Carlyle, and Mill as well, for, according to Knickerbocker, these writers, with Aristotle, Comte, and Hegel, each had his own school or coterie at Oxford.[36] Symonds probably read the famous Essays and Reviews (1861), which was a series of articles (of which Jowett wrote one) attacking conventional religious ideas. At any rate, he discussed the book with his friends,[37] as he did the work of De Quincey, "without some allusion to whom," he says, "I hardly remember any intellectual Oxford breakfast go off. . . ."[38] When he first read Goethe, I do not know, but in 1861 he was reading Faust, as well as Lewes' Life of Goethe, and he was given as presents Goethe's Autobiography and the complete works of De Quincey.[39]

Symonds read many other writers besides those I have mentioned. I need name only Balzac, George Sand, Whitman, Landor, Heine, Arthur Hugh Clough (whose poems and prose he edited, 1869), Tennyson, Browning, Kingsley, Edward C. Lefroy (whose name he rescued from oblivion by means of a penetrating critical estimate), Stendhal, to list

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[36]Knickerbocker, op. cit., p. 189.

[37]Brown, op. cit., pp. 87, 130, and 310.

[38]Ibid., p. 87.

[39]Ibid., p. 116

only a few--all are noticed in his published writings, or are given special treatment. The Greek poets, Latin writers, English and Italian Renaissance writers, critics and historians of the literary periods he described--all come within his field of vision. And Symonds' eclecticism is apparent in his works, for he is not loath to indicate to what writers he is indebted for his ideas.

IV Estimates of Symonds' Works

But the variety of his subject matter and the breadth of his reading do not always insure him applause, and the existing estimates of his work--most of which are written by his contemporaries--are of an extremely mixed nature.

He gets only grudging praise, for instance, from the literary historians. Saintsbury calls him "a thorough dilletante"; comments on "the extreme polity and efflorescence of his style"; says that he was "one of the most characteristic and copious members of the rather foolishly named 'aesthetic' school of the last third of the [nineteenth] century"; maintains that but for his redundance of style and thought he would hold a higher place than he does.[40] Hugh Walker, like other commentators, says that Symonds' Renaissance in Italy is one-sided, designed, as it is, to

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[40]George Saintsbury, A History of Nineteenth Century Literature (New York, 1898), pp. 401-2.

to emphasize literature and art. Symonds' work, Walker says, is "too purely aesthetic," and suffers from "a certain lightness in the intellectual foundations."[41]

Oliver Elton does not dismiss Symonds' work in the cavalier fashion of Saintsbury and Walker. He finds that Symonds' writing "has suffered from fatal contrast of its looser texture with the closer thinking and surer handiwork of Pater";[42] but he thinks that Symonds was a genuine historian, a good translator of poetry, a poet in his own right, and that he gives "his own secret" to the world without hiding it, as Pater does. Elton thinks that the fault of his Greek studies lies in his "giving to the Greeks the author's own code, at once formal and feverish, of beauty-worship";[43] but that his study of Bruno compares well with Pater's, while his study of Tasso is not inferior.[44]

Although the Studies of the Greek Poets received general acclaim, one anonymous writer in the London Quarterly Review said some harsh things about it:

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[41] The Literature of the Victorian Era (Cambridge, 1913), p. 978.

[42] A Survey of English Literature: 1830-1880, 2 Vols. (London, 1927), I, p. 293.

[43] Ibid., p. 293.

[44] Ibid., pp. 293-4.

> . . . . by an error precisely resembling Winckelmann's absurd overestimate of Raphael Mengs, a critic of such natural good sense and sound judgment as Mr. Symonds, whose book we have classed with Mr. Pater's The Renaissance at the head of our article, has been induced to assert that an execrable American scribbler, one Walt Whitman, is the true representative of Greek life in the nineteenth century.[45]

The reviewer goes on to deplore the rejection by critics of natural standards in favor of private perceptions derived from books--a practice which he thinks Symonds' book in part illustrates.

Most critics agree that Symonds' verse is inferior, and he himself realized that he was not strong as a creative writer. A reviewer in the Chicago Dial, a magazine which, on the whole, seems to have been more just to him and perhaps more discriminating than most English periodicals, sums up the case very well:

> . . . . Mr. Symonds as an author is better in prose than in verse. It scarcely need be suggested to those familiar with his admirable literary faculty, that the defects of his poetry are mainly on the negative side. . . . In New and Old some of the sonnets especially are models of structural propriety; and most of the pieces are in form dangerously near that 'dead perfection' which, without the vivifying influence of individual spirit, is as little admirable in poetry as Tennyson depicted it in the human face. However faultless in form and finish, Mr. Symonds' pieces lack that 'ane spark o' nature's fire' without which all such productions must be, not poetry, but at best only elegant and finished verses.[46]

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[45] London Quarterly Review, American Edition, CCLXXIV (October, 1874), p. 218.

[46] The Dial (Chicago), I (October, 1880), p. 116.

In the same magazine a few months earlier, James MacAlister had reviewed one of those books of travel sketches which made Symonds a popular writer. MacAlister attributes to him a powerful and brilliant imagination, a many-sided culture, wide sympathies, learning, exact erudition; he calls Symonds "a scholar of quite unusual grasp of intellect," one who can form "comprehensive generalizations." His critical work, we are told, is of the highest order and the Greek Poets among the best critical work of the century. MacAlister thinks that Symonds has only one superior as a writer on art in the English language: Namely, Ruskin. Further comments on his striking style, his impassioned language, and his abilities as a highly cultivated scholar close an article somewhat representative of the uncritical estimates which, in moments of enthusiasm, certain nineteenth century reviewers were wont to make of Symonds' less scholarly work.[47]

The Renaissance in Italy, as one would suppose, was more thoroughly reviewed than any other of his books. Walter Pater calls it a remarkable volume. He finds in it "highly-coloured pieces of humanity," and he says that the work "represents a brilliant picture of its subject, of the movements of these energetic personalities, the

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[47]"Symonds' Sketches and Studies in Southern Europe," The Dial (Chicago), I (June, 1880), pp. 25-7.

magnificent restlessness and changefulness of their lives, their immense cynicism." But Pater points out that the book lacks reserve.[48]

A reviewer for the New York Critic makes, I think, a truer estimate of Symonds' Renaissance. This man points out that in the--then--new school of English learning there was a tendency to generalize, with the result that whole works seem superficial and fit only for those who do not know the subject. It is pointed out that Symonds' British Protestantism leads him to giving accounts which are too detailed of the vices of the age, and that he does not understand the Italian character and is too ready to be severe in judging Italian rulers. Though the reviewer does not deprecate Symonds' zeal for morality, he does not commend it; and though he admits that the clearness in conception of Symonds' view of the Revival of Learning makes up for a lack of details, he declares the book to be a fairly good guide and primer--"to be used with care as an introduction to a deeper study. . . ."[49]

The anonymous writer of a later article in the same magazine says that the book is not philosophical and impartial enough, especially on religious matters, and that it is of greater value as a history of art and literature

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[48]"Symonds' Renaissance in Italy," Academy, VIII, (July 31, 1875), pp. 105-6.

[49]The Critic, II (January 28, 1882), pp. 21-2.

than as a history of the period which it discusses. The reviewer comments on the pictorial character of Symonds' descriptions, and suggests that the book is not inferior as picture-writing to Carlyle's French Revolution. Symonds is best, we learn, as a writer of monographs, and his style is not free from barbarisms. The essay on Tasso which Oliver Elton years later found to be a good piece of work, this reviewer finds lacking in insight and sympathy.[50] Apparently he would not agree with Melville B. Anderson, who called Symonds' Renaissance in Italy "one of the most noteworthy of the historical undertakings of our time."[51]

Thus, these works and the Elizabethan studies were variously received, and it would seem that in general writers adopt one extreme position or another: either they dislike Symonds' style and deplore his superficiality, or they think his style is beautiful and his scholarship sound. Certain writers are repelled by what they call his preoccupation with aesthetics, but those who do not make an issue of this side of Symonds' work speak of his accomplishment with respect.

W. S. Lilly, for instance, comments on "the soundness of his scholarship, the breadth of his culture, the opulence

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[50] The Critic, VIII, n.s. (July 16, 1867), pp. 26-7.

[51] "The Death of the Renaissance," Dial (Chicago), VIII (August, 1887), p. 82.

of his imagination, the fascination of his style."[52] William Watson gives him a place in criticism between men like Walter Pater and Sir Leslie Stephen.[53] Richard Le Gallienne classifies him as an artist rather than as a "mere" scholar, and says that his "insatiable curiosity to experience the best that has been thought and done in the world" is that of the artist rather than that of the scholar.[54] William Sharp speaks of the charm of his personality, of his warm heart, his eager brain, his exquisite sensibility.[55] An anonymous writer in the Athenaeum comments on Symonds' great knowledge, his generous aspirations, his keen perceptions; deplores his passion for novelty, "which occasionally obscured his judgment"; and says that Symonds always wanted to be in the advance guard of criticism.[56] Most of these writers agree on the charm of Symonds' personality and recognize in him a sincere effort to achieve artistic perfection.[57]

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[52] "Mr. Symonds' Essays Speculative and Suggestive," Nineteenth Century, XXVIII (1890), pp. 244 ff.

[53] "Symonds' Essays Speculative and Suggestive," Academy, XXXVIII (August 30, 1890), p. 167.

[54] "In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays by John Addington Symonds," Academy, XLIII (March 11, 1893), p. 213.

[55] "John Addington Symonds," Academy, XLVII (Feb. 2, 1895), p. 95.

[56] "John Addington Symonds," Athenaeum, No. 3417 (April 22, 1893), p. 506.

[57] See especially H. D. Traill, "The Life of Mr. J. A. Symonds," Nineteenth Century, XXXVII (1895), p. 342.

The last five or six estimates which I have mentioned are late ones, some of them occasioned by Symonds' death. Most of them are favorable and respectful in tone. But an anonymous writer in the Spectator takes a less charitable stand and dispenses with praise:

> We have no sympathy with his views, which were frankly humanist, and do not rank him high as a thinker, but he had great knowledge, a delight in his subject, and a style of perfect lucidity. He understood the men of the epoch [of the Renaissance], too, though he seems to us to tolerate scoundrels far too gladly. Still, he compelled his readers to think; and his books, to those who had read others on the same subject, are nutritive.[58]

A writer in the Quarterly Review who signs himself "Art" is equally impatient with Symonds. He is speaking about the autobiographical passages in the biography by Brown:

> Talk we find of human service; abstract worship of Law; hymns recommending the 'cosmic enthusiasm'. But a rule of conduct, or grounds of hope--these Symonds cannot give; and he makes known his poverty with a frankness which cuts to the heart, as we read him.[59]

And in speaking of Symonds' descriptions of his experiences at Oxford, "Art" says:

> It is the year 1862; but in a rich and amusing pictures which he draws of his undergraduate flutterings, we see the dawn of that movement wherein Mediaevalism, the Renaissance, Mr. Ruskin, Japanese ware, old blue china, and the French symbolists, were to play their several parts.[60]

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[58] Spectator, LXX (April 29, 1893), p. 559.

[59] "Latter Day Pagans," Quarterly Review, CLXXXII (July, 1895), p. 33.

[60] Ibid., p. 36

"Art" dismisses Symonds with the epithet, "A tired Virtuoso."[61]

Estimates of Symonds which are eminently more fair and critical than those I have already mentioned are made by an anonymous writer in the Saturday Review, by Arthur Symons, and by Maurice Hewlett.

The writer in the Saturday Review classifies Symonds not as a poet-historian, or critic, but as a man of letters. He speaks of the "gusto which [Symonds] derived from books and life," of his "real enthusiasm for beauty and taste that on certain sides was delicate and chastened," of his membership in the group of men who followed the pre-Raphaelites and who started from their standpoint. This writer finds Symonds to be not the most learned, of this group of men, nor the most original and powerful, but the most fertile and perhaps "the one who had introduced the humaner parts of culture to the widest audience." Sobriety is wanting in Symonds, we are told, and his taste is not always what it should be, for in his works there are marks of haste, of "hectic excess, of perverse crotchet in the

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[61] Ibid., p. 44. Since writing the preceding paragraph, I have discovered that this writer is William Barry, D.D., in whose Heralds of Revolt: Studies in Modern Literature and Dogma (London, 1904) "Latter-Day Pagans" is reprinted (pp. 309-42). Pierre Loti, Nietzsche, Pater and others are treated in this book. Somehow, in its emphasis on degeneracy, this work resembles Max Nordau's Degeneration, but its criteria for judgment are religious, not psychological.

sentiment." But he "aimed at the highest things and came a little short." This writer in the Saturday Review sees Symonds as a critic who tried to bring the greatest of men and the crowd together, and he finds that Symonds' purpose in writing was to increase knowledge and to widen sympathy.[62]

Arthur Symons judges Symonds on the basis of personality. He calls Symonds "a blithe companion," speaks of his "real suffering and sympathetic individuality,"[63] and of his habit of "painfully minute introspection."[64] He does not concede Symonds to be either a scholar or an artist,[65] but designates his real fascination to be that of personality, vivid, human, "acutely in touch with humanity."[66] Symons thinks that Symonds' work was in part an escape from himself[67]--an idea shared also by W. L. Wendell, who says that Symonds was "dead to the world of contemporary action" and lived in the past.[68]

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[62] Saturday Review, LXXV (April 29, 1893), pp. 456-7.

[63] Arthur Symons, Studies in Two Literatures (London, 1897), p. 249.

[64] Ibid., p. 250.

[65] Ibid., p. 254.

[66] Ibid., pp. 254-5.

[67] Ibid., p. 256. This statement, according to L. J. Bragman, is true also of Symons himself, whose whole life was an escape ("The Case of Arthur Symons--the Psychopathology of a Man of Letters," British Journal of Psychology, XII [March, 1933], p. 346).

[68] Book Buyer, XXII (1901), p. 42.

The most recent brief estimate of Symonds is found in the short review by Maurice Hewlett of his Letters and Papers. Hewlett thinks that he "trusted too much to his faculty of emotional expression and neglected that of logical exposition in which he was much stronger." Hewlett, like Symons and others, mentions Symonds' capacity for sympathy and appreciation, and he is able to think of Symonds with a certain understanding:

> His books [we learn] were serious attempts to convey information by appreciation and criticism. He was a scholar and a teacher, and pursued each career with passion. He was a man who could be greatly loved, though he thought that he was not. But there it was: he tormented himself; and I doubt that anything but the impossible could have consoled him.[69]

Such are the most important and the most penetrating estimates of Symonds, general in nature as the majority of them are.[70] But it is with Symonds as a critic that this thesis is concerned, and detailed pronouncements on that subject are few.

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[69] London Mercury, VII (April, 1923), pp. 665-6.

[70] It is worth noticing that even among those who knew Symonds personally or who entertained an interest in his favorite subjects, there was only qualified admiration for his writings. Stevenson did not care for his work (ibid., p. 666) though he seems to have been a rather close friend to him: he described Symonds in the character of Opalstein in his "Talk and Talkers" (Memories and Portraits, 1887). On the other hand, Symonds seems to have entertained only a temperate admiration for Stevenson: "I have apprehensions about his power of intellectual last," Symonds wrote to Brown. "The more I see of him, the less I find of solid mental stuff" (Letters and Papers, p. 240).

Saintsbury's dictum, confined to one paragraph in his history of criticism, is composed of comments on Symonds' verbosity, of a few laudatory remarks about the literary parts of the Renaissance in Italy, of the observation that in his Blank Verse he seems guilty of critical antinomianism. More than this Saintsbury does not say, and his long paragraph is characterized by wordiness, by an apparent superficiality, and by a learned breeziness. As a matter of fact, he does not mention Symonds' critical work.[71]

Van Wyck Brooks' volume, however, though it is aimed at a psychological study of personality, contains more acute observations on Symonds' criticism than does any other book I have found. Though many of Brooks' observations are not original with him, but come, rather, from the autobiographical sections of Brown's biography, he is able in part to place Symonds in his literary milieu. For one thing, he makes the remark that Symonds is the closest English equivalent to Amiel, though I must hasten to add that this conclusion is reached on the evidence of the personality which emerges from the Brown biography, and

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[70]footnote continued
Pater is said to have talked about "poor Symonds" and not to have cared about his writing though its subject-matter was so similar to his own. (Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater, 2 Vols. [New York and London, 1907], II, p. 115). But in a letter, again to Brown, Symonds wrote: "Pater wrote me a very sympathetic letter about my 'Renaissance' and my poem on the 'Corpse of Julia'. It pleased me" (Letters and Papers, p. 73).

[71]George Saintsbury, A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe, 3 Vols. (New York, 1904), III, pp. 551-2.

that it does not seem to apply to the writer of many voluminous works, or to the vigorous and physically active person which Symonds seems actually to have been. Brooks thinks that Symonds was always in danger of dilettantism, and he is right. He also points out a fact, which Symonds himself recognizes, that the latter had difficulty with an inability to decide between subjectivity and objectivity.[72] The tendency towards objectivity (or towards criticism and scholarship), Brooks says, was confirmed by Jowett, and yet

> His scholarship is never quite of the orthodox kind. It is restless scholarship, seeking always to do what only poetry can do, to become poetry; scholarship not merely as humanism but as mysticism.[73]

His work, Brooks finds, is never either literature of knowledge or literature of power, but a mixture of both; and of his criticism, we learn, Shakspere's Predecessors is the best example of his critical philosophy as it is described in his Essays Speculative and Suggestive.[74]

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[72]Brooks, op. cit., p. 136; see also Brown, op. cit., p. 147.

[73]Brooks, op. cit., p. 97.

[74]Ibid., p. 170.

V The Subject

To turn now to the specific subject which I have undertaken to discuss: This study began as a paper in a seminar on nineteenth century English criticism. In that paper I examined Symonds' theories of art and criticism, though I could not, of course, give them the intensive treatment they receive here. For some time afterwards, however, I left the theories of art and literature and read far afield in Symonds' work, especially in the Renaissance in Italy, in the Studies of the Greek Poets, and in the writings on English Renaissance literature.

I felt at the very beginning that Symonds' practical criticism left a peculiar effect, that it seemed to fall between the two stools of impressionistic criticism and history. I was not therefore more attracted to it: that is, I was no more convinced of its intrinsic value; but my curiosity was aroused. With reference to the studies of English Renaissance literature, for instance, I asked myself, What kind of writing is this, the content of which is strongly reminiscent of the work of A. W. von Schlegel, Lamb, Coleridge, and Hazlitt, and which is yet so far inferior to theirs? How, I further asked myself, could one explain those elements in such a work as Shakspere's Predecessors which indicate a departure from the practice of the earlier men, whom Symonds could conceivably

be expected to imitate, since he had apparently been impressed by their work and since he had undoubtedly absorbed certain ideas from them? I cannot say that I have finally answered these questions, but I have, I think, made strides in the direction of doing so.

One of my early discoveries in reading Symonds' practical criticism was that such examples of theory as I found in it pointed directly back to the material which I had used in my seminar paper. I therefore reexamined Symonds' theories of art and criticism and added new material to that which I had collected.

The problem which I had to solve then was clear: I was to elucidate Symonds' theoretical and practical criticism, and in order to effect a fuller explication of Symonds' ideas and to add enrichment to the material I had collected, I was to note the opinions of his predecessors and contemporaries and to show Symonds' relationship to them. But in working out my problem I found a certain duality in Symonds' thought and practice. Just as I had found that Symonds' practical criticism revolved between impressionism and historical writing, so I discovered that his criticism as a whole--theoretical as well as practical--fell into two parts, the one part apparently a reflection of the critical theory and practice of the writers of the Romantic period in literature, and the other a rather self-conscious attempt

to define and to realize an objective or "scientific" criticism, much in the manner of his contemporaries and of more recent writers.

But there were several subordinate issues which made themselves felt either at the very beginning of my study or as my work proceeded. I discovered, for instance, that Symonds' philosophical view seemed closely related to the ideas of certain literary men of the Romantic movement. Then, too, I found that the greatest part of his theory of art belonged to the psychological tradition in criticism which had reached its highest point early in the nineteenth century in the work of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and others. It became clear that Symonds' idea of Romantic criticism was thoroughly inaccurate, but that his own criticism, in that it was impressionistic, conformed to what he thought was the Romantic pattern. It became apparent, too, after a time, that Symonds' theory of criticism was in aim not different from that of his much greater predecessors, even though he made more than they of the scientific method, which he recommends as the contribution of the nineteenth century to criticism. Careful study revealed that Symonds' theories, especially the "scientific" ones, had a certain validity and left an impression of fundamental soundness which his practical criticism, whether impressionistic or historical, vitiated. I came to the conclusion, finally, that Symonds' ideal in

practical criticism was really historical criticism, or scholarship, and neither impressionism nor history *per se*. I reached this conclusion because Symonds himself often repudiated his own impressionistic critical devices and because his purpose was not to write history, but to increase the appreciation of art and literature through a kind of historical analysis.

VI The Material

My chief problem and its attendant issues having been formulated, my next problem was one of selection. The material to be considered in a study of Symonds is, as I have suggested, very extensive, and the two types of material with which I was to deal were both practical and theoretical. The theoretical criticism, however, presented no difficulty; it was to be found in such books as the *Letters and Papers*, in the biography by Brown, in such works as *In the Key of Blue*, and especially in the *Essays Speculative and Suggestive*, which is a virtual summary of Symonds' ideas.

Symonds' theoretical criticism was first brought to a state of completeness in 1890. The book in which it appeared is, then, a summary of the principles upon which his critical practice of the preceding thirty years was based. He himself thought that in some ways the *Essays* was the most important book he had prepared for publication.[75]

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[75] *Letters and Papers*, p. 232.

It contains, it is true, his most serious thoughts. And these thoughts are often couched in words which suggest a creed. Not once, for instance, but innumerable times does he declare that content in art concerns the "permanent relations" of men. Therefore the study of Symonds does not present problems which call for the juxtaposing of statements against one another for the purpose of indicating fundamental inconsistencies. There is some divergence between his theory and practice, as one might expect, but his ideas do not change appreciably from 1860 to 1890.[76]

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[76]This fact is best illustrated by a reference to Symonds' interpretation of the Renaissance (a subject I shall consider in detail later). He expressed the same ideas about it in 1893, the year of his death, as he did in 1863, when he first began writing. The 1893 work is an article called "The New Spirit" (Fortnightly Review, LIII [March, 1893], pp. 427-44); the 1863 work is the Oxford Chancellor's Prize essay called "The Renaissance." In the 1893 work (I have it reprinted in John Addington Symonds, Last and First [New York, 1919]) he quotes page 8 of the 1863 essay, and adds: "I am not able after thirty years of searching, to yield a better account of the aetiology of the Renaissance than I did then" (pp. 16-17). The passage which he quotes is substantially the same as one in The Renaissance in Italy, "The Age of Despots" (Renaissance in Italy, complete in 2 Vols. [New York, n.d.], pp. 3-5). This consistency of thought is everywhere apparent in Symonds. The charitable reader will accept this consistency as a virtue; the less charitable one may possibly consider it an evidence of an incapacity for mental development.

If Symonds' theoretical criticism presented no problems of selection, his practical criticism did. Was I to discuss the critical portions of the Renaissance in Italy, all of the material in the Studies of the Greek Poets, and all of the material on English Renaissance literature as well? It may be said, of course, that a writer's practical criticism should be known only through a reference to all of his work. For the sake of expediency, however, I decided to confine myself for the most part for illustrative material to the writings on English Renaissance literature, though I would make reference occasionally to examples of practical criticism which fall outside this field and which seemed at times to be especially apropos. There were several reasons for concentrating on the studies in English Renaissance literature. For one thing, most of these studies had not been collected, and were generally inaccessible.[77] Furthermore,

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[77]It was Symonds' unfortunate habit to "through off" short works which were later incorporated into longer ones. Parts of the Renaissance in Italy, for instance, were first published as articles in The Cornhill Magazine, in The Westminster Review, and in The Fortnightly Review. This practice was adopted for parts of Symonds' other long works as well, and it no doubt explains the lack of unity in much of his writing. If the Renaissance in Italy often gives the impression of a collection of long essays--well, that is what it is. The essays were at least collected, however; those on English Renaissance literature were never so brought together.

this body of writing had never been examined; Brooks treats it as particularly characteristic of Symonds, though Harrison, in an article from which I have quoted,[78] does not mention it at all; but it is an important part of Symonds' critical output, despite the fact that it is not so well known as are the works on the Italian Renaissance and on the Greek poets.

The material on English Renaissance literature is found partly in books, partly in magazine articles and reviews.[79] It is characterized by a certain incompleteness, for there are many lacunae in the material discussed, the drama receives most of the attention, and the general subject receives only intermittent treatment throughout Symonds' writing career. Symonds began that career with an essay on the Renaissance as a cultural movement, an essay with which he won the Chancellor's Prize at Oxford in the spring of 1863. Some nine years later (1872) appeared his first important work on the Italian Renaissance, An Introduction to the Study of Dante. Between 1863 and 1872 he wrote many articles on English Renaissance literature, and especially on the drama. ~~This field~~ Symonds

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[78]See above, p. X .

[79]See the Appendix for a complete list of Symonds' writings on English Renaissance literature.

actually had a history of English Renaissance drama in mind as early as 1865, for in that year he wrote to Jowett: "I have been writing, at spare times, a history of our Elizabethan drama as an exercise, which is now about one-third finished."[80] Jowett apparently discouraged these studies and actually, as seems to have been his practice with people who asked his advice, turned Symonds towards work which was not congenial to his temperament.[81] Other influences besides that of Jowett, however, turned him away from his projected history. Some years later, in his preface to Shakspere's Predecessors (1884),[82] Symonds wrote that in 1865 he had

> laid [his] manuscripts aside, discouraged by ill-health, partly by a conviction that the subject was beyond the scope and judgment of a literary beginner.[83]

In 1882, under the encouragement of his nephew, John St. Loe Strachey, he resumed his work on the history of the English drama. Writing to his friend Brown in that year, he said:

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[80] Brown, op. cit., pp. 191-2.

[81] Ibid., p. 193.

[82] The preface is, however, dated 1883.

[83] Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama, New Edition (London, 1900), Preface, p. vii.

> I am looking over the MSS. of my work on the Elizabethan Drama, left unfinished in rage, fury, love, depression, illness in 1866. It seems to me really remarkable that I should have abandoned it. And yet I doubtless took right measure of myself; I would not be ambitious then, if my own soul judged me lower in faculty than the height of that soul's expectation. It was prompted by romantic feeling that I wrote on the Greek Poets, and whistled my soul's self-scorn to the winds--love having lent those frail things wings to fly by. But the "Elizabethan Studies" inflated by no love, sank to the bottom of the Dead Sea of my pride. That is the truth. I sneered at their half-accomplishment. My wish is now to resume them and repiece them.[84]

But the studies never pleased him. "I am lying idle," he wrote in 1883, "having shaken off the load of Elizabethan studies, which do not seem to me in any way successful."[85] Shakspere's Predecessors was published the following year, but Symonds made no enthusiastic comments about it, and he never completed the history of English drama which Churton Collins said promised "to be the most voluminous history of our national drama which has yet to be attempted."[86]

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[84] Letters and Papers, p. 147.

[85] Ibid., p. 155.

[86] Essays and Studies (London, 1895), p. 91.

VII Further Work to be Done

It remains for me only to mention possible further studies of Symonds.

Certainly a comparative study of him and Pater would not be without interest. The two men are in many respects similar, both being concerned with the Greeks and with the Renaissance; both being influenced by Winckelmann, Hegel, and Goethe; both adopting as a sort of motto Goethe's maxim, "Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen, resolut zu leben." Both men belonged to the "aesthetic school," at least in part; both in their youth were admirers of Ruskin; both were more concerned (as was Swinburne, also[87]) with the ethical than is usually thought. Yet there was a want of sympathy between them--a want of sympathy having its basis, perhaps, in their very similarity. Symonds' dislike of Pater's style, with its precious sentences, may have been due to a feeling that his own work closely skirted the realm of preciocity.[88]

A more detailed study than I have been able to make of Symonds' relationship to Hegel, to the Schlegels, to

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[87]See Ruth C. Child, "Swinburne's Mature Standards of Criticism," PMLA, LII (1937), pp. 870-9.

[88]The style of both writers, it may be remarked, seems to find its source in DeQuincey. Yet Symonds maintains that Pater's style has a disagreeable effect upon his nerves--"like the presence of a civet cat" (Brown, op. cit., p. 401).

Goethe, and to Walt Whitman should be undertaken. Symonds' Hellenism is not so distinguished, perhaps, as Matthew Arnold's; but it deserves critical evaluation. Poetry more minor than his has been the object of serious study. A new biographical work, should source material eventually be available, would not be out of order: Horatio F. Brown had four thousand letters to select from, and it is possible that some of the best letters and some of those which will make of Symonds a more well-rounded personality than he appears to be are not yet published. As for his criticism in English Renaissance literature, most of his contributions in that field need strict editing. I believe that it is safe to say that Symonds' work on the period of the Italian Renaissance has overshadowed his other writing to such an extent that few people realize how many phases of his work will repay study. But even his work on the Italian Renaissance needs further study, and his critical evaluations of Italian fine arts and literature should be carefully examined. These matters must, however, remain for a later time.

CHAPTER I

SYMONDS' PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW

Primarily a man of letters, John Addington Symonds was no philosopher. There is nothing about him which resembles a Kant, a John Stuart Mill, or a Santayana. In his work one finds no intellectual preoccupation with abstractions; nor will one find a well-defined theory of categories or essences. He was not a rationalist. His thought is never on the high plane of philosophical speculation. He was an empiricist, first and last, and as an empiricist he lived and thought on the level of the experiential.

In matters of thought Symonds was fundamentally a practical man. He accepted only what affected him personally; his "philosophy" is <u>felt</u>, not thought through; a confirmed neurotic, he was preoccupied more exclusively with himself than was almost any other writer, except Rousseau and Amiel, perhaps, and possibly Proust. His way

of thinking was decidedly non-rational, for to him there was hardly any reality, if there was any at all, beyond immediate experience or emotion; his writings reveal, consequently, a peculiar lack of interest in the conjectural, and they exhibit an unflinching regard for the pragmatic. The highest kind of thought of which man is capable--what in writers like Carlyle or Coleridge may be called the philosophical--becomes in Symonds the religious. Even as a religious man, however, he does not show great depth.

He admits his own religious lightness thus:

> ...I was not gifted by nature with any strong sense of God as a Person near to me, nor was I naturally of a pious disposition; nor yet, again, endowed with that theological bias which qualifies the metaphysical thought of philosophers like my late brother-in-law, Professor T. H. Green.[1]

He rejected "dogmatic Christianity in all its forms," he says. And he found equally distasteful "Broad Church Anglicanism, the gospel of Comte, Hegel's superb identification of human thought with essential Being, and many minor nostrums..."[2] What, then, had he left? A combined mysticism, a regard for law, and a scientific optimism which he found in certain poets and in a few philosophers.

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[1]Horatio F. Brown, John Addington Symonds, Second Edition (London, 1903), p. 309.

[2]Ibid., p. 324.

A. Symonds' Mysticism

Symonds calls himself a skeptic--a pure one, and he feels "helpless about everything. Things are."[3] He explains his skepticism on the grounds of ill-health: "I do not believe," he says, "that any man who is healthy and active can know the pinch of scepticism--what there is wretched and weak and morbid about it."[4] His skepticism is not complete, however: it "oppresses [him] just as much if [he tries] to imagine no God as if [he tries] to state the absurdity of a God emerging from somnolence into world-creative activity." He wishes that he could embrace Positivism,[5] but marked as is his enthusiasm for

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[3]Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds, collected by Horatio F. Brown (New York, 1923), pp. 24-5. See also Brown, op. cit., p. 185.

[4]Letters and Papers, p. 19. Symonds made much of his ill-health and used it to explain certain things about himself which he wished were otherwise. Faith and philosophy, he says, are unnecessary to the healthy man, and are important only to the sick one (ibid., p. 14). Thus he finds everything to be "a mode of the human nervous system" (ibid., p. 13), and declares for a kind of mechanistic psychology.

An interesting clinical study of Brown's life of Symonds has been made by a Dr. George M. Gould, who says: "As a case of tuberculosis the general practitioner [sic] must find the clinical history highly anomalous, and the existence of other pathogenic factors than the simple tuberculotic process is clear. The chief was undoubtedly eyestrain and its migrainous reflexes. These were clearly active every day of his life" ("The Life Tragedy of John Addington Symonds," Maryland Medical Journal, XLVII [August, 1904], p. 287). It would be interesting to know whether or not recent medical science would agree with Dr. Gould.

[5]Letters and Papers, p. 22.

Rationalism, Science, and Comtism, he can never accept a "religion of humanity" alone--that could not satisfy him.

Symonds was a man in search of something in which he could believe. A member of the post-Darwinian group at Oxford, he felt that dogmatic religion had little to offer his generation. At Oxford he fell under the influence of Jowett, but unlike Jowett he could not retain his belief in God.[6] He turned quite naturally, then, to the influences which combined a mystical faith with the spirit which accepted the facts of the world as they are disclosed by science. He looked for a sense of harmony in nature. Christian theology he could not adopt, for it had "made man an exile from nature." But he did find a harmony in nature, and that harmony he discovered in natural law. He read Goethe and Marcus Aurelius, in both of whom he found ideas consistent, he says, with the spirit of modern science.[7]

Symonds sees a unity in the cosmos, and he finds in that unity a "mind," but he conceives of mind as something more than the ratiocinative capability of man. We do not see mind in creatures lower in the biological scale than

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[6]See Van Wyck Brooks, "John Addington Symonds," Forum, XLIX (April, 1913), p. 490.

[7]Ibid., p. 491.

we, he argues, but it may exist in them, although we are not able to apprehend it, and although it may assume a different form in them. Furthermore, he maintains, we cannot believe that man is "the final product of Nature." Higher creatures than we may have more fully organized intellects than ours; and our ratiocinative ability, he says, may be only the human reflection of the cosmic mind and not an ability which is duplicated in other creatures, who may reflect the cosmic mind in other ways. Symonds accepts the doctrine of continuity in nature, and he believes that "we must postulate the evolution of life and mind out of primordial organic elements." Thus he seems to echo Leibnitz, who declared that "Nothing happens all at once, and it is one of my great maxims...that nature never makes leaps."[8] Consequently, Symonds assumes that mind was potentially present in the primordial elements from which all zoological life (with man as its "crown") emerged.

But what <u>is</u> mind? Though men know it as intelligence, "it constitutes the whole universe"; in men it may be only the final synthesis of biological functions. Symonds cannot finally explain what he means by the "cosmic mind." He accepts the idea that mind constitutes the whole universe, but he is forced to assume that mind itself

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[8]Quoted in Frederick J. Taggert, <u>Prolegomena to History</u>, <u>Columbia University Publications in History</u>, Vol. IV, No. 3 (August 30, 1916), p. 232.

appears sometimes as inorganic form, sometimes as organic. The "world-stuff" of mind may be neither Spirit nor Matter, "for these names are merely symbols, like x and y of Algebra."[9] The individual is therefore at one with the universe; since everything is mind, and mind is the whole universe, man is at one with the cosmos.

Now, Symonds' mysticism is sufficiently vague and broad in scope to have various affinities in philosophy. It resembles Plato's doctrine of the One and the Many, and it suggests Idealism in the Fichtean sense that the Not-Me is the creation of the Me and therefore identical with it. It is comparable to the Idealism of Schelling and of Bruno, as well as to that of Berkeley. Symonds probably found its poetic expression in his favorite Romantic poet, Shelley, whose Mount Blanc (itself probably derived from Plato) reads thus:

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[9] Essays Speculative and Suggestive, New [Second] Edition, in one volume (New York, 1894), pp. 13-17. This book will hereafter be called Essays. The essay in which Symonds' philosophical position is indicated ("The Philosophy of Evolution," pp. 1-28) appeared earlier as "The Progress of Thought in Our Time," Fortnightly Review, XLVII, n.s. (June, 1887), pp. 885 ff.

It should be observed that the idea that "world-stuff" may be neither Spirit nor Matter is like Goethe's belief that Spiritual phenomena derive from the same source as the Material. See below, p. 34.

> ...The secret strength of things
> Which governs Thought, and to the infinite dome
> Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
> And what wert thou and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy?[10]

Symonds, as I have indicated, was a great reader of Shelley, especially in his youth, and an unconscious intellectual influence is likely.

The most probable model for Symonds' mysticism, if not its actual source, however, can, I believe, be found in Goethe, who was convinced of the identity of man and nature. Especially marked is this idea in Goethe's "Fragment über die Natur."[11] In his Proemium to Gott und Welt, to be mentioned again later, he identifies man's mind and nature with God, especially in this stanza:

> What were the God who sat outside to see
> The spheres beneath His finger circling free?
> God dwells within, and moves the world and molds;
> Himself and nature in one form enfolds:
> Thus all that lives in Him and breathes and is,
> Shall ne'er His presence, ne'er His spirit miss.[12]
>
> (Symonds' translation)

It should be added, moreover, that in his essay on "Landscape" Symonds quotes the Romantic poets, Wordsworth

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[10]Percy Bysshe Shelley, Complete Poetical Works, Cambridge Edition (Boston and New York, 1901), p. 349.

[11]Sämmtliche Werke, Jubiläums Aufgabe, Vierzig Bände (Stuttgart und Berlin, 1902-7), XXIV, p. 112.

[12]For the original see Goethe, Werke, II, pp. 239-40. For Symonds' translation see various places, and especially Brown, op. cit., p. 278.

("Tintern Abbey") and Shelley as pantheistic mystics, and that he indicates that these two with Goethe furnish the distinctive examples of this type of mind.[13]

Symonds' mysticism, whatever its resemblance to the thought of the men I have mentioned, seems, in the jargon of modern psychology, to be an "escape mechanism." Like his Victorian contemporaries, he found it necessary to make an adjustment between his intellectual and spiritual inheritance from the preceding Romantic age and the science which was threatening to destroy the religious, if not always the philosophical, teachings which had emerged in tolerably clear outlines from the past. His adjustment is illustrated by his religious mysticism, which, considered historically, may be explained much as Professor Beach explains transcendentalism. "Human nature being what it is," we are told, "transcendentalism was an absolutely necessary step in the transition from supernaturalism to naturalism."[14] Thus mysticism may be thought of as the

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[13]Essays, pp. 315-8. At the head of his first work in the Essays, Symonds places this quotation from Goethe: "To discuss God apart from Nature is both difficult and perilous; it is as if we separated the soul from the body. We know the soul only through the body, and God only through Nature. Hence the absurdity, as it appears to me, of accusing those of absurdity who philosophically have united God with the world. For everything which exists necessarily pertains to the essence of God; therefore God is the one Being whose existence includes all things" (ibid., p. 1. The translation is by G. H. Lewes.).

[14]Joseph Warren Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry (New York, 1936), p. 345.

mental compromise of a person who cannot accept the principles of dogmatic religion but who desires a place in the realm of spirit; it is a compromise between dogmatic Christianity and out-and-out skepticism, between the supernaturalism of the past and the naturalism to which science points and which may constitute the "religious" thought of the future.

B. Symonds' Scientific Optimism

Symonds' mystical pantheism has a scientific cast, however. Unlike Arnold, and Carlyle, and Tennyson, he thought of science not as a destroyer, but as a builder. In some ways, Symonds was not disturbed, as these other men were, by the apparent antagonism between science and religion. Since he did not think of dogmatic religion as a part of the problem created by the advent of science, he required only an adjustment between the philosophy of science and his idea of the one-ness of the universe. If he seems more easily to have adapted himself to and accepted the implications of science, his intellectual problem was not so great as was Tennyson's, for instance. Consequently, he is able more readily to assent to science, which attempts to discover cosmic law, and he sees its development not as a cause for regret, but as a source of

optimism; for science, he thinks, has destroyed nothing, save, perhaps, dogmatic religion, and at the same time it has improved the spiritual condition of man.

The scientific law which Symonds thinks has come to dominate nineteenth century thought is that of evolution. The scientific expression of the law he found in Darwin and Herbert Spencer, but he knew it from earlier poetic utterances from Bruno to Goethe and in the logical systems of *a priori* thinkers like Hegel.[15] Symonds grants, however, that evolution is a generalization and a provisional, hypothetical one. It is not final; but it is adapted "to the present conditions of the human mind."[16]

Religion, says Symonds (expressing, as he does so often, a truism which seems fresh and new to him), is the result of the attempt by man to account for the universe and to define man's place in it. The Copernican theory destroyed the mythology of Christianity, which had been conceived by people who believed in a geocentric universe, we are told. Geology and primitive anthropology assisted in the destruction begun by the Copernican theory, but, Symonds adds, "Evolution dealt a death-blow at the

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[15]Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

[16]*Essays*, p. 2. The popularity of the theory of evolution in the nineteenth century and Symonds' application of it to literature are discussed in Chapter VI of this thesis.

One discovers Symonds' feeling of optimism with regard to science in his attempt to show how science has been of aid to man.

First, he says, science has spiritualized religion. It has shown that the world is one homogeneous whole and that the cosmos is spiritual. Symonds' argument on this point runs thus: We can be sure of only one thing, "the importance in ourselves of mind." Cogito, ergo sum, he says, with Descartes. Therefore we are mind and nothing but mind, and we are compelled to expect mind in that of which we are a part.[19] But man's thought does not make the world; the world exists independent of the mind of man. We can know it, however, only by thinking; for us the world is what we think it--"but only for us," Symonds hastens to add. "Our mind is not co-extensive with the universe." Nevertheless, we must hypothesize an Universal Mind, since we are a part of the universe about us and a part of the cosmic mind.[20]

The second accomplishment of science, according to Symonds, is the dissipating of "the materialistic associations which environ theology in its mythical stages."[21]

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[19]Symonds mentions that Hegel took this position, but, he says, Hegel made the mistake of identifying the world-mind with the human mind (ibid., p. 12). See also Letters and Papers, p. 49.

[20]Essays, pp. 10-13.

[21]Ibid., p. 10.

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[21]Ibid., p. 10.

This idea hardly needs discussion--Symonds gives it hardly any--since it expresses a natural result of the "spiritualizing" of religion, in Symonds' sense, and of the third accomplishment of Science, which is "to emancipate the individual from egotism in the presence of the universal Being of which he is a part, and to the manifestation of which he contributes."[22]

The emancipation of the individual from egotism is the result of this process: Since man is a part of Nature, Nature must contain what corresponds with our spiritual essence. Science has demonstrated the presence in Nature of Law, and "has prepared the way for the identification of Law with God." We therefore "commit ourselves" to this power which is God "with the assurance that self, purged of egotism, is seeking its own best through dedication."[23] Thus does the individual become one with the universe, and in accepting Law, which governs all things in the universe, he also accepts God.[23]

There is an attempt in Symonds' "philosophy," then, to fuse mysticism and science. He holds, for instance, that the scientific spirit allows one to retain the sense of allegiance to and dependence on a Supreme Being. But, he adds, religion must create enthusiasm for cosmic emotion,

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., pp. 17-20.

which should be an active, aggressive thing.[24] He finds that science has remolded the elements of morality, which should be regarded as one aspect of the laws which control the universe. Science, as well as religion, has shown that virtue and vice are differently rewarded.[25]

The word which best describes what Symonds feels to be the proper attitude of the individual towards the universe is "submission"--submission to law and order. This submission is similar to Goethe's renunciation.[26] It reflects a resolution--perhaps, I may add, the resolution of a sick man--to accept the world as it is; it shows a desire to be perfectly "pragmatic" in a world which is at best disappointing.

Earlier I quoted Symonds on Goethe, Bruno, and Hegel--all of them mystics who believed in the principle of development. Their names occur frequently in Symonds' works. In Bruno he finds the scientific spirit operating when the regnant philosophy was still that of the men of the Church. He frequently quotes Goethe's Proemium to Gott und Welt because it expresses a pantheistic creed and treats of God

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[24]Ibid., pp. 20-24.

[25]Ibid., pp. 24-26. Symonds sees everything as controlled by a law of struggle for existence and he implies that morality is a code by which it is best to retain the benefits of our existence.

[26]Goethe's words are: "Entbehren sollst du; sollst entbehren" (Brown, op. cit., p. 286).

as Law. In Hegel he finds an expression of the principle of development. Like Matthew Arnold, he frequently mentions Marcus Aurelius, whose philosophy he finds "constant with modern science as Christian theology could not be."[27] He often quotes the prayer of Cleanthes, the Stoic: "Lead Thou me, Zeus, and thou world's Law, whithersoever I am by you appointed to go; for I will follow you unreluctant; and yet should I refuse, through evilness (or cowardice) up-grown in me, none the less [sic] I shall surely follow."[28] He mentions the name of Darwin. But he names Walt Whitman, who emphasizes mystic and cosmic enthusiasm as Cleanthes emphasizes Law, as frequently as he does anyone. All of these men furnish Symonds with an ideal. They are the prototype of the religious mystic whose spirit is consistent with that of science. All recognize an immanence of spirit in nature, and the existence of universal law; and all are in the best sense optimistic. Symonds' motto was always Goethe's statement, "To live resolvedly in the Whole, the Good, the Beautiful." And science seemed to him to point in the direction of such an ideal manner of living.

I think it is safe to say that Symonds' "philosophy" is neither profound nor especially complete in details; it expresses the creed of a man who needed to find a religion to help him adjust himself to a life which was

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[27]In the words of Van Wyck Brooks, Forum, xlix, p. 491.
[28]Essays, p. 10.

never spiritually satisfactory. Most of his friends, I am sure, were not aware of the complicated nature of Symonds' inner life. His letters to his most intimate friends are filled with expressions of spiritual depression, of gloominess, of despair; sometimes they sound merely like a series of complaints. Actually the man seems, outwardly at least, to have been a very cheerful person, a great talker, a fine conversationalist, a physically alert individual when he was not ill. His "philosophy" is based on the necessities of that inner man who felt that the world and he were out of sympathy. His mysticism is not either new or markedly different from that of thinkers before him; it is less a mysticism like Emerson's, which finds its source in personality, than one which is the result of a determination to accept the world as it is.

But his mysticism is fundamentally less important to the student of his criticism than is his recognition of the existence of Law: God is superseded by universal Law and becomes identified with it. But man too is controlled by universal Law and is a part of it; his entire capabilities must therefore conform to it. Indeed, one may assume that man instinctively follows universal Law, and he can do that only by acting in certain ways, always within the limits which are determined by his physical makeup. Thus we see that in the study of man and of his creations which we call the arts, a knowledge of psychology assumes

considerable importance. Man must conform to universal Law, which means that he must conform to his own nature, and his creations are determined by the characteristics of that nature.

I have shown, I think, that scientific optimism is one of the two important pillars of Symonds' philosophical house. Though he himself places emphasis upon "science," the reader is aware chiefly of Symonds' emotional reaction to it. So far as science itself is concerned, Symonds knows nothing about it. The feeling aroused by speculating about its probable effects, not science itself, is the important thing. This feeling of optimism often gives the impression that Symonds is doing a kind of whistling in the dark, for no less than Arnold and Tennyson was he disturbed by the intellectual temper of his age. "I feel paralyzed," he writes, "by the confusion round me, science and religion clashing, no creeds emergent, social conditions shifting like quicksands, the phantasmagorias of old literatures rising up to mock our modern style."[29] One would expect a person holding Symonds' belief in science to embrace the "religion" of Comtism; but he does not do so, because, he says, Comte "makes his universe revolve round man on this planet" and a scheme as pre-Copernican as Positivism seems

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[29]See "Art," "Latter Day Pagans," Quarterly Review, clxxxii (July, 1895), p. 39.

naive to him.[30] His scientific optimism, then, appears to be based less on intellectual conviction than on a need for spiritual centrality. Were his optimism more spontaneous, Symonds might remind one of Browning, for whom he had great admiration. But Symonds' optimism is far less spontaneous, and certainly less robust than Browning's, and in some ways it is less convincing.

C. Symonds' Philosophical View with Reference to Ideas Current During the Romantic Period

Symonds was not a philosopher, then; he was not, in some ways, a religious man, though he wanted a religion badly. How is he to be classified? He has classified himself for us: "The groundwork of my mental temperament," he says, "might...be described as literary, aesthetical, with a certain bias to scholarship and curiosity."[31] If Symonds knows himself, and if what he says is true, in what field, one may ask, did he find his source of thought? I have named certain men already--Goethe, Marcus Aurelius, Shelley, Bruno, Hegel, Walt Whitman, Darwin, Herbert Spencer--who affected his religious existence. Add to these Plato and certain Romantics, and I think that the list of the most significant influences on his mind is practically complete.

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[30]Brown, op. cit., pp. 312 ff. It may be remarked, however, that he approved of Positivism except as a religion.

[31]Ibid., p. 309.

At least in supposing as much, one is only applying to Symonds a critical principle which he himself followed, the principle that a writer should and can be known less in terms of his successors than in terms of his predecessors; thus Shakespeare is in part explained by the accomplishments of the men who go before him, as Milton, for another, is explained in terms of his Renaissance predecessors, not of his Restoration successors. So Symonds himself, I think, may be explained in terms of his Romantic forebears in literature.

In the course of this study I have found it necessary to employ many terms which are difficult to define. Such words as "milieu," "Renaissance," "evolution," "psychological criticism," and "scientific criticism" frequently have indefinite conceptual boundaries, but I have tried to use them with a certain accuracy. The most difficult of terms to handle, however, and the most Protean in associations is the word "Romanticism." I have adopted the simple expedient, therefore, of avoiding the term unless I am quoting someone who uses it. But, much as I might wish to, I cannot avoid the word "Romantic."

I shall, however, use the word only as it applies to a period in English (as well as in German and French) literary history. Since such expressions as "a poet of the Romantic movement," and "a writer of the Romantic period" become awkward and monotonous, I have decided that the word

"Romantic," unless I am quoting someone who uses the term to designate a type of mind, will in this study refer only to the Romantic period in literary history, and not to any characteristic of that period. Thus a "Romantic poet" will be a "poet who lived during the Romantic movement"; a "Romantic" is a man who lived and wrote during the Romantic movement; and, I may add, a "Romantic idea" is one which is found in the writings of the period.

I should like, however, to show that the word "Romanticism" is not exactly inapplicable to Symonds' work, though one must provisionally accept the special meanings attributed to it by certain writers. There are many definitions of the term, and most of them are the interpretations of literary historians who entertain a definite bias towards the age. Thus, one man will emphasize the fact that "Romanticism" is a reaction against eighteenth century rationalism; another, like H. A. Beers, will call the movement the "medievalizing tendency"; another (Watts-Dunton) will call it the "renascence of wonder"; still another (I think of Brunetière) identifies it with lyricism and extreme subjectivism; certain writers identify it with the emancipation of the ego, or with the "liberal" movement in English literature. And all of these definitions are partly true, but only partly so.

Two of these definitions in particular, those by Irving Babbitt and Miss A. E. Powell, fit Symonds and his

thought, and I should like to measure Symonds' work as a whole with them. I must warn the reader, however, that I do not agree with Babbitt and Miss Powell in what they say about Romantic thinkers: Babbitt has an axe to grind--always a deplorable thing if one attempts to see a phenomenon in its true light; and Miss Powell, in her zeal to show the way in which they support Crocean aesthetics, stresses too much the "expression" of the Romantic writers.

Afterwards I shall compare Symonds' "philosophy" with the ideas of three poets of the Romantic period: with those of Shelley, Goethe, and Whitman. His admiration for all three writers was unbounded, and if there is any "source" for his ideas, it is to be found in their work.

One of the most complete definitions of a certain type of "Romantic" mind--but, as I have suggested, an unsafe guide to the Romantic period as a whole--is Irving Babbitt's Rousseau and Romanticism (1919). Herein the reader finds an emphasis on the emotional character of the Romantic writers and an almost complete disregard for the substantial aspects of the Romantic movement--its concern with the permanent, the universal, the intellectual, its concern with the judgment of human activity. I use Babbitt's book, then, realizing that it omits mention of the characteristics of the period which are essentially sound, but that it does mention just those aspects of it which Symonds' work resembles.

"In general," says Babbitt, "a thing is Romantic when, as Aristotle would say, it is wonderful rather than probable; in other words, when it violates the normal sequence of cause and effect in favor of adventure."[32] Babbitt sees Romanticism as a refusal to adhere to the doctrine of imitation: as a return to freedom and spontaneity of expression, as a tendency towards emotional naturalism, towards the exaltation of the virtues of primitive ages, as well as towards the glorification of the imagination or of the element of illusion. The Romantic believed that in art and literature the imagination should be free, especially of judgment;[33] he cultivated self-expression, and in his desire for the emotion of wonder, he cultivated strangeness and the picturesque; he fed on expansive emotions and on a desire for the unknown and the nostalgic. He nourished the personal, the individual, yes, the eccentric. In Romanticism Babbitt sees a kind of rushing

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[32]Rousseau and Romanticism (Boston and New York, 1919), p. 4.

[33]Here we find one of those false statements which may apply to some of the lesser Romantics, but which certainly do not apply to a man like Coleridge. Beyond the fact that in the Biographia Literaria he judges Wordsworth's poetry, and that he refers to "fixed canons of criticism" (The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. William G. F. Shedd, 7 Vols. [New York, 1854-64], III, p. 186), it is pertinent to remark that in his Lectures on Shakespeare he says: "It is to be lamented that we judge of books by books, instead of referring what we read to our own experience" (Works, IV, p. 42).

after the wonder and novelty of the moment and a lack of "something deep down in the human breast that craves the abiding."[34]

How does Symonds fit Babbitt's definition? Very well, indeed. The ideas of freedom and spontaneity appear like leit-motiven in his criticism: the Elizabethans he admires because they wrote freely and spontaneously; a great art-form, he thinks, arises spontaneously from the consciousness of a people. His own criticism has that feeling of expansive freedom and emotional spontaneity which Babbitt deprecates. Emotionalism and the indulgence of the imagination are of the very texture of his work: he speaks of art as a source of emotional revery, as a kind of other-world of experience. The nostalgia for the past which is so clear in Scott and which caused Beers to call Romanticism the "medievalizing tendency" is illustrated in Symonds by his preoccupation with the Renaissance: that period in time seems in his work to be a veritable Golden Age, and its great men are like admirable primitives, titanic in their free and spontaneous strength. Art itself is in part an illusion, a forgetting, an absorption in emotion. Symonds, in some ways, did not cultivate his personal

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[34]Babbitt, op. cit., p. 366.

characteristics[35] as much as Babbitt says the Romantics did, or, indeed, as much as did certain of his contemporaries like Wilde, Whistler, and Swinburne; but he does find the personal as the predominant characteristic of art. And his penchant for picturesque prose reveals his weakness for emotional wonder. Then, too, the extremely autobiographical tone of writing reveals a concentration on self which is rare. His very mysticism, his Amiel-like maladie du Idéal, is a nostalgia for the unknown, for the "infinite illimitable desire" which he thought was aroused in one by art.

Miss A. E. Powell (Mrs. E. R. Dodds) in ~~her~~ The Romantic Theory of Poetry draws up a definition of Romanticism in art which deals with fewer distinctions than does Babbitt's and which is far simpler:

> The romantic artist [we are told] values content more than form--he usually has a practical as well as an artistic interest in his matter: he prizes emotional experience for its own sake, and aims at enlarging men's power to experience.[36]

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[35]I say this only because I have no evidence to the contrary. I must admit that the 4,000 extant letters of Symonds (at least, extant in 1924) would probably disclose autobiographical material which the disinterested and critical investigator would find most valuable. The biographical material on Symonds has been collected by relatives and close friends. Brooks adds nothing to the information found in that material. I remember reading somewhere that a neutral observer said something to the effect that Symonds was a very pornographic conversationalist, though not in a nasty way. None of the existing biographies, however, reveals such a thing as fact. I believe that investigation of whatever material is left after the present war will uncover new aspects of Symonds' personality and his critical opinions.

[36]The Romantic Theory of Poetry (London, 1926), p. 1.

Thus Miss Powell finds that the romantic poet is tested by his power to feel,[37] and that romantic philosophy includes a theoretical exaltation of feeling with emphasis placed on the value of experience, on content, and on the shadowy and suggestive.[38] Hume and other philosophers, we learn, concentrated attention upon experience as against authority, and therefore upon feelings. The problem of Kant's contemporaries, Miss Powell finds, was to define a concept of feeling.[39] Rousseau, Wordsworth, Blake--all found the significant experience in feeling, even to the point of finding the truth of spiritual reality in exalted emotions.

Romantic thinkers, according to Miss Powell, conceived of Spirit as non-mechanical, as pantheistic, Platonic, One, Universal. Thus Blake saw God in feeling and impulse--in the divine in man; and he found the truth of spiritual reality in exalted feelings. The philosophy of the Romantics, says Miss Powell, was, then, mystical, as in Shelley (the latter of whom finds his model in Spinoza), or in Blake (who derives from Swedenborg), or in De Quincey and Coleridge (who follow the German Idealists), or in Wordsworth (who follows Coleridge), or, to a slighter extent, in Keats.[40]

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[37] Ibid., p. 3.
[38] Ibid., p. 8.
[39] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[40] Ibid., pp. 11-13.

The preponderance of emotion which, according to Babbitt and Miss Powell, is a characteristic of Romantic poetry and thought is also a characteristic of Symonds' work, whether it be history, poetry, or criticism which he is writing. His emotion is usually an unadulterated enthusiasm, and with this his criticism is permeated. Indeed, the cult of feeling is one of the marks of Symonds' entire literary output.

So much for the general tone of Symonds' work. What, now, of his ideas, especially those which concern his "philosophy"? These seem to derive from Romantic critics and poets.

With his mysticism (or his Idealism) I have already dealt. Its obvious source is an emotional one; it represents an emotional solution for an intellectual problem: the Many becomes the One through a kind of fraternal feeling of the individual for everything in the universe. I have said already that his scientific optimism is just what the term suggests--not a knowledge of science, but a feeling for what science has done and for what it may mean in an utopian future. Now, this aspect of Symonds' thought is not inconsistent with his mysticism.

Science, indeed, was not unknown among thinkers of the Romantic period. Wordsworth was not anti-scientific in spirit; Coleridge actually did some reading in the natural sciences; and Shelley's scientific interests are,

thanks to the researches of Professor Grabo, now well known. If Professor Beach is right, science is an indispensable part of idealism or transcendentalism.

> My general contention [he says] is that the metaphysical concept of nature is the joint construction of science, philosophy and religion, and is not dependent for its main force on Arcadian sentiment or on supernaturalism.[41]

This is otherwise expressed thus:

> In the poetic concept of nature the elements derived from science and religion were maintained in a kind of equilibrium by the mediation of metaphysics. But it was at best a precarious and unstable equilibrium, which forever tended to break down with the overweight of one or other of the elements. In the romantic period it was the preponderance of the religious element that caused the break-down; in the Victorian period that of the scientific element. Between these two break-downs there were two fairly successful attempts to restore the balance--one under the influence of transcendentalism, the other under that of evolutionary positivism.[42]

The combination of scientific optimism and mysticism in the thought of Symonds resembles both attempts which Beach mentions to restore the balance between science and religion, and much as it may be indebted to Herbert Spencer, it finds sufficient support, too, from the Romantic poets.

Though not markedly scientific in tone, Keats, for one, refers to the doctrine of evolution. In Hyperion, Oceanus says to Saturn that

> "We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
> Of thunder, or of Jove...."
> (Hyperion, Book II, ll. 181-2)

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[41] Op. cit., p. 22.

[42] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

In explanation he adds

> "And first, as thou was not the first of powers,
> So art thou not the last; it cannot be:
> Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
> From chaos and parental darkness came
> Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
> That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
> Was ripening in itself...."
> (Book II, ll. 188-194)

Thus matter was given life, and Heaven and Earth and the Gods were created; but just as Heaven and Earth

> "...are fairer, fairer far
> Than Chaos and blank Darkness...."

so "a fresh perfection" will be fairer than Heaven and Earth and the early Gods. In this way "the eternal law" operates, and it provides

> That first in beauty should be first in might.

Thus evolution is the eternal law--and truth.

But in Shelley can be found the expression of the relation of science to a religion of the One. I quote from Professor Carl Grabo:

> For the philosophical task which Shelley set himself, and whose accomplishment was necessary to his peace of mind, was no less than to reconcile the thought and the methods of science with that body of mystical speculation which may be called Platonism: an ambitious project, but one the way to which had been pointed by some of the scientific philosophers and metaphysicians whom he had encountered in his extensive reading. The range and depth of that reading has been little appreciated nor its implications understood. Shelley could neither dismiss the discoveries nor the methods of science nor could he withstand the fascinations of idealistic philosophy. He had in some way to reconcile these seeming opposites. The way thereto was indicated by the speculations of Newton, Darwin, and Davy who conceived of matter as

> no more than one of the manifestations of force. What then was this intangible something, force? To Newton it was the luminiferous or electric ether; to Darwin, some form of fire; to Davy, electric charges in some state of balance--a conception anticipating the modern theory of elements composed of electrons. Such an electric conception of the universe has its manifest resemblances to the Platonic theory of a universe animated by the divine fire which pours from the ever-flowing fountain which is the One, source of all things. Thought, energy, matter--all are manifestations of the divine fire, the ether, or in modern terminology, electricity. That Shelley had translated the Platonic conception in terms of the speculative science of his own day is particularly manifest in Prometheus and The Witch of Atlas.[43]

Indeed, there are close parallels between the thought of Shelley and that of Symonds. Both men are Platonic, Shelley more genuinely so because of intellectual convictions, perhaps, than Symonds; both men find a source of inspiration in science. In one important respect they differ, however; though Shelley knows something about scientific thought, Symonds does not, a fact which is an indication, perhaps, of a probable intellectual superiority of the former over the latter. As for Symonds' contention that one should submit to Law, that has its similarities to Shelley's youthful belief in Necessity as it is apostrophized in Queen Mab:

> Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power!
> Necessity! thou mother of the world![44]

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[43]The Magic Plant: The Growth of Shelley's Thought (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1936), pp. 432-3.

[44]Sec. VI, ll. 197-8, Complete Poetical Works, p. 21.

I wish it were possible to show that Symonds' "philosophy" derives from Shelley; but in his book on Shelley, Symonds does not indicate that he is indebted to the poet for any of his more intellectual concepts. During those frequent literary walks of his, he must, however, have discussed the ideas of Shelley; we know that he read Shelley's poetry and spoke about it with enthusiasm, but anything more can be conjecture only. His book on Shelley does not reveal any special regard for the poet as a thinker; rather, it discloses an intense admiration for the "romantic" qualities, as Babbitt sees them, of Shelley's poetry--his enthusiasm, his ideality, his freedom, his lyricism, his spontaneity, his "self-abandonment to inspiration," his elemental quality. It is not amiss, I think, to quote a passage which illustrates Symonds' preoccupation with these qualities and his apparent disregard of the deeper thought-stuff in Shelley:

> As a poet, Shelley contributed a new quality to English literature--a quality of ideality, freedom, and spiritual audacity, which severe critics of other nations think we lack. Byron's daring is in a different region: his elemental worldliness and pungent satire do not liberate our energies, or cheer us with new hopes and splendid vistas. Wordsworth, the very antithesis to Shelley in his reverent accord with institutions, suits our meditative mood, sustains us with a sound philosophy, and braces us by healthy contact with the Nature he so dearly loved. But in Wordsworth there is none of Shelley's magnetism. What remains of permanent value in Coleridge's poetry...is a product of pure artistic fancy, tempered by the author's mysticism. Keats, true

and sacred poet as he was, loved Nature with a somewhat sensuous devotion. She was for him a mistress rather than a Diotima; nor did he share the prophetic fire which burns in Shelley's verse, quite apart from the direct enunciation of his favorite tenets. Innone of Shelley's greatest contemporaries was the lyrical faculty so paramount; and whether we consider his minor songs, his odes, or his more complicated choral dramas, we acknowledge that he was the loftiest and the most spontaneous singer of our language. In range of power he was also conspicuous above the rest. Not only did he write the best lyrics, but the best tragedy, the best translations, and the best familiar poems of his century. As a satirist and humorist, I cannot place him so high as some of his admirers do; and the purely polemical portions of his poems, those in which he puts forth his antagonism to tyrants and religions and custom in all its myriad forms, seem to me to degenerate at intervals into poor rhetoric.

While his genius was so varied and his flight so unapproached in swiftness, it would be vain to deny that Shelley, as an artist, had faults from which the men with whom I have compared him were more free. The most prominent of these are haste, incoherence, verbal carelessness, incompleteness, a want of narrative force, and a weak hold on objective realities. Even his warmest admirers, if they are sincere critics, will concede that his verse, taken altogether, is marked by inequality. In his eager self-abandonment to inspiration, he produced much that is unsatisfying simply because it is not ripe. There was no defect of power in him, but a defect of patience; and the final word to be pronounced in estimating the larger bulk of his poetry is the word immature. Not only was the poet young; but the fruit of his young mind had been plucked before it had been duly mellowed by reflection. Again, he did not care enough for common things to present them with artistic fulness. He was intolerant of detail, and thus failed to model with the roundness that we find in Goethe's work. He flew at the grand, the spacious, the sublime; and he did not always succeed in realizing for his readers what he had imagined. A certain want of faith in his own powers, fostered by the extraordinary discouragement under which he had to

write, prevented him from finishing what he began, or from giving that ultimate form of perfection to his longer works which we admire in shorter pieces like the Ode to the West Wind. When a poem was ready, he had it hastily printed, and passed on to fresh creative efforts. If anything occurred to interrupt his energy, he flung the sketch aside. Some of these defects, if we may use this word at all to indicate our sense that Shelley might by care have been made equal to his highest self, were in great measure the correlative of his chief quality--the ideality, of which I have already spoken. He composed with all his faculties, mental, emotional, and physical, at the utmost strain, at a white heat of intense fervour, striving to attain one object, the truest and most passionate investiture for the thoughts which had inflamed his ever-quick imagination. The result is that his finest work has more the stamp of something natural and elemental--the wind, the sea, the depth of air--than of a mere artistic product. Plato would have said: the Muses filled this man with sacred madness, and, when he wrote, he was no longer in his own control. There was, moreover, ever-present in his nature an effort, an inspiration after a better than the best this world can show, which prompted him to blend the choicest products of his thought and fancy with the fairest images borrowed from the earth on which he lived. He never willingly composed except under the impulse to body forth a vision of love and light and life which was the spirit of the power he worshipped. This persistent upward striving, ~~this striving,~~ this earnestness, this passionate intensity, this piety of soul and purity of inspiration, give a quite unique spirituality to his poems. But it cannot be expected that the colder perfections of Academic art should be always found in them. They have something of the asymmetria we admire in the earlier creations of Greek architecture. That Shelley, acute critic and profound student as he was, could conform himself to rule and show himself an artist in the stricter sense, is, however, abundantly proved by The Cenci and by Adonais. The reason why he did not always observe this method will be understood by those who have studied his Defence of Poetry, and labored to sympathize with his impassioned theory of art.[45]

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[45]Shelley (English Men of Letters, New York, 1929), pp. 183-6.

I do not wish to pause here to indicate how closely this kind of writing, both by what it is and by what its author praises, illustrates various aspects of Babbitt's definition of "Romanticism"; nor do I wish to describe this kind of writing as a kind of criticism: that I shall do in a later chapter with reference to Symonds' critical writings on English Renaissance literature. I do not care, either, to show that, like so much of his criticism, this selection from the book on Shelley is partial self-revelation: the reader will notice the sentences beginning, "A certain want of faith in his own powers...." But it is worthy of note that except for the generalities about Shelley and Nature, there are on these pages no indications of the ideas of Shelley, and that attention is focused almost exclusively on literary and on aesthetic effect.

Whatever Symonds may have got from Shelley, the real point of reference for his ideas is probably found in one man whose name was mentioned in the passage I have just quoted--in Goethe. Like Arnold, Pater, and others, Symonds found an example of intellectual repose and centrality in the author of Faust.

The universe is One, is Mind; the individual must submit to Law, which is represented in part by his psychological limitations; man must therefore conform to the requirements of nature, beyond which he cannot go--these ideas are found in Goethe as well as in Symonds:

> To maintain the mind and spirit of man within the framework of nature [Beach tells us]--this is what Goethe managed to do more consistently than any other poet of his time, and with more circumstance and plausibility.[46]

According to Goethe, though nature was hostile and unfriendly to man, the spiritual nature of man and everything about him is part of universal nature. To this idea, Goethe added what Beach calls a geniality of imagination, a sense of fact, and a religious feeling of trust and reconciliation which convinced him that the poet should trust himself to the natural order. Like Symonds, Goethe believed that man could not go beyond phenomena: man is spiritually in contact with the deepest in nature, but intellectually he cannot go beyond phenomena.[47] Goethe held that within himself the individual would find the moral center of the universe.[48]

Beach finds that Goethe was more scientific than either Wordsworth or Shelley;[49] that he had "Intimations of Evolution";[50] that he believed in the oneness of natural phenomena, and in "the derivation of spiritual phenomena

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[46] Op. cit., p. 276.

[47] Ibid., pp. 276-80.

[48] Ibid., p. 283.

[49] Ibid., p. 291.

[50] Title of section, ibid., p. 287.

from the same natural fountain as material";[51] and that his consistently scientific attitude is like the evolutionary naturalism of Meredith.[52]

Herein we find everything that is of importance in Symonds' intellectual outlook--his belief in the oneness of the universe, his conviction of man's spiritual identity with the universe and of man's psychological limits, his interest in science, and his assertion that spiritual and material phenomena have identical sources.

Intellectually, then, Symonds resembles Shelley and Goethe, though he is a smaller mind than either of them, and though, what is more, he never really understands Shelley (as is attested by his biography, which treats Shelley almost entirely as an artist) or Goethe (whose interest in science he seems to emulate, though not to the point of working in the natural sciences himself). He is not a philosopher, not an independent thinker, not an abstract reasoner. The men who influence him do so because they give him some intellectual repose; and these men are, with few exceptions, almost entirely literary or scholarly. He is, on his own testimony, "literary, aesthetical, with a certain bias to scholarship and curiosity," and as such a man he is indebted to Romantic poets and critics for his philosophical as well as for his critical ideas.

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[51] Ibid., p. 296.
[52] Ibid., p. 297.

But if Symonds failed to understand completely such men as Goethe and Shelley, he did not have a similar difficulty with Whitman, to whom he went for an emotional support which even Goethe could not so completely give him.[53] In Whitman he found an idealism which stemmed from Hegel; a belief in the doctrine of progress, which Whitman allied with his own art; and the idea of scientific realism, which embraced the scientific concept of nature as independent of cosmic reason but influenced by the processes of historical evolution. Whitman, as Symonds saw, tried to bridge the gap between idealism and realism, and his thought consequently included such discordant elements as mystical pantheism, naturalism or realism, democracy, primitivism, and faith in the innate goodness of man. All of these ideas were congenial to Symonds' own way of thinking, and they were held together in his mind (and in Whitman's) by a sort of cohesive element called a cosmic plan, assented to by the individual through the emotion of "cosmic enthusiasm."

This "cosmic enthusiasm" was the emotion of the poet of the future, who, according to Whitman, must be bold, modern, cosmic;[54] who must accept Hegel, Darwin, Christ; and who

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[53]See below, p.67, for Symonds' account of Whitman's influence upon him.

[54]"Democratic Vistas," Complete Writings of Walt Whitman. Issued under the editorial supervision of his Literary Executors, Richard Maurice Bucke, Thomas B. Harned, and Horace L. Traubel. With additional bibliographical and critical material by Oscar Lowell Triggs, 10 Vols. (New York, 1902), V, pp. 127-8.

must be like Shakespeare, Homer, and Isaiah.[55] This "cosmic enthusiasm" is related to mystical experiences,[56] with a Nature that is divine.[57] Man, in Whitman's view, is part of Nature; and, since God is in Man, every person has potential equality with every other person, and he must be allowed to grow and develop.[58] Furthermore, Nature in the process of creation is a continuous organic growth, and the creative force of the universe is reflected in the procreative impulse in man.[59] Whitman allows a pantheistic view of the universe, and though he often seems to accept as a fact the complete freedom of the individual,[60] he recognizes the existence in the cosmos of the element of law.[61]

The close sympathy between the thought of Whitman and that of Symonds is based on philosophical idealism and on the concept of the brotherhood of man. Whitman appealed to Symonds' sense of the religious, to his emotional life. The two men wrote letters to one another, though Symonds was the

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[55]Ibid., p. 141.

[56]"Song of Myself," Works, I, pp. 40-1.

[57]Ibid., p. 60.

[58]"To You," ibid., p. 285.

[59]"Song of Myself," ibid., p. 35.

[60]"Song of the Broad Axe," ibid., p. 225; and "Song of Myself," ibid., p. 108.

[61]"Notes Left Over," Works, V, p. 298.

more enthusiastic correspondent; their point of contact was the Calamus section of the Leaves of Grass.[62] The most charitable interpretation to place upon the rapport between the American poet and the English critic-historian is this: that Symonds was always in ill-health, that he was naturally a skeptic, that he was fundamentally religious, that his own mental equilibrium demanded some emotional identity with something larger than himself, and that in Whitman's thought--in Whitman's "cosmic enthusiasm"--he found a mystical pantheism which set him emotionally at rest and which, to his way of thinking, realized its outer manifestation in the brotherhood of man and in political democracy. Though Symonds' poem to Walt Whitman, called "Love and Death: A Symphony,"[63] celebrates the gospel of love between men, it is safer to see in the relationship between him and Whitman a religious influence of the one upon the other. Of Whitman's religion Symonds says this:

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[62]Symonds wanted to know the hidden meaning of the poems in this section, but Whitman would never answer his questions in any satisfactory manner. So insistent was Symonds that certain commentators have hinted at or openly declared his homosexual leanings. Be that as it may, Symonds' questions about Whitman's doctrine of the inspired comradeship of men were evaded. For a history of the Whitman-Symonds correspondence, see Harold Blodgett, Walt Whitman in England (Ithaca, New York, 1934), pp. 58-68.

[63]In In Re Walt Whitman: Edited by his Literary Executors, Horace L. Traubel, Richard Maurice Bucke, Thomas B. Harned (Philadelphia, 1893), pp. 1-12.

> I do not think it is a religion only for the rich, the powerful, the wise, the healthy. For my own part, I may confess that it shone upon me when my life was broken, when I was weak, sickly, poor, and of no account; and that I have ever lived thenceforward in the light and warmth of it....During my darkest hours it comforted me with the conviction that I too played my part in the illimitable symphony of cosmic life.[64]

It would seem that Goethe's influence on Symonds tended to be intellectual, but that Whitman's was emotional. Whitman's religious thought suggested a way to bring all the discordant and strained elements of his existence into a state of satisfying harmony. The acceptance of the religion of Walt Whitman more than anything else shows what I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter: that Symonds was not a rationalist, but an empiricist, and that his thought is on the plane of the experiential.

Symonds is in reality no profound thinker. His philosophical notions--or at least his expression of them--are ideas only in outline; they suggest but do not constitute a well-defined or detailed system of thought. Similarly with his critical ideas. One does not go to him for new opinions on comedy, on tragedy, on the heroic, on the sublime. His mind does not move freely among abstractions, but finds its locus among general ideas whose truth

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[64] A Study of Walt Whitman (London, 1893), pp. 34-5.

has been shown to him by experience. A man of letters, Symonds hardly skirts the regions of criticism which are related to the philosophical or metaphysical.

CHAPTER II

SYMONDS' THEORY OF ART

The focal point of all of Symonds' writing is the subject of art. One can read hardly a page of his biographical or historical work, of his poetry, of his "picturesque" essays, or of his criticism without being made aware of his preoccupation with great artistic and literary works. Thus The Renaissance in Italy is mostly remembered because of its sections on Italian art and literature. His poems are sometimes about artists, or about his own emotional reactions to some painting or to some piece of sculpture. His "picturesque" essays are filled with descriptive scenes in the manner of the landscape painters, or with frequent references to actual works of art. His criticism is, as one may well expect, full of the subject, and reminds one slightly of the work of the nineteenth century "aesthetes." It is not surprising, therefore, that Symonds should have constructed a tolerably well-defined theory of art.

In general Symonds' theory of art divides itself into two parts: there is one group of ideas belonging to the psychological tradition; there is another not belonging to the psychological tradition. Both groups seem to find their source in Romantic theory, however, and both exhibit a modification of the theory of art as it appears among Romantic writers.

There will be five major divisions in this chapter: A) a consideration of Symonds' ideas which are not in the psychological tradition; B) a consideration of his ideas which are in the psychological tradition; C) a brief survey of pre-Victorian psychological criticism; D) a similar survey of Victorian psychological criticism; E) a discussion of Symonds' theory of art in nineteenth century literary and art criticism.

A. The Ideas of Symonds Not in the Psychological Tradition

1. The Autonomy of Art

I must first point out that Symonds treats art as something entirely autonomous, as something of intrinsic value which is under no obligation to contribute values or illustrate values which are outside its nature. Art, he says, for instance, is not morality or science.

In attempting to define the relations of art to morality and to science, Symonds finds it necessary first to state that we cannot define goodness, truth, and beauty, since he finds that they are inseparable in our spiritual nature, and that in attempting to define them, "we violate the unity of our higher self."[1] His observation of the identity of these three in our psychological makeup is not original, and is one of the most common doctrines of the Romantics, who speak in mystical terms of the good, the true, and the beautiful. Emerson saw them as one; and so did Goethe, whose statement that one should live in the Whole, the Good, and the True Symonds quoted so frequently. "To be a poet," said Shelley, "is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word, the good...."[2] In Carlyle's early essays, which may, strictly speaking, be said to belong to Romantic criticism, the three words are used interchangeably; to Carlyle beauty is indistinguishable from transcendental truth; beauty is a higher truth.[3] Keats' identification of beauty with truth is too well known to bear quotation. Except for Keats, all of these

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[1]Essays Speculative and Suggestive, New [Second] Edition (New York, 1894), p. 103.

[2]"A Defence of Poetry," Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism, ed. John Shawcross (London, 1909), p. 123.

[3]See Frederick William Roe, Thomas Carlyle as a Critic of Literature (New York, 1910), p. 29.

men who see the true, the good, and the beautiful as one have affinities with mysticism; and thus in a small way Symonds belongs to them.

He believes that art must contain goodness and truth, in order to be vigorous, enduring, vital, and universal; but he admits that it is possible for art to stress ignoble pleasures and to gratify morbid sensibility; and he believes that art does not require moral discipline of the artist, who never works from a consciously moral or scientific point of view.[4] All art-works are, however, "the products of a moralized personality"; and something of the artist's nature is disclosed even in his style.[5] And since art must convey a meaning of some sort, it is connected with the problem of goodness. Even music, Symonds finds, even architecture, affects the moral quality of man. Art, therefore, cannot ignore morality.[6] Since art is linked with man's spiritual forces, he concludes, "art is able to

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[4]Essays, p. 108. "He is satisfied with making something; and this something may be of very various sorts in regard to truth and goodness."

[5]I am reminded at this point of a dictum of Henry James: "There is a point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer" ("Art and Fiction," American Critical Essays, XIXth and XXth Centuries, edited with an Introduction by Norman Foerster [Oxford, 1930], p. 183).

[6]Essays, p. 103-11.

assert man's moral nature at moments [e.g. Italy during the Renaissance, Greece during the days of its glory] when it seems in other spheres to have been paralyzed or vitiated."[7]

Symonds attempts to define the relations of art to morality. He maintains that though the former cannot disregard the latter, the two are entirely different, morality holding up those things which are good, art holding up those things which are beautiful, though the good may be beautiful, and the beautiful may be good; and though, on the contrary, the good may <u>not</u> be beautiful, and the beautiful may <u>not</u> be good.[8] But morality, we are told, is more complex than art "because it is concerned with nothing less than the whole nature of man."[9] Morality, then, is in one sense greater than art, since, like life, it is more inclusive than art is. Art expresses "man's delight in nature and his sympathy with human joys and sufferings"; morality expresses "man's self-consciousness and judgment as to the right and wrong of conduct, governed by subjective qualities inherent in a race or epoch."[10]

In his conclusions on this matter of art and morality Symonds is making a kind of compromise between the position

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[7]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 116.

[8]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 105.

[9]<u>Ibid</u>.

[10]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 107.

of the Romantic critics that there is a close relationship between the two and that of "aesthetes" like Oscar Wilde who find that the two are distinct and unencumbered by one another.

Coleridge said that poetry had for its object first, "Pleasure, and that of the highest and most permanent kind"; and second, moral and intellectual truth.[11] And in a letter written to Sir Humphrey Davy (on October 9, 1800) he describes an essay on poetry which he is planning and which will in effect be "a disguised system of morals and politics."[12] In a later letter (dated February 3, 1801) Coleridge mentions the essay again and refers to the possibility of its superseding all books on metaphysics and morals.[13]

It should always be borne in mind that the Romantic conception of the "moral" is that which is true to life. The word, then, is used in its broad sense. Thus, it will be remembered that Coleridge, in discussing the question of Shakespeare's immorality, makes a distinction between manners and morals.[14] Manners are adventitious things;

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[11] Biographia Literaria, The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. William G. F. Shedd, 7 Vols. (New York, 1854-64), III, p. 371.

[12] Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E. H. Coleridge, 2 Vols. (London, 1895), I, p. 338.

[13] Ibid., I, p. 347.

[14] See Lecture VI, Collier Report, Lectures of 1811-12, in Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (London, 1930), p. 125.

morals are more inclusive and penetrate to every part of human life. Somewhat the same distinction can be found in Hazlitt.

The position of Hazlitt on this subject is closer to Symonds' than is Coleridge's. Coleridge was fundamentally a moralist, whereas Hazlitt, like Symonds interested not only in literature but also in painting, looked for the pleasurable aspects of art. Hazlitt does not allow moralistic preaching in literature. "The painter of manners," he says, "gives the facts of human nature, and leaves us to draw the inference...."[15] The stage, he maintains, however, is the best teacher of morals because it gives the most true and "intelligible picture of life."[16] But Hazlitt, on the whole, does not emphasize the relationship of morality to art, though, like Symonds after him, he sees a relationship between the two because art draws from all of life, and because morality is a not unimportant part of life.

Symonds is therefore closer to the Romantic critics than to the art for art's sake men, who allow no relation between morality and art. In his preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde takes the extreme view that "There

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[15]"Standard Novels and Romances," Collected Works, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover, with an Introduction by W. E. Henley, 12 Vols. (London, 1930), X, p. 27.

[16]"On Actors and Acting," Round Table, Works, I, p. 153. The italics are mine.

is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all." Again he says that "No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style." But even Wilde can be somewhat inconsistent: "The moral life of man," he confesses, "forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium."[17] It would seem that, try as he will, no man who thinks about art and morality can argue out of existence some relation between the two. Morality is close to art, and especially to literature, which is in part the presentation of ideas in artistic form; but, according to Symonds, morality and art are different things.

And so are art and science: art has to do with beauty, science with truth. Now, to Symonds truth is "conformity to what is actual and capable of demonstration"; and since we can know only mind, he qualifies his definition: truth "is the exact apprehension by our mind of facts as they really are, whether these be good or bad, beautiful or ugly. It is a quality, not of aspect, but of essence."[18] Science is indifferent to morality and beauty. The attempt to find out what things are leads to science, but the

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[17]For all these quotations see <u>The Picture of Dorian Gray</u> (New York, n.d.), p. 7.

[18]<u>Essays</u>, p. 104.

"attempt to seize their aspects and appearances leads to art."[19] Art, "on its formal and technical side, partakes of the scientific spirit," as it partakes in other respects of the ethical spirit. Art cannot ignore truth any more than it can ignore morality.[20]

The distinction which Symonds draws between art and science is almost identical with that of earlier writers. Coleridge in his Lectures on Shakespeare maintained that

> Poetry is not the proper antithesis to prose, but to science. Poetry is opposed to science, and prose to metre. The proper and immediate object of science is the acquirement, or communication, of truth; the proper and immediate object of poetry is the communication of immediate pleasure.[21]

And in the Biographia Literaria he says that

> A difference of object and contents [in writing] supplies an additional ground of distinction [in the matter of form]. The immediate purpose may be the communication of truths; either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science; or in facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure, and that of the highest and most permanent

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[19] Ibid., p. 106.

[20] Ibid., pp. 111-2. A more extreme view is Spingarn's: "Beauty's world is remote from both these standards; she aims neither at morals nor at truth" ("The New Criticism," American Critical Essays, XIXth and XXth Centuries, p. 443). I should remark, however, that Symonds is speaking about art and Spingarn about beauty. Symonds did not think of the two as synonymous; to him beauty was one quality of art. But if I am at all able to judge, Spingarn would not alter his statement even if the word "art" took the place of "beauty."

[21] Works, IV, p. 19.

> kind, may result from the attainment of the end; but [in works of science] it is not in itself the immediate end [as it is in poetry].[22]

It must be noted that Coleridge's idea of the difference between art (or poetry) and science is the same as Symonds', except for one thing--Coleridge allows for absolute truth in science; this Symonds does not do: though he is a religious mystic, he accepts as scientific only the evidences of things as they appear to be; and, like Pater, he believes not only that man lives in the relative but also that it is impossible for him to apprehend, intuitively or otherwise, the absolute.

Wordsworth makes a distinction between art and science which is like Coleridge's and Symonds':

> The appropriate business of poetry [he says], (which, nevertheless, if genuine, is as permanent as pure science,) her appropriate employment, her privilege and her duty, is to treat of things not as they are, but as they appear; not as they exist in themselves, but as they seem to exist to the senses, and to the passions.[23]

In an earlier work he had said that

> ...the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure, which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature, with affections akin to those, which, through labour and length of time, the Man of science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both

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[22] Works, III, p. 371.

[23] "Poetry as a Study (1815)," Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. the Reverend Alexander B. Grosart, 3 Vols. (London, 1876), II, p. 106.

> of the Poet and the Man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings.[24]

In this passage, it is true, the differences between art and science are said to be incidental to the feeling of pleasure they arouse and to their value for the individual. But Wordsworth makes the important distinction that poetry is closer than science to the intimate life of human beings, and is necessary to them; science is a lesser thing than poetry perhaps, since it is merely individual accomplishment in studies of "particular parts of nature."

Hazlitt speaks in terms similar to Wordsworth's. Pleasure in art is to him like pleasure in science in that both art and science derive from something not, or only imperfectly, known. Nature, to Hazlitt, is identical with reality and represents everything that exists. Both art and science depend upon nature, therefore, but the difference between them is explained thus: Science, we are told, "depends on the discursive or <u>extensive</u>--art on the intuitive and <u>intensive</u> power of mind....The one is knowledge--the other power."[25] This passage, I should like

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[24]"Preface" to the <u>Lyrical Ballads</u> (1800), <u>Prose Works</u>, II, pp. 90-1.

[25]"Why the Arts are not Progressive?" <u>Works</u>, IX, pp. 489-90 (Appendix I).

to remark, sounds suspiciously like De Quincey's distinction between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, a distinction which may itself be thought of as another juxtaposition of art to science. Be that as it may, Hazlitt, in noting the psychological differences between experience with art and that with science, comes close to Wordsworth's position in that he gives a kind of pleasure to both: "We grow attached to the mathematics," he says, "only from finding out their truth; and their utility consists (at present) in the contemplative pleasure they afford to the student."[26]

The marks of distinction which, according to the Romantic writers, separate art and science are hardly different from these remarks as they are described in the writings of the art for art's sake men. Swinburne, who early in his life may be thought of as typical of the latter group of writers, describes art and science in terms similar to those used in the examples I have given. In his book on William Blake, for instance, he declares this:

> Admit all the implied pretensions of art, they remain simply nothing to science; accept all the actual deductions of science, they simply signify nothing to art. The eternal 'Après?' is answer enough for both in turn.... Poetry or art based on loyalty to science is exactly as absurd (and no more) as science guided by art or poetry....To art, that is

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[26]"On Imitation," Round Table, Works, I, p. 75.

> best which is most beautiful; to science, that is best which is most accurate; to morality, that is best which is most virtuous.[27]

In this passage Swinburne shows that art and science differ, but he seems to separate them more than Romantic writers do. I submit that the reason for the difference of impression lies partly in the terminology: Swinburne, like Symonds, uses the word "beauty"; Wordsworth uses the word "pleasure." And there seems to be a closer relationship between pleasure and science than there is between beauty and science. Ultimately, I suppose, there is little distinction between pleasure and beauty; at least, the terms as they are frequently used are of such nebulous character as to be practically interchangeable, so that beauty may be defined as the pleasure one finds in an object. Thus Swinburne's distinction between art and science is not as different from Wordsworth's as would at first appear. What this passage indicates is not so much a change in thought as regards the spheres of art and science--the Romantic writers and the art for art's sake men seem fairly agreed on this point--as a change in emphasis from "pleasure" to "beauty" and from "poetry" to "art." The Romantic critics, except for Hazlitt perhaps, were primarily interested in poetry; the later Victorians in the seven arts.

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[27]William Blake, Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Bonchurch Edition, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise, 20 Vols. (London and New York, 1925-27), XVI, p. 144.

In Symonds' criticism, then, there is a conscious effort to discover or delimit the proper sphere of art. In general, I should say that he takes the stand that art has no extrinsic purpose. That is why he is careful to show that art is not morals, though it can have a moral effect; and that, since it is nothing else but art, it must be judged according to criteria which concern it.[28] A similar idea is found in the works of romantic writers, especially Kant, Schiller, Goethe, Schelling, and Hegel, and in the work of Coleridge.[29]

Kant said that aesthetical judgments about beauty are disinterested, aesthetic pleasure resulting from the mere contemplation of the representation of the object; he also said that a beautiful thing has "Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck" (purposiveness without extrinsic purpose).[30]

Schiller furnishes a possible model for Symonds' attempt to find the proper sphere and purpose of art, for he said that beauty "gibt schlechterdings kein einzelnes Resultät, weder für Verstand noch für dem Willen"; he continued to say that it has no intellectual or moral object,

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[28]For an expression of the idea that art is autonomous and that its sphere is separate from that of religion, see Renaissance in Italy, 2 Vols. (New York, n.d.), I, p. 602.

[29]See Rose Frances Egan, "The Genesis of the Theory of 'Art for Art's Sake' in Germany and England," Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, II, no. 4, July, 1921, and V, no. 3, April, 1924.

[30]Ibid., V, no. 3, pp. 38-9.

discovers no truth, does not help in the performing of any duty, "mit einem Worte, gleich ungeschickt, den Charakter zu gründen und den Kopf auf zuklären."[31]

Goethe, however, is a more probable source for Symonds' idea that art may have a moral effect but that it has no extrinsic purpose. Goethe maintained that the artist had no definite moral purpose. "Moralische Zwecke von Künstler fordern," he says, "heisst ihm sein Handwerk verderben."[32] Schelling said much the same thing: [Die Kunst], he maintained, "kann sich, ohne den Adel ihrer Natur aufzugeben, noch nichts Äusserem richten."[33]

Hegel, whose name Symonds also frequently mentions, especially in his more historical works, is more emphatic even than these other German Romantic writers in denying that art has any other purpose than what is consistent with its nature.

> [It] has its purpose in itself [he says], in this representation and revelation [of the truth]. For other objects, such as instruction, purification, improvement, pecuniary gain,

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[31]Johann Friedrich Schiller, Sämmtliche Werke, ed. Ludwig Bellerman, Vierzehn Bände (Leipzig und Wien [1895], VIII, p. 244.

[32]Dichtung und Wahrheit, Sämmtliche Werke, Jubiläums Aufgabe, Vierzig Bände (Stuttgart und Berlin, 1902-7), XXIV, p. 112.

[33]Über das Verhältnis der bildendem Künste zu der Natur, Sämmtliche Werke, Vierzehn Bände (Stuttgart und Augsburg, 1956-61), VII, p. 327.

endeavor after fame and honor, have nothing to do with the work of art as such, and do not determine its conception.[34]

It is interesting to observe that Coleridge adopts the same view about the intrinsic value of art. He compares art, as we have seen, with science: he declares that the essence common to all the arts "consists in the excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure through the medium of beauty," and of science he says that its "immediate object and primary purpose is truth and possible utility." He admits that science is able to give pleasure and that the arts "may lead to important truth," but, he adds, "these are not the direct and characteristic ends...."[35]

2. The Hierarchy of the Arts: Poetry the Highest of the Arts

The second of Symonds' ideas which are not in the psychological tradition but which are similar to those found among Romantic thinkers is that in the hierarchy of the arts poetry has the highest place. I do not know how

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[34]G. F. W. Hegel, Introduction to the Philosophy of Fine Art, tr. Bernard Bosanquet (London, 1905), pp. 141-2. The italics are mine.

[35]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, with His Aesthetical Essays, 2 Vols., ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), II, p. 221.

many philosophers and theorists of art agree on this point; but Hegel called poetry the universal art;[36] Coleridge called it the type of all art;[37] Schopenhauer thought it was the richest and highest of the arts.[38] Shelley's great claims for the art are well known, and though poets may not be the legislators of the world, few writers refuse to give poetry the high place which Shelley does. Symonds, in his definitions of the characteristics of the arts, gives poetry an equally exalted position.

The purpose of all the arts, Symonds thinks, is "the presentation of a spiritual content," but each art, he recognizes, "has its own vehicle of expression."[39] "Of all the arts," he says, "architecture alone subserves utility." The geometrical proportions of the art-work "contain the element of beauty and powerfully influence the soul." Emotions are stirred by form, and we call a

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[36] See Katharine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, A History of Esthetics, (New York, 1939), p. 451.

[37] Ibid., p. 402.

[38] Ibid., pp. 470-1.

[39] Essays, p. 90. Despite Croce's attempt to show the fallacy of classifying the arts (Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic, tr. Douglas Ainslie [London, 1909], pp. 185-90), commonsense compels one to think of the arts as separate. The Wagnerian ideal of the art-work of the future seems retrogressive, as does Croce's ideal--a returning to a primitive condition in which all the arts are in operation at once (as in primitive ceremonials). Since the arts have become more and more distinguishable one from the other through the centuries, an attempt to argue them into identity by means of a metaphysical terminology seems futile.

building "sublime or graceful, frivolous or stern" after apprehending the form.[40] Sculpture and painting imitate the external world in order to express, to present internal, spiritual things.[41] Music, like architecture, does not imitate anything, and, like architecture, it relies on mathematical proportions; but, unlike architecture, it serves no purpose. We do not ask about music's meaning: we feel it.[42] Symonds has little to say about dancing and acting as arts.[43] But of poetry, as one would expect, he has much to say.

Symonds, as I have suggested, places poetry highest of all the arts. He admits that its sensuous appeal is limited, but he shows that this deficiency is balanced by its intellectual intensity. Its material is that which men use in expressing their ideas and emotions. "To the bounds of its empire," he says, "there is no end. It embraces in its more abstract being all the arts. . . . It is the metaphysic of the fine arts."[44] Symonds claims

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[40] Essays, p. 91.

[41] Ibid., p. 92

[42] Ibid., pp. 95-6.

[43] See ibid., pp. 91-2.

[44] Ibid., p. 99. It should be said, however, that he does not think of poetry as the standard for the other arts, any more than he thinks of music in that way. See The Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds, collected by Horatio F. Brown (New York, 1923), p. 39. The term "metaphysic" is used throughout Symonds' work as descriptive of poetry. See Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama (New York, 1913), p. 11.

nothing insignificant for this highest of the arts: Poetry, more than any other art, he says, fulfills the requirement of all art, that it manifest "the human spirit by man to man in beautiful form. . . ." Words "are the spirit manifested to itself in symbols with no sensual alloy," and poetry represents in words "life and all that life implies." Poetry without spiritual content does not exist. Meaningless poetry is a contradiction in terms. "The best poetry is that which reproduces the most of life, or its intensest moments." Poetry falls short of the other arts in sensuous concreteness. But, whereas the other arts are limited in what they can say, poetry can express everything "which has entered into the life of man."[45] Poetry may not appeal, as the other arts do, immediately to the senses, but

> the elixir which it affords to the mind, its quintessence extracted from all things of sense, reacts through intellectual perception upon all the faculties that make men what they are.[46]

Although Symonds gives poetry the palm as the highest of the arts, yet, like Saintsbury,[47] he does not agree with Matthew Arnold that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life.

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[45] Essays, pp. 100-1.

[46] Ibid., p. 101.

[47] Saintsbury may be said to take the literature-for-literature's sake position. The criticism of life, he maintained, was not one of the things essential to poetry (History of Nineteenth Century Literature [New York, 1898], pp. 61-2).

Poetry, he says, "is not so much a criticism of life as an revelation of life, a presentment of life according to the poet's capacity for observing and displaying it in forms that reproduce it for his reader."[48] The poet is not a judge, but a seer and reporter. No matter what the content of poetry, he says, the medium in which it is couched must be poetry. Imagination, fancy, creative genius, style, dramatic energy, passion, sympathy, enthusiasm--these are some of the things found in great poetry.[49] But the final test of a poet's greatness is

> his adequacy to human nature at its best; his feeling for the balance of sense, emotion, will, intellect in moral harmony; his faculty for regarding the whole of life, and representing it in all its largeness.[50]

Matthew Arnold, he concludes, in calling poetry a criticism of life, stressed too much the "intellectual and moral aspects of life."[51]

Nor does Symonds agree with Pater that all arts aspire to the condition of music, because, he claims, this theory

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[48]Essays, p. 343.

[49]Ibid., pp. 343-4. It will be noted that these are qualities of the poetry and not "faculties" used in artistic creation.

[50]Ibid., p. 346.

[51]Ibid., p. 359.

stresses too much the sensuous aspect of art.[52] To those who say that what Pater means is that in music form and content are inseparably one, and that all art aspires to this condition, Symonds would answer that Pater also says that art strives "to be independent of mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material."[53] He mentions statements by Milton, Sidney, Shelley, Goethe, Rossetti, Michael Angelo, and Beethoven--without directly quoting these men, however--which deny the substance of Pater's words.[54] Symonds attributes Pater's statements on the arts and music to "personal susceptibilities."[55]

Though Symonds does not agree with Arnold, then, that poetry should be a criticism of life, he does give poetry first place in the hierarchy of the arts because to its sensuous appeal, it adds an intellectual intensity to which the other arts cannot aspire.

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Quoted by Symonds, ibid., p. 360. See Pater, The Renaissance, (New York, n.d.), p. 115.

[54] Essays, p. 363

[55] Ibid., p. 364.

3. The Idea of Progress

It seems logical at this point to consider briefly an extra-artistic idea which is not entertained exclusively by the Romantics, though it is found among the members of the group who treat of social matters in broad terms. I refer to the idea of progress, which permeates Symonds' theoretical criticism and appears at frequent intervals in his practical criticism and in his historical writing.

The idea is reflected in the body of work I am discussing in two ways: Symonds expresses the notion that criticism may eventually become deductive, and he assumes that the history of modern Europe is a progressive striving towards the realization of the democratic ideal.[56] Bury, the authoritative historian of the idea of progress, explains that it was popular in the nineteenth century because of its close association with the doctrine of evolution. To base progress on evolution, Bury says, one must show 1) that social life obeys the same general laws of evolution as nature, and 2) that the process involves an increase of happiness. Herbert Spencer in Social Statics (1851) and in First Principles (1862) convinced his contemporaries of the truth of these ideas. In the 1870's and 1880's, therefore, says Bury, the idea of progress

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[56]See below p.296. The idea of progress is found in criticism also in Eugene Véron, Aesthetics, (London and Philadelphia, 1879), pp. xv-xvi.

became a general article of faith.[57] But the idea can be found, too, in the work of men who came before Spencer.

The writers with whom Symonds seems to have been acquainted are Kant,[58] Hegel,[59] Mme. de Staël,[60] Vico through Michelet,[61] Comte,[62] and Buckle.[63] Symonds' idea of progress is what Bury calls a "closed system," like Comte's,[64] that is, progress is said to operate up to a certain point. That point in Symonds' conception seems to be the time when criticism can be deductive and when the idea of democracy will be realized. If he sees progress as extending beyond these points, he does not mention the fact. But he seems to have accepted the idea of progress implicitly, and he makes no distinction between progress in science and progress in art, as Pascal did.[65]

I may add that, though I feel that Symonds was introduced to the doctrine of progress by Romantic writers like those I have mentioned and especially by historians,

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[57] J. B. Bury, The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth, (London, 1920), pp. 335-6.

[58] Ibid., p. 249.

[59] Ibid., pp. 255-6.

[60] Ibid., p. 263.

[61] Ibid., pp. 269-71. And in the original, too. ~~See J.A.S., p. 405.~~

[62] Ibid., pp. 301-5.

[63] Ibid., p. 310

[64] Ibid., p. 304

[65] See J. E. Spingarn, "The New Criticism," American Critical Essays XIXth and XXth Centuries, p. 448.

yet the idea is found in English Romantic literature also. Coleridge says that there are two principles in every European state: "Permanency and Progression."[66] The examples I have given from Keats[67] to illustrate his use of the principle of evolution may serve also to illustrate his use of the idea of progress. Also, Shelley in Queen Mab speaks to the spirit of nature about passive things fulfilling her will, and he adds:

> Like theirs, [man's] age of endless peace,
> Which time is fast maturing,
> Will swiftly, surely come.[68]

4. The Ideas of Democracy and of Democratic Art

The idea of progress, however, is somehow fused in Symonds' mind with the idea of democracy. Democracy itself is related to his pantheism:

> It has been my object [he writes in his autobiography] to assimilate culture to the simplest things in man's life, and to assume from human sympathy of the crudest kind fuel and fire for the vivifying of ideas. By means of this philosophy I have been enabled to revive from mortal sickness, and what is perhaps more, to apprehend the religious doctrine of democracy, the equality and homogeneity of human beings, the divinity enclosed in all.[69]

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[66] Table-Talk (January 1, 1833), Works, VI, p. 259.

[67] See above, p. 23.

[68] Ll. 235-7.

[69] Horatio F. Brown, John Addington Symonds, Second Edition (London, 1903), p. 34.

Indeed, democracy is for Symonds an ideal which is to be reached in the future. As will be seen shortly, he believes that a new kind of art will be the democratic; also, he thinks that the Renaissance was the first stage in the process of liberation which will end in the realization of the democratic ideal. In fact, on the strength of his interest in democracy one may see in Symonds the publicist of the "Romantic" mind as it is described by Gilbert and Kuhn, because

> It is a characteristic. . . .of the Romantic spirit to connect dreams of the past with Utopian hopes and schemes for the future. This combination of the romantic glorification of bygone days and a program for the England of the future was present in [William] Morris. In the New World across the sea it was natural that an enthusiasm for a popular art--an art looking ahead and honestly expressive of the lives and ambitions of the proletariat and of pioneering heroes--should come into being.[70]

In Symonds the glorified bygone days are those of the Renaissance; his program for the future lies in the realization of the democratic ideal and in the birth of a new democratic art.

The one respect in which Symonds is like William Morris, but in which he differs from his great contemporaries, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold, and from his lesser contemporaries like Wilde and Whistler, is that he believes in a sort of mystical "people" whose turn it was to express themselves

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[70]Gilbert and Kuhn, op. cit., pp. 424-5.

in art.[71] There seems little doubt that Symonds' belief that Democratic art would supersede what he calls the Romantic type of art is due to his enthusiasm for Walt Whitman, with whose poetry he was acquainted early in life,[72] and whose poetry represented democratic art in his mind. Symonds' democratic convictions are apparent in everything he writes, and his comradeship for peasants of all types and in all places--notable during the last fifteen years of his life, which he spent at Davos in Switzerland[73] testifies to a genuine, not a condescending

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[71] To what extent the great Victorians did not believe in democracy is discussed by Benjamin Evans Lippincott in Victorian Critics of Democracy (Minneapolis, 1938). Arnold seems to have been more tolerant of the democratic idea than were Carlyle and Ruskin (See p. 111). In a letter to J. E. Pearson, Symonds says: ". . . .we in our studies dream and reason. The people lives and acts and feels. It is possible that the new synthesis, if one there is to be, may arise from the proletariate, as Christianity, as Buddhism, as the Mosaic Theocracy before it" (Letters and Papers, p. 50).

[72] Ibid, p. 20. Symonds indicates that he knew Whitman's work when he (Symonds) was twenty-seven; but, according to a statement in his Walt Whitman (London, 1893), p. 157, he knew that work two years earlier. The Essays were published some twenty-five years after the date on which Whitman's name first appears in the Letters and Papers. Symonds' preoccupation with democracy seems to derive almost entirely from the historians and from Whitman, for in his writings he seems practically unaware of the democratic leanings of the Romantics, and even of so important a "Democrat" as Rousseau.

[73] This is described in Margaret Symonds, Out of the Past (New York, 1925), pp. 202ff.

interest in the people. The democratic idea seemed to him one of the important facts of the nineteenth century, and since he felt that life was more than literature,[74] he felt too that literature was the hand-maiden of life, and that the democratic ideal could not be ignored if literature was to be vital and purposive.[75] The ability of one who had been trained in the classics to appreciate and emulate a writer like Walt Whitman, as Symonds did, testifies to a breadth of mind, surely, which few men possess.[76]

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[74]See In the Key of Blue (London and New York, 1893), p. 208

[75]He calls Pierre Loti's Mon Frère Yves "a great book in the 'democratic art' style," and says, "I cannot regard such books as mere plots. They are always human documents for me" (Letters and Papers, p. 164).

[76]Symonds himself has explained Walt Whitman's profound effect upon him. I quote from his Walt Whitman, (pp. 157-160): "I had received the ordinary English gentleman's education at Harrow and Oxford. Being physically below the average in health and strength, my development proceeded more upon the intellectual than the athletic side. In a word, I was decidedly academical, and in danger of becoming a prig. What was more, my constitution in the year 1865 seemed to have broken down, and no career in life lay open to me. In the autumn of that year, my friend Frederic Myers read me aloud a poem from 'Leaves of Grass.' We were together in his rooms at Trinity College, Cambridge; and I can well remember the effect of his sonorous voice rolling out sentence after sentence, sending electric thrills through the very marrow of my mind. I immediately procured the Boston edition of 1860-61, and began to study it attentively. It cannot be denied that much in Whitman puzzled and repelled me. But it was the aesthetic, not the moral, sensibility that suffered; for I felt at once that his method of treating sexual things (the common stumbling-block to beginners) was the right one, and wished that I had come across 'Children of Adam' several years earlier. My academical

Accepting the idea of democracy, Symonds adopts an unconventional classification of the arts. He does not agree with Hegel that the arts should be classified on the basis of the fitness of various spiritual contents

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[76]footnote, continued

prejudices, the literary instincts trained by two decades of Greek and Latin studies, the refinements of culture, and the exclusiveness of aristocratic breeding, revolted against the uncouthness, roughness, irregularity, coarseness, of the poet and his style. But, in the course of a short time, Whitman delivered my soul of these debilities. As I have elsewhere said in print, he taught me to comprehend the harmony between the democratic spirit, science, and that larger religion to which the modern world is being led by the conception of human brotherhood, and by the spirituality inherent in any really scientific view of the universe. He gave body, concrete vitality, to the religious creed which I had been already forming for myself upon the study of Goethe, Greek and Roman Stoics, Giordano Bruno, and the founders of the evolutionary doctrine. He inspired me with faith, and made me feel that optimism was not unreasonable. This gave me great cheer in those evil years of enforced idleness and intellectual torpor which my health imposed upon me. Moreover, he helped to free me from many conceits and pettinesses to which academical culture is liable. He opened my eyes to beauty, goodness and greatness which may be found in all worthy human beings, the humblest and the highest. He made me respect personality more than attainments or position in the world. Through him, I stripped my soul of social prejudices. Through him, I have been able to fraternize in comradeship with men of all classes and several races, irrespective of their caste, creed, occupation, and special training. To him I owe some of the best friends I now can claim--sons of the soil, hard-workers 'natural and nonchalant,' 'powerful uneducated' persons.

"Only those who have been condemned by imperfect health to take a back-seat in life so far as physical enjoyments are concerned, and who have also chosen the career of literary study, can understand what is meant by the deliverance from foibles besetting invalids and pedants for which I have to thank Walt Whitman."

for sensuous presentation.[77] Instead, he classifies the arts under three headings: the classical, the romantic, and the democratic. He uses the broader definition for classical art: ". . . . in whatever style an artist works," he says, echoing Goethe, "the style will be classical, provided the work itself be good, sincere, and representative of sterling thought."[78] But he accepts also the usual definition of classical art, by which it is considered to be a derivative art of Europe after the Renaissance, the art based on the "rules" supposedly followed by the ancients.[79] Romantic art, he says, was revolutionary art, a reversion to the "literature and architecture of feudalism." Classicism was aristocratic; romanticism, though it was revolutionary, was no less aristocratic. Symonds finds the "cardinal phenomenon of the nineteenth century" (aside, we assume, from the advent of science)[80] to be "the advent of the people." A new mode of utterance was therefore made possible, and this new mode of utterance Symonds calls democratic art.[81]

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[77]See G. F. W. Hegel, Introduction to the Philosophy of Fine Art, tr. Bernard Bosanquet (London, 1905), Ch. V.

[78]Essays, p. 255

[79]Ibid., pp. 255-7

[80]Which he called "the sister of Democracy" (ibid., p. 280).

[81]Ibid., p. 257

Most of Symonds' theoretical criticism is not "original," since most of its details can be discovered among the dicta of earlier writers. But he does make one contribution to criticism in that he anticipates the development of a "proletarian" literature. He no doubt derives some notion of the people as a group from Hegel, and from the social novelists of his day--though there is no evidence that he read any of the latter and there is evidence that he was rather indifferent to the social problems of his age;[82] or from social theorists like Engels and Marx--though there is no evidence that he knew their work. The poetry of Walt Whitman, however, arouses in him the enthusiasm which causes him to declare that democratic art is the art of the future. This art, he says, one "for the people, of the people," is demanded if art is to retain its hold on reality.[83]

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[82]See Letters and Papers, p. 65: "I hope you will not torment yourself too much about the social questions. How utterly ridiculous it would be to fling away the advantages and duties of a position to which you have been born and an education you have received, for the will-o'-the-wisp of what you know not! It is but little that any of us can comprehend of so-called social questions. Yet we must know more about those which affect our section of the nation than about those which concern the proletariate. In the vast mass of human ignorance aspiring to knowledge and sticking fast to sciolism, perhaps the most pitiable is communistic sociology" (Letter to Horatio F. Brown, April 7, 1874): Such is Symonds' real feeling about the problems of the proletariat, it would seem. How sincere, then, are his outpourings of emotion about the art of the people?

[83]Essays, p. 258

What is democratic art? Symonds answers that it is

> an art free in its choice of style, free in its choice of subject; an art which has recovered sobriety after the delirium of romantic revolution; but which retains from that reactionary movement one precious principle--that nothing in nature or in man is unpoetical, if treated by a mind which feels its poetry and can interpret it.[84]

Such art is necessary because democracy "is a fact, the main fact. . . . of our epoch."[85] And thinking about democratic art leads Symonds to combine the idea with a statement of the province of art: "The duty of art in the immediate future," he says, "is to manifest the immanence of the divine in nature and man. While so doing . . . . art will once more serve the permanent spiritual needs of humanity. This is Democratic Art."[86]

These few ideas which I have considered are not in the psychological tradition, but they are a part of Romantic thought. The idea of progress was not, of course, the exclusive property of the Romantic thinkers, but it surely received encouragement from them. The idea of democracy was the basis of much Romantic thought and is prominent in Byron and Shelley; but Whitman's treatment of the idea most impressed Symonds and from Whitman he took it, as well as the attendant idea of the

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[84] Ibid., p. 257

[85] Ibid., p. 261

[86] Ibid., p. 288

democratic art of the future. The idea of the autonomy of art is an assumption of the German and English romantics, and was far from new in Symonds' day, though it afforded a sharp contrast with Ruskin's insistence upon the close relationship between art and morals. The idea that poetry is the highest of the arts is so commonly accepted by critics that Symonds' statement that it is the metaphysic of the fine arts can be matched by earlier assertions like Wordsworth's, that it is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge" and that it is "the first and last of all knowledge,"[87] as well as by the statements of Hegel, Coleridge, Schopenhauer, and Shelley which I have mentioned. In short, it may be said that Symonds adopts general ideas about art which were held by his Romantic predecessors and that he somehow relates them to social ideas which were also held by these predecessors. Thus, in the belief of Symonds, the autonomous thing which is art undergoes modification under the pressure of democratic social tendencies in a process which suggests "evolution" and is called progress.

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[87] "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1800), Prose Works, I, p. 91.

B. Ideas of Symonds in the Psychological Tradition

Before discussing the ideas in Symonds' criticism which are common among Romantic critics and which at the same time belong to the psychological tradition, it may be well for me to say what I mean by "psychological criticism" and what I consider the psychological critic to be.

I call a psychological critic one who does not devise theories out of his imagination or out of some metaphysical system, but who bases his dicta on actual experience. He is concerned with the mental and emotional operations which coincide with the act of creation; he is concerned also with the effects, mental and emotional, of art upon the individual who perceives it. Thus Santayana says that beauty is "pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing"; that it "is a value, that is, it is not a perception of a matter of fact or of a relation: it is an emotion, an affection of our volitional and appreciative nature."[89] Here beauty is explained in terms of human emotion. Similarly, when Herbert Read says that art is an attempt to create pleasing forms, and that beauty "is a unity of formal relations among our

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[89]George Santayana, The Sense of Beauty (New York, 1936), p. 39. The italics are mine.

sense-perceptions,"[90] he is defining art and beauty as psychological matters because they appeal to the senses. The emotions, the mind, the senses--these are the psychological critic's material, and he tries to explain and to describe art by referring to them.

It should be said, however, that psychological criticism itself need have nothing to do with the laboratory. Psychological criticism is based on observation and on experience, it is true, but it is not based on an observation of emotions and the senses isolated from art. In laboratory psychology the emotional reaction is observed of course; in preparing for criticism, however, the psychological critic observes the emotional reaction only as it explains something with reference to art or to an art-work. In the laboratory, the senses and the emotional reactions are the point of attention; in psychological criticism the art-work is the point of attention, though the senses and emotional reactions explain or describe it. In other words, psychology in the laboratory may be psychology, but it is not necessarily criticism. To the psychological critic, on the other hand, the purpose of criticism is to pass judgment of one kind or another, and criticism can begin only on the psychological plane.

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[90] The Anatomy of Art (New York, 1932), pp. 4-5. In England this book was called The Meaning of Art.

The psychological critic thinks in terms of the creator, of the art-work, and of the individual who apprehends the art-work.

He thinks of creator as a man, not as an artist; as a man creating an art-work for men--for humanity, not for other poets or artists. The creator works, then, as a human being with thoughts and emotions, not as a mere craftsman, not as a specialist in form. His subject is important to him, as Wordsworth pointed out, and the more it concerns the generality of men, the better it is for the purposes of art. The creator must have a knowledge of human nature, and he must be interested in the truths of human nature. Even the subject of man as a social creature may concern him because environmental factors operate on the psychological qualities, upon the thought and feelings, of the individual.

The creator of an art-work employs himself, then, with the primary laws of human nature, and the psychological critic conceives of him as an impassioned, thinking human being with a tendency to make new forms. The artist has certain marked habits of association; he works with feelings--those of pleasure and pain, those of moral import; he works intuitively, perhaps, but with thought and design; and sometimes he exhibits a refinement and high degree of development of certain human faculties--those of wit, fancy, reason, understanding, or imagination--

which other men do not have in like proportion. Even the tendency to create new forms can be explained psychologically--for did not Kant say that the mind alone is formative, and does not the artist have in an unusual degree the formative characteristics of the human mind? The psychological critic thinks of the artist not as someone working exclusively for men of his own profession, but as one who deals with all experiences of men and who works for all men in so far as they can understand him.

As for the art-work itself, the psychological critic thinks of it as composed of matter which is of interest to all men and as made in a manner which is pleasing to them. The entire art-work may be thought of as an expression of the human imagination, or as consisting of a subject concerned with the permanent facts of human nature and with the truths of the human heart and soul. Thus it may reveal the characteristics of the artist himself, or those of more general humanity. Poetry, for instance, is, in the words of Wordsworth, an "image of man and of nature."[91] Thus it is that though a man like Coleridge will make much of the meter of poetry, the psychological critic, putting the matter of art in the first place, will think that form should be adapted to it, and that form must grow out of the subject. The poet, as

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[91]"Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1800), Prose Works, II, p. 89.

Wordsworth indicated, must have an "organic sensibility," but he begins with a subject which arouses the passions and which becomes an object of artistic representation after it has been molded by thought.

The psychological critic considers, too, the appreciator, who may be himself. The question he asks is, "What is the effect of the art-work on me?" He shows the emotional, the moral, the intellectual effects of the work under examination. These effects, as Shelley and Wordsworth point out, may be excitement, or some more permanent forms of pleasure. They may lead to a kind of enlightenment, and even a certain moral improvement. Therefore Hazlitt could speak in this way:

> Impassioned poetry [he tells us] is an emanation of the moral and intellectual part of our nature, as well as of the sensitive--of the desire to know, the will to act, the power to feel; and it ought to appeal to these different parts of our constitution, in order to be perfect.[92]

Art ought so to affect us because it reflects human nature, its universal laws and truths. "It awakens and enlarges the mind itself," Shelley tells us, "by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought."[93]

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[92] "On Poetry in General," Lectures on the English Poets, Works, V, p. 6

[93] "The Defence of Poetry," Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism, p. 131

It also, Shelley says a bit later, "enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight. . . ."[94] Thus the work of the human mind, which has created something new in form after emotional experience has filtered down through thought, acts upon the human mind itself to make for emotional, moral, and intellectual enrichment.

The psychological criticism of Symonds is supported by the philosophical idea of the limits of possible knowledge; art in his terms is a human activity and not a revelation of an Absolute. The critical ideas which Symonds seems to derive from Romantic thinkers and which belong to the psychological tradition are concerned with the artist and with how his personality is revealed in art; with the art-work itself in that its content must be related to the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of human beings; and with the perceiver and the effect upon him of the art-work.

1. The Limits of Possible Knowledge

Since man is able to know mind only, Symonds is convinced of the limitations of human experience, and of the fact that human beings are bound to act, think, and move in a well-defined sphere. Man's very way of

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[94] Ibid.

apprehending things is indicative of his limitations; man cannot, for instance, find in nature the perfections which he imagines as possibly existing. Symonds therefore suggests that if man had a sympathetic comprehension of the universe, he would perhaps see the perfection of nature, which is a something man cannot probably even imagine.[95]

Hence it is that man cannot get out of himself, cannot apprehend things except as they appear to him. Symonds adds that it does not follow, however, that that man can say definitely that he knows the universe as it is: the most he can say is "that [he] forms an integral part of the world, and that his consciousness is consequently a substantial portion of the whole."[96] Symonds would make psychology of philosophy: "All that Philosophy can do," he says, "is to analyze the mass of human thoughts and feelings, to ascertain the limits within which we apprehend the world, and to show the direction in which our faculties may be applied." Theology and Ontology, he believes, "have no foundation except in the subjectivity of man."[97] But man has power to obtain a partial knowledge of the world, though he is mistaken when he identifies

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[95]Essays, p. 128
[96]Ibid., p. 428
[97]Ibid.

or accounts for the whole by his experience with only a part of it. Yet man is a part of the Force of the universe, and is therefore subject to its laws. Symonds cannot forego a God, a Power, a Something which is the ultimate source of all reality, and he has a "sense of the reality and inscrutability of Being." But more than the few things which man can know, Symonds concludes, he can never understand. He is forever hemmed in by the limits of his nature.[98]

The idea that there are limits to the things which man can know is fundamental to Symonds' criticism as well as to his "philosophy." In the history of English thought, however, it is far from new. It is one of the corollaries of extended scientific investigation, but it appeared long before science reached the state of development it did in the nineteenth century. It was a part of the philosophical system of Kant, though it is not foreign even to earlier thought. The assumption of the following passage from Locke, for instance, is that knowledge is relative:

> Had we senses acute enough [says Locke, speaking of color as a quality of objects] to discern the minute particles of bodies, and the real constitution on which their sensible qualities depend, I doubt not but that they would produce quite different ideas in us; and that which is now the yellow colour of gold would then disappear, and instead of it we

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[98] Ibid., pp. 428-32

> should see an admirable texture of parts, of a certain size and figure. This microscopes plainly discover to us; for what to our naked eye produces a certain colour, is, by thus augmenting the acuteness of our senses, discovered to be quite a different thing; and thus altering, as it were, the proportion of the bulk of the minute parts of a coloured object to our usual sight, produces different ideas from what it did before. . . .[99]

Though the whole theory of the secondary qualities of matter is in point here, this argument takes us farther than a mere consideration of the relation of color to the individual eye; for if our ability to see is limited, and if the senses are the media through which we gain knowledge, what we can know is limited. There are two further implications of this passage to be noted: first, that all knowledge is relative; second, that experience is subjective. Since the microscope changes the appearances of things for us, other instruments adapted for use by the other senses would change the impressions we receive through those senses. Furthermore, if the senses themselves were altered or if any physical condition which controls the functional ability of the senses were altered, our view of the world would be altered. We see things, we must conclude, as our senses allow us to see them. What seems simple to us may be complex, as Spencer pointed out.[100] Therefore things may not in reality be what

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[99]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and A Treatise on the Conduct of the Understanding (Philadelphia, 1853), p. 191.

[100]Herbert Spencer, Principles of Psychology, 2 Vols. (New York, 1897), I, pp. 145-62. Spencer is writing about the substance of mind.

they seem. Our ability to apprehend our world is confined to the ability which our capabilities exhibit. The world is surely not what our senses tell us it is; but that, of course, is not to say that the world does not exist independently of us. We can never know the world, however, except as our senses interpret it to us. Such are the implications of Locke's passage on the effect on human vision of the microscope. These implications, I may add, are found explicitly stated in British philosophy after Locke, notably in the work of Sir William Hamilton and Herbert Spencer.

2. Art as a Human Activity, not as a Revelation of the Absolute

If the conceptions of the relativity of knowledge and the limited capabilities of man are granted, then it follows that art, which is both created and apprehended by man, must be studied not as something divinely inspired, but as something related to human beings, that it must be interpreted as it affects human beings.[101] Art must then take human experience as its subject-matter; it can do nothing else; and that subject-matter is conditioned by what the artist thinks, sees, and feels.

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[101]Compare with Véron: "We address ourselves only to those who believe art to be a purely human affair, and that the source of all poetry is the soul of the poet. As for those who would substitute a farrage of recipes for the personality of the artist, and conventionality for sincerity--we can only look upon them as the worst enemies of art" (op. cit., p. xxv).

It is true that in evaluating art the critic must try to find what Goethe called "abiding relations," but the subject-matter of art can never be anything but the universally human. With this argument Symonds agrees.

Now, Symonds never ventures to ally art with the absolute. As we have seen, his thought is practically unconnected with metaphysics: his two leading ideas concerning the universal are that man belongs to it and is a part of it, and that the principle of law pervades it. The most he ever demands of art is that it express "permanent relations"--how often that Goethean phrase appears in this criticism!--and these relations are permanent human ones and are not connected with the Absolute.

Symonds' theoretical criticism, like the psychological criticism of Coleridge and Wordsworth, is based on the notion that in art it is a mind which imitates,[102] and it is logical therefore to expect that his criticism too is psychological. To the question, "What is Art?", he would answer: "All art is a presentation of the inner human being, his thought and feeling, through the medium of beautiful symbols in words, form, colour, and sound."[103] In another answer to the question he adds that art includes

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[102] Essays, p. 123

[103] Ibid., p. 63

what the artist perceives, thinks, and feels "concerning external nature, mankind, and himself--the world, human life, and his own being. . . ."[104] Art gives form to human consciousness, he says, and he again quotes Goethe, who expressed the opinion that art "is but form-giving." Symonds adds that "Art is a method of expression or presentation," that expressing the feeling or thought of man is "its prime function."[105] Art, he says, is bound up with man's spiritual forces.[106] He does not, therefore, see art as metaphysical in origin.[107] In one instance he

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[104] Ibid., p. 73

[105] Ibid., p. 86. This psychological explanation of the origin of art in feeling and thought reminds one of Coleridge, who says: "[The distinguishing feature of poetry is] that pleasurable emotion, that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the act of composition. . . . [In poetry] is produced a more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and of the human heart, united with a constant activity modifying and correcting these truths by that sort of pleasurable emotion, which the exertion of all our faculties gives in a certain degree. . . ." ("Definition of Poetry," Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 20). Similar ideas can be found in Wordsworth, who thinks of poetry as the creation of a man who feels and thinks and has an "organic sensibility."

[106] Essays, p. 116. This idea seems to echo Coleridge and Wordsworth also.

[107] So far as I am able to determine, Symonds had little interest in metaphysics. In a letter, written when he was twenty-five, he comments thus on a conversation which he heard carried on by Woolner, Tennyson, Gladstone, Holman Hunt, and his own father: "In all this metaphysical vagueness about matter, morals, the existence of evil, and the evidences of God there was something almost childish. Such points pass with most men for settled as insoluble after a time" (Letters and Papers, p. 6). Other instances on which Symonds expressed similar opinions can be found.

quotes Hegel on beauty, which Hegel calls "die sinnliche Erscheinung der Idee,"[108] but he explains that this statement expresses in metaphysical form the fact that art is "obliged to cast roots down into sense, and to flower up into thought, remaining within the province where these extremes of consciousness interpenetrate."[109]

Symonds' constant concern is with the utility of art. What does it do for men? we may assume is the question he always has in mind. In taking this attitude he has the example of Aristotle to follow. The psychological effects of art are surely one of the subjects of the Poetics, though they are of course not so defined. Aristotle maintains, for instance, that "The poet. . . . should put himself as much as possible in the place of the spectator. . . ."[110] In discussing the difference between the epic narrative and the tragedy, Aristotle says that the epic narrative "admits of many. . . . simultaneous incidents," and that this fact" enables the poet to relieve his hearer and diversify his book by a variety of dissimilar episodes."[111]

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[108] Symonds rephrases this: "The main fact to bear steadily in mind is that beauty is the sensuous manifestation of the idea--that is, of the spiritual element in man and in the world" (Essays, p. 367).

[109] Ibid., p. 179.

[110] The Poetics and Demetrius on Style, Everyman Edition (New York and London, 1934), p. 33.

[111] Ibid., p. 48

And the purgation theory is too well known to bear quotation. In similar fashion, Symonds is concerned with the effect of art on men, and its utility he finds in its psychological effect. He says that the product of the artist's mind stirs the mind of one who apprehends an art-work.[112] Also, the object of art is "to delight and stimulate the mind, not to exercise the brain by logical propositions, nor to excite the appetite by indecent imagery."[113] The artist is allowed to draw upon the whole of human experience to work with "untrammeled liberty and creative power of minds."

a. The Artist: Art as a Revelation of Personality

The assumption that we can know only the things which our minds allow us to know leads logically to the intellectual position that all art is an individual thing, that it is a representation, or, to use a Crocean word, an "expression" of the individual's reaction to his world--"his world," because he cannot know any other. This point of view enables the critic to break down the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity in art, between realism and idealism. In the preface to the

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[112] Essays, p. 168

[113] Ibid., p. 180

third edition (1907) of the Essays Speculative and Suggestive,[114] Horatio F. Brown quotes a letter which Symonds wrote to Henry Holt and Company (New York) on August 7, 1890, a letter in which Symonds' position is exactly stated:

> What I have attempted to demonstrate in these essays [he says] is that the personality of the artist inevitably makes itself felt in any attempt to imitate nature, and that this fact renders a thorough realism in art impossible, while it forces idealism of one sort or another on the artist's work.[115]

It is possible to see, I think, a relationship between this statement and the contention of Goethe that in art and literature personality is everything.[116]

1. The Moral Effect of the Artist's Personality

It is consistent with Symonds' belief in the great place taken by personality in art that he should find that the moral effect of the art-work will be the result of the moral qualities of the artist. Symonds agrees with Goethe that the artist of the great soul--Goethe mentions Sophocles--will always exert a moral

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[114] London, Smith, Elder.

[115] Essays, Third Edition, p. xi. Hereafter the New [Second] Edition will again be used.

[116] Goethe's Literary Essays, ed. J. E. Spingarn (London, 1921), pp. 250-1. See also Saintsbury, History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe, 2 vols. (New York, 1904), III, p. 376.

influence.[117] The effect of art will, then, consist of the character, of the quality of personality, of the artist. Hence Symonds' insistence upon the degree to which personality is revealed in art and upon the preponderance of subjective qualities in it. Art expresses the individuality of the artist, he holds.[118] Thus he thinks that Michelangelo owes his grandeur to his personality,[119] a

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[117] See below, p. 25. This idea is essentially the same as that of Henry James, who maintains that "questions of art are questions (in the widest sense) of execution: questions of morality are quite another affair. . . ." ("The Art of Fiction," American Critical Essays XIXth and XXth Centuries, p. 182.); and that there is "one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer" (Ibid., p. 183).

[118] This is, of course, essentially the position, too, of Sainte-Beuve, who believed that literature is an expression of personality--a theory which J. E. Spingarn rightly calls a "misleading half-truth, if by personality is meant, not the artistic personality which unfolds itself in the work of art, but the complex of external traits which the artist exhibits in his practical life" ("The New Criticism," American Critical Essays XIXth and XXth Centuries, p. 433). It is not clear that Symonds makes the distinction which Spingarn makes here, though I personally think that he believes that personality is revealed in the "artistic personality which unfolds itself in art." But Symonds, like Sainte-Beuve, had too many of the qualities of the biographer not to be interested in "the complex of external traits" which Spingarn mentions.

[119] Renaissance in Italy, I, p. 812.

notion which is in keeping with the ideas of the worth of the individual and of the uniqueness of personality which were entertained by some romantic writers and which were commonly accepted in Symonds' day too, especially among critics like Pater, Wilde, and Symonds, and among early French art for art's sake men like Gautier, Flaubert, Banville, Leconte de Lisle, and, to some degree, Baudelaire.[120]

B. The Identity of Realism and Idealism

It follows that if one accepts Symonds' contention that the artist's personality is revealed in his work, one must accept also his comparison of Realism and Idealism and his assertion that for psychological reasons these are inseparable in art. His definition of the term "Realism" need not detain us long. His "Realism" is not at all Platonic in nature; it means, rather, an impression of reality, and reality is nothing but things as they appear to human beings. Realism is what

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[120]See Ruth C. Child, The Aesthetic of Walter Pater (New York, 1940), p. 78.

It is not inappropriate to mention that another critic who emphasized the psychological basis of art, Véron, stresses the idea that a work of art "rests entirely upon the degree of energy with which it manifests the intellectual character and aesthetic impressions of its author" (op. cit. p. vi). Véron's ideas are in many respects similar to Symonds', but they are expressed in more forthright language.

Zola and his followers attempted to achieve in art--to describe things as they actually are. But the strong subjective element in art, as in all human activities, does not permit a true Realism to exist, Symonds thinks; and the result, as he shows, is that Idealism is a necessary element of the process of artistic creation.

Assuming for a time that Realism and Idealism are separable, Symonds cannot understand why Realism is found only in the revolting, the commonplace, in the vicious: surely beauty and modesty, chastity, strength, and harmony, he says, are equally as real as the ugly. Idealism is not the "moonshiny and insipid"; it is much more than that: it is "the manifestation of consciousness to itself, the pledge to the race of our existing in a process of development." If one assumes that life is in continual progress (as Symonds does), then progress itself implies Idealism in that human aspiration is in the direction of the spiritual.[121]

But Realism and Idealism are present, he finds, in every work of art. Realism is the basis of all art ("the substratum and indispensable condition of all figurative art"). The artist, however, cannot imitate these things exactly as they are. The human mind intervenes. To reproduce in art what he sees in nature, it

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[121] Essays, pp. 117-9

is necessary for the artist to put his own individuality into the art-work. He not only imitates a thing, but he imagines the thing, and the art-work is the imagined thing.[122]

All art is symbolic, Symonds continues, for "it symbolises a conception formed of some external object in the artist's mind." The Realism or Idealism of the art-work will depend, then, upon the quality of the artist's mind, upon his use of materials, and upon his use of technical symbols.[123] But Reality is the starting-place for art, "the sole sound school master which brings us to a sense of ideal beauty."[124] Symonds finds the right understanding between Realism and Idealism in Greek sculpture.[125] He also finds an early expression of the difference between Realism and Idealism in Aristotle: the former, which Symonds defines as "the presentation of natural objects as the artist sees them, as he thinks they are," Aristotle found in Euripides; the latter, which Symonds defines as "the presentation of natural

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[122] Ibid., pp. 119-122

[123] Ibid., p. 124

[124] Ibid., p. 129

[125] Ibid., p. 131

objects as the artist fain would see them, as he thinks they strive to be," Aristotle found in Sophocles.[126] Symonds finds a false Idealism in Sir Joshua Reynolds ("the Grand Style"), in David in France, and in West in England; he sees a reaction against this false Idealism which has ended in the false Realism of Zola: the false Idealists, he says, tried "to dispense with the necessary interrogation of nature," the false Realists "ignore the fact that art is selection and must disengage the elements of beauty inherent in nature."[127]

Thus it would seem that Symonds attempts to effect a compromise between the Idealism of Sir Joshua Reynolds and the Realism of Zola. He therefore accepts the principle that the artist should stay close to nature, but he points out that the artist must select in order to create a work of art. In other words, subjectivity is the crux of his argument: The Ideal is the artist's; if he wishes to select ugly and depressing details for his art-work, that is his privilege; but the Ideality of the art-work is undisputed, nevertheless. On the other hand, the artist must observe in order to be an artist. He cannot follow any generalized Ideal like that of

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[126] Ibid., pp. 133-4

[127] Ibid., pp. 135-6. Earlier (ibid., p. 129) Symonds quoted Sainte-Beuve: "To disengage the elements of beauty"--that is art.

Reynolds.[128]

Symonds was not the first to disapprove of Reynolds' ideal. Reynolds believed that nature should be imitated, but that the true object of imitation was an "ideal beauty superior to what is to be found in individual nature."[129] Reynolds asked for a kind of grand style (as Arnold did, with a difference, in poetry) which was due to generalization and idealization as these are found in Greek and Roman literature. The artist, according to Reynolds, imitates a generalization, "the general idea of nature." The model, Reynolds thought, is appropriately used for practice, but the finished work must be corrected by an idea in the mind.[130] Nature, therefore, is in this view inferior to art. This dogmatic treatment of what can

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[128]A quotation from the Renaissance in Italy (II, p. 303) is in point here: "The criticism and the art-practice of his century," Symonds says, "have combined to shake our faith in the grand style. The spirit of the Romantic movement, penetrating poetry first, then manifesting itself in the reflective writings of Ruio and Lord Lindsay, Ruskin and Gautier, producing the English landscape-painters and pre-Raphaelites, the French realists and Impressionists, has shifted the centre of gravity in taste. Science, too, contributes its quota . . . . Only here and there, under special reactionary influences, as in the Düsseldorf and Munich schools of religious purists, has anything approaching to the eighteenth-century 'grand style' delusion reappeared."

[129]Discourses, ed., with an Introduction by Roger Fry (London, 1905), p. 51.

[130]Ibid., pp. 50, ff.

only be Aristotle's doctrine of ideal imitation was furiously attacked by Blake and Hazlitt, and Ruskin, somewhat later, declared its falseness.

Blake's scorn for Reynolds and his Ideal is expressed in his Notes on Reynolds and in a series of poems called "On Art and Artists." Here Blake scoffs at the "classical" practices of eighteenth-century English painters and at the English nobility and gentry who gave these painters encouragement. But at Reynolds he levels special attacks.[131] Hazlitt too disagrees with Reynolds in that he thinks that ideal expression is extreme expression;[132] in that he thinks of the model as a corrective of the ideal image; and in that he believes that the painter should through sympathy understand what is in his model.[133] Hazlitt emphasizes the individuality and variety of objects in nature,[134] as Goethe

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[131] See William Blake, Poetical Works, ed. John Sampson (London and New York, 1925), pp. 198-209. The epigrams which refer especially to Reynolds are nos. vii, xiv, xv, xvi, xvii, xviii, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, and xxiii.

[132] "On Certain Inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses," Table-Talk, Works, VI, p. 141.

[133] See passim in the essay cited in the preceding note, and also "The Fine Arts," Works, IX, pp. 387-9, in which Hazlitt shows how the Dutch painters copied from real models.

[134] ". . . .nature. . . .is manifold. . . ." ("Remarks on the Systems of Hartley and Helvetius," Works, VII, p. 457; also, "On Genius and Common Sense," Table-Talk, Works, VI, p. 47).

did also. Ruskin as well sees error in Reynolds' position, and he feels that there exists a pernicious influence on painters who follow Reynolds' beliefs that artists should study the old painters and that by academical study they may produce works which represent religious or heroic emotions which they themselves never had.[135]

If Symonds finds the generalized Ideal of Reynolds an impossibility, he finds the "Realism" of the Zolaesque novel equally untenable, since, like every work of art, even this type of literature is a construct of the imagination. In a discussion of La Bête Humaine Symonds thus sums up his attitude towards the subject of Realism and Idealism:

> Zola's realism consists, then, in his careful attention to details, in the naturalness of his connecting motives, and in his frank acceptance of all things human which present themselves to his observing brain. The idealism which I have been insisting on, which justifies us in calling La Bête Humaine a poem, has to be sought in the method whereby these separate parcels of the plot are woven together, and also in the dominating conception contained in the title which gives unity to the whole work. We are not in the real region of reality, but in the region of constructive imagination from the first to the last line of the novel. If that be not the essence of idealism--this working of the artist's

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[135] John Ruskin, Studies in the "Discourses" of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Lecture I, Works, Library Edition, 39 Vols. (London and New York, 1903-12), XXII, p. 494.

> brain not in but on the subject-matter of the external world and human nature--I do not know what meaning to give to the term.[136]

3. Le Style c'est l'Homme

It is clear that for Symonds, as for such men as Pater, Swinburne, Goethe, and Hegel, subjectivity is of first importance in art; and this subjectivity to Symonds is the characteristic of the artist as man, not only of the artist as an individual. The ideality of art as Symonds sees it is the result of the inability of man exactly to reproduce his model, which makes a thorough-going reality in art impossible. The painter, Symonds says, echoing Carlyle, is not able to be a camera; but the painter creates an art-work, something which the camera cannot do. The painter's art-work is satisfactory to men, because it contains elements subjective to the artist as man and subjective to its beholders as men. But the more evident subjectivity of the artist as in-

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[136] *In the Key of Blue*, p. 131. In his definition of what he calls "the essence of idealism" Symonds is close to the position of Coleridge and Wordsworth that the artist is a man who deals with emotions and thoughts of men. The poet, for instance, is, according to Wordsworth, one who has "a greater knowledge of human nature" ("Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads* [1800], *Prose Works*, II, p. 88).

dividual is difficult to distinguish from his subjectivity as man. There is one aspect of art, we are told, in which individuality shows itself, however; that aspect of art is style: Le style c'est l'homme.

Style, broadly speaking, is, according to Symonds, a "mode of expression or presentation,"[137] and standards of style (tastes in qualities of style) change according to the fashion and according to the age. But criticism attempts to discover the permanently good or bad in style, that which does not change with a change in taste, that which does not depend upon personal prejudice or partiality.[138] Style in literature is therefore defined as "the adequate investiture of thought with language;"[139] Symonds moreover believes that thought is prior to language and that for every thought there are words which best fit it.[140] The writer aims, therefore, at finding the words which best fit his thought, and in order to do so, he must place his greatest attention on thought.[141] Style is the result, then, of how a man thinks and feels;

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[137] Essays, p. 182.

[138] Ibid., pp. 182-3.

[139] Ibid., p. 183.

[140] Ibid., pp. 183-5 and 442-3.

[141] Ibid., p. 185.

since there is so intimate a connection between thought and language, individual style will be revealed through a man's command of language. Style must be studied from two points of view--from that of the individual and from that of the language itself. A work of art contains both types of style.[142] In the narrower sense, in fact, style is a branch of rhetoric: this is style considered objectively, as a manner proper in poetry, argument, drama, history, and other forms of discourse.[143] The idea that there is an intimate connection between thought and style and that for every thought there are words that best fit it is found in De Quincey as well as in Wordsworth, upon whose notion of style De Quincey reports. The latter maintains that manner must "become confluent with matter," and then he adds:

> [Wordsworth's] remark was by far the weightiest thing we ever heard on the subject of style; and it was this: that it is in the

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[142] Ibid., pp. 185-7. I believe that though Symonds is speaking only of the language-arts, we may safely assume that the principles of style which he lays down are applicable to any art. He says, however, that style is more important in a language-art since in no art is the relation of content to form so intimate (ibid., p. 188).

[143] Ibid., pp. 188-9.

> highest degree unphilosophic to call language or diction "the dress of thoughts." And what was it then that he would substitute? Why this: he would call it "the incarnation of thoughts." Never in one word was so profound a truth conveyed.[144]

De Quincey himself has this to add to Wordsworth's remark:

> In what proportion the thoughts are subjective, in that same proportion does the very essence become identical with the expression, and the style become confluent with the matter.[145]

Though De Quincey explains the existence of the proper rapport between thought and style partly in terms of the artist's subjectivity, Ruskin later explains it, as Symonds does also, in terms of the artist's thought, of his intention:

> . . . . the style or manner of an artist [he says] is, in all good art, nothing but the best means of getting at the particular truth which the artist wanted . . . .[146]

And in yet another place he explains style in terms of truth, which this time means the demonstrable, not something transcendental:

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[144] "Style, Part IV, "Works, ed. D. Masson, 14 Vols. (London, 1890), X, pp. 229-30.

[145] Ibid., Works, X, p. 230.

[146] Modern Painters, I, Pt. II, Sec. I, Ch. VIII, Works, III, p. 193

> What is meant by style in the constant sense of exact scholarship is literally the pillar and ground of the Truth; that is to say, it is the method of language by which any true thing may be most closely both uttered and established . . . .[147]

Thus both Wordsworth and Ruskin stress the artist's purpose, his thought, his idea, as the basis of style; and Symonds' conception of style, of the relation of matter to manner, seems to derive from the earlier men.

Symonds is, as one would expect, more interested in recognizing certain manifestations of personality in style than in objectively studying style itself. He supposes that since no two men are ever "born with the same physical, mental, and moral nature, at the same moment under precisely the same conditions, and using the same language," the styles of no two men can be the same. Were two such men ever to exist, they would be identical and their styles would be the same. Style is, he says, "an index to character."[148] Broad distinctions of moral and emotional temperament can be detected in literary style.

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[147]"Fiction, Fair and Foul, III," On the Old Road, Works, XXXIV, p. 334, note 3.

[148]Essays, p. 235. Symonds mentions Emile Hennequin (La Critique Scientifique [Paris: Perrin et Cie, 1888]) on personal style and calls his book "an important contribution to the psychology of style" (Essays, p. 239). It should be noted, however, that Symonds was not influenced by Hennequin.

Tendencies toward exaggeration or reserve, toward sentimentality or irony, sincerity or affectation--Symonds mentions others--these are disclosed in style.[149] The abstract thinker's style differs from that of the concrete thinker; that of the analytical thinker from the synthetic; the ratio-cinative from the intuitive; the logical from the imaginative; the scientific from the poetical. Physically active men write differently from sedentary ones. Education, social environment, profession, place of residence--these affect a man's outlook on life, and therefore his style.[150]

The principles of style, Symonds believes, are these: precision ("verity of utterance, truth to the thing presented"),[151] beauty of language, the art of transition,[152] thought "vigorous and well-digested," and idiomatic diction.[153] Like Ben Jonson, Symonds recommends the reading of great writers as an exercise in the preparation for developing a style.[154]

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[149] Ibid., p. 237

[150] Ibid., pp. 237-9. For illustrations of these principles, see pp. 239-41.

[151] Ibid., pp.241-2

[152] Ibid., pp. 242-5

[153] Ibid., p. 245

[154] Ibid., pp. 248-9

In the matter of style, we are told, the unfailing subjectivity of man in his artistic creations shows itself. Style reveals the man, or, as Goethe said, "Altogether, the style of a writer is a faithful representation of his mind."[155] It would not be untrue, I think, to say that in all aspects of art Symonds sees the revelation of personality. In style, however, he sees more than that; therein he finds partly also the revelation of the milieu, of the artist's age and race.[156]

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[155] Goethe's Literary Essays, p. 266.

[156] I should like to stop here a moment to indicate that the dual aspect of style--its revelation of the artist's personality, and of his milieu--is found also, as Miss Child shows (The Aesthetic of Walter Pater, p. 66-7), in Pater, who believes "That ages have their genius as well as the individual, that in every age there is a peculiar ensemble of conditions which determines a common character in every product of that age, in business and art, in fashion and speculation, in religion and manner, in men's very faces. . . ." (Plato and Platonism [London, 1910], pp. 9-10). Style, Pater also shows, is the age, as well as the man ("Postscript," Appreciations, with an Essay on Style [London, 1911], p. 261).

4. The Artist's Contribution to His Art

Symonds insists that the object of art is to give delight to the mind. This delight is the result of more than imitation of what the artist wishes to represent; it is found in the artist "distinct from his mimetic skill":[157] That is to say that to succeed in effecting a close imitation or in making a copy is not enough in art. The artist contributes certain indispensable qualities of his own to his work.[158]

And the first of these qualities is that of beauty. By "beauty" Symonds seems to mean ideal beauty, and his theory is closely allied with Aristotle's dictum on ideal imitation, the dictum that the painter makes a likeness true to life, but more beautiful.[159] Symonds, however,

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[157] Essays, p. 150.

[158] I am reminded of A. W. von Schlegel, who says: "But, in the fine arts, mere imitation is always fruitless; what we borrow from others must be again as it were born in us, to produce a poetical effect. Of what avail is all foreign imitation? Art cannot exist without nature, and man can give nothing to his fellow men but himself" (A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. John Black [Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, 1833], p. 4; see also Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur, Sämmtliche Werke, ed. Eduard Boecking, 12 Bände [Leipzig, 1846-7], V, p. 8). There are statements in Coleridge, as well as in Carlyle, which seem to echo this passage.

[159] Poetics, pp. 31 and 52.

explains the existence of beauty in psychological terms: "In a certain sense," he says, "art can never rival nature in beauty," because man "is unable to transcend the order which he helps to constitute."[160] Symonds believes that man's mind is "the most perfect of existences at present known to us," and since it is the most perfect, whatever it sees "in the external world lacks something in comparison with itself."[161] The mind supplies this something. The beauty which is not found in nature, Symonds continues, is the beauty of "complex totalities"; the beauty which is found in nature is re-formed by the human mind, and the beauty which then results is "that of mind, imagination, feeling." It is this beauty, he goes on to say,

> where the very best things that can be seen in nature can be educed, and, as it were, quintessenced by human thought, expressed in form of human skill, and gifted with immortal life by human genius--it is this synthetic, intellectual, spirit-penetrated beauty to which the arts aspire.[162]

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[160]See also Hazlitt, "Remarks on the Systems of Hartley and Helvetius," Works, VII, p. 457.

[161]Essays, p. 151.

[162]This idea is expressed later (ibid., p. 152) in this way: The mind, after reflecting on nature and the beauties of nature, becomes aware of an infinity which it can grasp only through thought and feeling, an infinity "which shall never be fully revealed on this earth, and which poetry and art bring nearer to our sensuous perception." Symonds always insists upon the compensatory character of the subjective aspects of art. Art, he says, is inferior to nature, and artists, since they

Beauty in art is, then, a human beauty which results from the attempt of the artist to abstract beauty from nature and give it form. But it is clear that art cannot rival nature in beauty.

This idea, that art cannot hope to rival nature but may only hope to seek her perfection, is found also in Goethe. In one of his famous conversations with Eckermann, Goethe is reported as saying that he is amused by aesthetical people who attempt to find a single conception for beauty. "Das Schöne," he says, "ist ein Urphänomen, das zwar nie selber zur Erscheinung kommt, dessen Abglanz aber in tausend verschiedenen Aeusserungen des schaffenden Geistes sichtbar wird und so mannichfaltig und so verschiedenartig ist als die Natur selber." Thereupon Eckermann suggests that he has often heard it said that nature is always beautiful, but that "sie sei die Verzweiflung des Künstlers, indem er selten fähig sei, sie ganz zu erreichen." And though Goethe does not agree that nature is always beautiful, he does seem to agree

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[162]footnote continued
cannot rival reality, use their limitations adroitly and introduce subjective elements in their art in order to compensate for the deficiencies of their product when it is compared to nature (ibid., p. 160).

It is worth noting that Symonds does not really define the term "beauty"; nor does he consider it as any more than just one quality of an art-work. The aesthetic experience must therefore be more than a recognition of the beautiful.

that the artist cannot find it in his power to equal her beauty.[163]

A similar idea, I may add, is found also in Hazlitt,[164] and in Ruskin. From the latter it may not be irrelevant to quote:

> This infinite universe [he says] is unfathomable, inconceivable, in its whole; every human creature must slowly spell out, and long contemplate, such part of it for those beneath him; extricating it from infinity, as one gathers a violet out of grass . . . .[165]

The second of the qualities which Symonds says the artist adds to his imitation of nature is that of composition; and composition, he feels, is "a constituent of intellectual beauty." It implies balance, proportion, symmetry, subordination of the part to the whole. Composition is "something less determined by emotion," something "more strictly calculated," more scientific.[166] Now, composition is necessary in art, for it too, like beauty, is a compensation to man for his subjectivity and for what he cannot accurately represent. Art cannot

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[163] J. P. Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe, Drei Teilen, Vierte Aufgabe (Leipzig, 1876), Dritter Teil, 1 April, 1827, pp. 101-2.

[164] See Notes of a Journey Through France and Italy, Works, IX, p. 90; "On Genius and Common Sense," Table-Talk, Works, VI, p. 47; "Originality," Works, IX, p. 425; and in other places.

[165] "The Vestibule," Stones of Venice, Vol. I, Works, IX, p. 409.

[166] Essays, p. 154.

be merely bare imitation. "Man's soul speaks to man's soul from the picture," Symonds holds, "and says something which nature does not say."[167]

There is some indication in Symond's theoretical criticism that he identifies art with expression, as Croce does, but there is no indication that he identifies all expression with art. Symonds sees it as the third of the ideal qualities which the artist adds to his imitation of nature. He uses the word "expression" in two ways: the one as that of the object itself, the expression, for instance, in a good portrait; the other as that of thought and feeling not inherent in the object, but found in the artist himself, in the subjective thought and feeling "for which the forms of art are vehicles."[168] The second type of expression is the one which Symonds values.

Characterization, the fourth and last of these qualities, implies not only "the expression of a thought or feeling, a passion or a sentiment, intended by the artist and impressed upon his transcript of the model," but also "an effort to penetrate and then to represent the essential character of his model in the most forcible way." Symonds illustrates from the painters:

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[167] Ibid., p. 156

[168] Ibid., p. 157. See Véron who maintains that the chief characteristic of modern art is the power of expression (op. cit., p. 126).

Characterization in its highest form is the exercise of the imaginative faculty which allows the artist to pierce below the surface of character and "to use the physical as an index to the spiritual qualities of men and women"; it may, however, be limited to pointing out peculiarities of character, in which case it is close to caricature. Herein Symonds find the most idealistic of the arts: ugliness can be raised to sublimity; "interpretation of the object reaches its climax here."[169]

The insistence of Symonds upon the value of subjectivity in art is patent. But there are degrees, too, of subjectivity, and he seems to have attempted to discover its normal aspects and manifestations. Beauty, form, expression, characterization--these are found in all art, but in various degrees. Symonds discovers that there are certain qualities in art due to exaggeration, caused by the departure from the normal. Caricature, he says, exaggerates, and misrepresents the object though the object is still recognizable; it is not realistic, it is idealistic.[170] The fantastic is the least realistic

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[169] Essays, pp. 161-2. Symonds uses painting and sculpture to illustrate his assertions about these qualities of art. It may be said in passing that Symonds has no theory of sublimity, though he uses the word when some piece of great art seems to have moved him profoundly.

[170] Ibid., pp. 169-70.

of all artistic species, and therefore the most idealistic; it is the work of a "capricious fancy, playing with things, which it combines into arbitrary, non-existent forms."[171] The grotesque is a branch of the fantastic, but caricature, not present in the fantastic, is found here, as is also a certain "spontaneity of humour."[172] Obscenity is closely allied with caricature and the grotesque,[173] but Symonds gives

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[171] Ibid., p. 171.

[172] Ibid., p. 173. There seems to be no relation between Symonds' idea of the grotesque and Hugo's as reflected in his preface to Cromwell. Hugo gives the grotesque a large share in the modern spirit of art (of Romantic art, to be sure). Symonds thinks of the grotesque merely as a departure from the normal quality of art and as a mark which the artist's own personality has set on his work. Hugo's statements about the grotesque run thus: "Si, au milieu de ces développements nécessaires, et qui pourraient être beaucoup plus approfondis, le fil de nos idées ne s'est pas rompu dans l'esprit du lecteur, il a compris sans doute avec quelle puissance le grotesque, ce germe de la comédie, recueilli par la muse moderne, a dû croître et grandir dès qu'il a été transporté dans un terrain plus propice que le paganisme et l'épopée. En effet, dans la poésie nouvelle, tandis que le sublime représentra l'âme, telle qu'elle est, épurée par la morale chrétienne, lui jouera le rôle de la bête humaine. . . . Le second prendra tous les ridicules, toutes les infirmités, toutes les laideurs. Dans ce partage de l'humanité et de la création, c'est à lui que reviendront les passions, les vices, les crimes. . . . Ce que nous appelons le laid . . . . est un détail d'un grand ensemble qui nous échappe, et qui s'harmonise, non pas avec l'homme, mais avec le création tout entière" (Preface de Cromwell and Hernani, ed. John R. Effinger [Chicago, 1900], pp. 62-3.

[173] Essays, p. 175.

it no place in art because "at a certain point art must make common cause with morality, and the plastically beautiful has to be limited by ethical laws."[174] These things, then, caricature, the grotesque, and obscenity, do not find a place in great art, because art "finds its proper sphere of operation only in the middle region of the scale" from the simplest to the most complex states of human consciousness, from the condition of mere sensation to that of elaborated thought. The various stages of this scale, Symonds finds, cannot be separated, although scientists make rude attempts at classifying them. Art, which must appeal to normality, confines itself to working in the middle region of human consciousness and of sensation and thought.[175]

I should like to conclude this section on the artist's relation to his work by making the observation that in Symonds' day shows that the status of the artistic creator had changed from what it was during the Romantic period. In Shelley the poets had been "the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present. . . ."[176] In Carlyle (who came

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[174] Ibid., p. 177

[175] Ibid., p. 178. In view of earlier psychological theories, it is of interest to note that Symonds will have nothing to do with "faculty" psychology, Psychologists err, he says, in speaking of "sensation, perception, emotion, will, reason, and so forth, as though they were separate faculties" (ibid.) Clearly, Symonds believes that to art the man whole and entire reacts.

[176] "Defence of Poetry," Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism, p. 159.

later) the artist was a seer, "whose eye has been gifted to discern the godlike Mystery of God's universe, and decipher some new lines of its celestial writing. . . ."[177] A notion closer to Symonds' idea of the creator is expressed by Wordsworth and Coleridge. The poet, to Wordsworth, "is a man speaking to men."[178] To Coleridge the poet,

> described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity.[179]

But if these psychological definitions are more in keeping with Symonds' notion of what the creator is than are the mystical pronouncements of Shelley and Carlyle, even these do not express his idea. His frequent reference to art as a craft, to the artist's work as craftsmanship leads me to feel that, like Wordsworth, he thought of the artist <u>in part</u> as a craftsman, and that he looks somewhat in the direction of the art for art's sake men, who made much of the craft of writing, and especially of the <u>difficulty</u> of writing. Pater, for one, accepted this idea of the difficulty of the artist's

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[177]"Death of Goethe," <u>Critical and Miscellaneous Essays</u>, 7 Vols. (New York, 1872), IV, p. 44.

[178]"Preface" to the <u>Lyrical Ballads</u> (1800), <u>Prose Works</u>, II, p. 37.

[179]<u>Biographia Literaria</u>, <u>Works</u>, III, p. 374.

task, though to it he added the Romantic idea of spontaneous creation.[180] But the notion that the artist is a craftsman carries with it implications of a narrower sphere of operations than that which the Romantic critics allowed the poet. The artist is dispossessed of his great purpose of speaking as a man to men; he becomes a creator for the specialist, almost an artificer, a "maker" who appeals to a select group of men who understand his work because they understand his technique.

There is no reason for saying, however, that Symonds thinks of the artist exclusively as the craftsman. He apparently did not have enough connections with the French art for art's sake group to adopt their idea that art is difficult and that the mastery of form is all important. Conscious of form he certainly was, as my examination of his practical criticism will show. And though there is in his work the suggestion that the artist is a specialist in creating beautiful forms, there is also the idea that the artist works with "spiritual content," with the thoughts and feelings of human beings. Here are Symonds' words:

> The masterly handling of these vehicles [of art-solid substances, pigments, sounds, and words] and the realization of their characteristic types of beauty have come to be regarded as the craftsman's paramount concern.

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[180] See Child, The Aesthetics of Walter Pater, pp. 70 ff.

> And in a certain sense this is a right conclusion. . . . This dexterity, this power, are the properties of the artist *qua* artist. Yet we must not forget that the form created by the artist for the expression of a thought or feeling is not the final end of art itself. That form, after all, is but the mode of presentation through which the spiritual content manifests itself.[181]

The idea that art is a craft, but that the presentation of its content, not its form, is its final end seems to be a compromise between the extreme art for art's sake preoccupation with form and the conviction of A. W. von Schlegel and Coleridge that form grows out of content. The idea suggests a further notion: that the artist himself is in part a craftsman, but that his first task is to reveal the thoughts and feelings--the spiritual nature--of human beings.

b. The Art-Work: The Problem of Content and Form

Symonds makes a distinction (which Croce declares to be false[182]) between content and form. Art, he says, again quoting Goethe, is the giving of form to human consciousness.[183] Every work of art has a theme, a motive, the subject is the final end of art; the art is good or bad "as the subject has been well or ill presented,

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[181] *Essays*, pp. 86-7.

[182] *Op. cit.*, pp. 25-7

[183] *Essays*, p. 86.

consistently with the laws of beauty special to the art itself." We thus arrive at two standards of criticism--the standard of content and that of form. Symonds thinks that if the phrase "art for art's sake" has any meaning, it is that the artist is interested only in form, in technicalities, that the artist may neglect his theme. But with this theory Symonds has little patience. Art is not for art's sake; it is not even for the artist's sake, if the art is to be great. "Art exists for humanity," he says, and we assume that humanity, not the technicians are to judge of its value.[184]

Symonds thus defines his own relationship to the art for art's sake men like Wilde and Pater: much less than these writers he emphasizes, at least in theory, the purely formal aspects of art. But he is not <u>too</u> specific as to the relationship of content to form. We may assume that the content must be universally human in significance, that it be psychological, and that the form must be pleasing. Symonds' statements on the relationship of content to form are reasonable enough. He does not take any extreme position: content is not a restricted, specified thing--for instance, it need not have social or ethical significance--nor is it declared to be either unnecessary

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[184] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 88-90.

to art, or irrelevant to the artistic experience; form is not emphasized at the expense of content, as it was by some of the art for art's sake men like Wilde, for instance, who declares that "Form is everything."[185] With some allowances for a greater emphasis on craftsmanship *per se* by Symonds, one may say that his attitude towards form is essentially that expressed by Coleridge:

> The form is mechanic [he says, in defending Shakespeare from the charge that he did not follow the "Rules"] when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material. . . . The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it develops itself from within, and the fulness of development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form.[186]

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[185]"The Critic as Artist," *Intentions*, *Writings*, Uniform Edition, 15 Vols. (London and New York, 1907), X, p. 221. The German Romantic philosophers seem to have been responsible for the extreme emphasis on form which was characteristic of the French art for art's sake men, and to some extent of Pater, Swinburne, and Wilde. See Egan, *op. cit.*, *Smith College Studies*, II, no. 4, pp. 39-57.

[186]"Shakspear's Judgment Equal to his Genius," *Lectures on Shakspeare*, *Works*, IV, p. 55. The idea of organic form is said to have come to Coleridge from A. W. von Schlegel, who says in *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, p. 273: "Form is mechanical when, through external influence, it is communicated to any material merely as an accidental addition without reference to its quality. . . .Organical form, again, is innate; it unfolds itself from within, and acquires its determination along with the complete development of the

Symonds' point of view with regard to the proper content of art is also found in Coleridge:

> For art cannot exist without, or apart from, nature; and what has man of his own to give his fellowman, but his own thoughts and feelings, and his observations so far as they are modified by his own thoughts and feelings?[187]

The idea that art is organic, however, is found also in Goethe, who speaks of a work of art as "etwas Geistig-Organisches,"[188] and as "der Begriff einer dichterischen Ganzen."[189]

But what, one may ask, are Symonds' specific pronouncements on the content of art? In the Renaissance in Italy, for instance, he maintains that

> . . . . art is valueless unless the artist has something intensely felt to say, and. . . . where this intensity of feeling exists, it finds for itself its own specific and inevitable form.[190]

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[186]footnote continued
germ. . . . In the fine arts. . . . all genuine forms are organical, that is, determined by the quality of the work . . . ." See also Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur, VI, pp. 157-8.

Since it is evident that Symonds read the Schlegels, it is conceivable that he knew the idea of organic form as it is described in the passage I have just quoted.

[187]Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 53.

[188]Werke, XXXIII, p. 108.

[189]Werke, XXIII, p. 17.

[190]II, p. 886.

Again, in the Essays he states that the subject-matter of art is spiritual, is some "portion of the human spirit,"[191] is "commensurate with what man thinks and feels and does. It is as deep as religion, as wide as life."[192]

Though it is notable that Symonds gives a prominent place in art to content, yet his "spiritual content" seems a little anemic because it seems to be a substitute for something deeper, more difficult to define, more enigmatical, something more profound and inscrutable: namely, truth.

Romantic and early Victorian writers gave truth a prominent place in art, a fact which Babbitt consistently overlooks. Coleridge thinks that "truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the ultimate end [of poetry]."[193] He finds that poetry produces a "more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and the human heart. . . ."[194] In like manner Wordsworth agrees with Aristotle that

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[191] p. 87.

[192] Ibid., p. 88

[193] Biographia Literaria, Works, III, p. 371

[194] "Definition of Poetry," Lectures on Shakespeare, Works, IV, p. 20.

> Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: . . . . its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal.[195]

The Poet, Wordsworth says later, "singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and homely companion."[196]

Hazlitt also sees truth as the content of art, but this truth is neither so philosophical nor so mystical as Coleridge's and Wordsworth's. Hazlitt's "truth" is a truth to nature, which the human mind imitates: "The mind," he says, "resembles a prism, which untwists the various rays of truth, and displays them by different modes and in several parcels"[197] But Hazlitt finds nature to be "deep, obscure, and infinite,"[198] and he believes that in order to understand nature, we must examine her with "our understandings and our hearts."[199] In painting Hazlitt asks for moral and spiritual truth.[200]

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[195] "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1800), Prose Works, II, p. 89.

[196] Ibid., Prose Works, II, p. 91.

[197] "Originality," Works, IX, p. 425.

[198] "On Genius and Common Sense," Table-Talk, Works, VI, p. 46.

[199] "Thoughts on Taste," Works, XI, p. 461.

[200] "On Reason and Imagination," Plain Speaker, Works, VII, pp. 54-5.

Carlyle was more emphatic than Hazlitt about truth in art--more emphatic, perhaps, than any of the Romantic critics, except, possibly Coleridge, and more insistent than they about the identity of poetry and philosophy. He goes to the extreme in demanding content in art and in not being moved, as Coleridge was, by what may be called its formal or aesthetic aspect. Thus

> We cannot but believe [he says] that there is an inward and essential Truth in Art; a Truth far deeper than the dictates of mere Mode, and which, could we pierce through these dictates, would be true for all nations and all men. To arrive at this Truth, distant from every one at first, approachable by most, attainable by some small number, is the end and aim of all real study of Poetry.[201]

Poetry like philosophy aims to incorporate "the everlasting Reason of man in forms visible to his Sense."[202] Carlyle, in common with the Romantics, tried to make poetry synonymous with all of life; the attempt to do so is found also in Friedrich Schlegel, Richter, and Novalis, among the Germans, and in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, De Quincey, and Shelley among the English.[203] Shelley, for instance, calls a poem "the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth."[204] This is not the same, exactly

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[201] "Goethe," Essays, I, pp. 199-200.

[202] "Goethe," Essays, I, p. 221. The Reason which Carlyle mentions is of course the intuitive faculty which sees into the realities of the spiritual world.

[203] See Roe, op. cit., p. 28, note 4.

[204] "The Defence of Poetry," Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism, p. 128.

as "some portion of the human spirit," and Symonds' "spirit" sounds superficial alongside the truth which the Romantics asked for in art.

In Ruskin, his early model as an art critic, there is this same insistence upon the value of truth in art. Ruskin likens the painter to the preacher:

> Both are commentators on infinity [he said], and the duty of both is to take for each discourse one essential truth, ... and to impress that, and that alone, upon those whom they address. . . .[205]

Ruskin goes even further and considers truth as the just criterion of all art:

> Truth is the bar of comparison at which they [the arts] may all be examined, and according to the rank they take in this examination will almost invariably be that which, if capable of appreciating them in every respect, we should be just in assigning them; so strict is the connection, so constant the relation, between the sum of knowledge and the extent of thought, between accuracy of perception and vividness of idea.[206]

"Truth and beauty," we are told later, "are associated in art."[207]

In Pater can be found a position similar to Symonds' with regard to the content of art, but Pater is in one

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[205] Modern Painters, I, Pt. II, Sec. 1, Ch. 4, Works, III, p. 157.

[206] Ibid., I, Pt. II, Sec. 1, Ch. 1, Works, III, p. 138.

[207] Ibid., I, Pt. II, Sec. VI, Ch. III, Works, III, p. 616.

sense (though in that one sense only) closer to the Romantics than is Symonds--closer because he also uses the word "truth," which Symonds avoids in this connection, and which, as I have said, he identifies with the results of scientific investigation. But Pater seeks after "truths," not after the truth. One may interpret this modification of terminology as the effect of science, of the relative "spirit," on the vocabulary of the criticism of art: for in Pater, as in Symonds, there is no absolute truth. Both writers think of art, not as a sensuous representation of the absolute Idea, as did Hegel, but, rather, as a sensuous representation of individual thought and feeling reacting to any part of human experience.[208] Pater's truth in art is, then, a truth to fact, and also a kind of truth synonymous with beauty:

> In the highest as in the lowliest literature, then, the one indispensable beauty is, after all, truth:--truth to bare fact in the latter, as to some personal sense of fact, diverted somewhat from men's ordinary sense of it, in the former; truth there as accuracy, truth here as expression, the finest and most intimate form of truth, the vraie vérité.[209]

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[208] Pater's attitude towards the subject of absolute truth is found in his first critical essay, "Coleridge's Writings," Westminster Review, LXXXV (January, 1866), pp. 106-32.

[209] "Style," Appreciations, p. 34.

Indeed, Pater's truth in the passage which I have just quoted resembles that of Wilde, who declared that truth was a matter of style.[210]

If Pater and Wilde agree on this point, then Symonds would not go along with them, for he believed, like the Romantics, in a certain truth to universal human nature. Did Goethe's "permanent relations" express what Symonds meant by the spiritual subject-matter of art? I think so. And very likely he agreed with Goethe, too, that in its highest stage art is the expression of the universal through the particular.[211] Because of his usual brevity, however, and his usual failure to develop his thought or to express it in detail, Symonds leaves us somewhat in the position of not knowing exactly what his attitude was towards the idea of truth in art. The most logical inference to adopt from Symonds' statements is that, believing in the concept of the relative and not recognizing the possibility of the absolute in art, he allowed a spiritual content to art in order to indicate a relation between it and the permanent in human nature--between art and human psychology; and in order to avoid the problem created by an Hegelian Absolute or by a

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[210]"The Decay of Lying," Intentions, Writings, X, p. 35.

[211]See Einfache Nachamung der Natur, Manier, Stil.

Coleridgean-Wordsworthian-Shelleyan-Carlylean truth, the definition of which was eminently unclear and the qualities of which depended to great extent upon the point of view of the individual using the term.

As a matter of fact, the word "truth" had in Symonds' day come down to earth, had lost its transcendental implications. It meant, as I have suggested, "reality," things-as-they-seem. Thus in the passage from Swinburne's William Blake, from which I have quoted,[212] art has to do with the beautiful only, science has to do with accuracy, with truth. A writer like Oscar Wilde, who believes that art is divorced from anything that can be proved, says that "Even things that are true can be proved"[213]--meaning, I suppose that "true things" are essentially different from art. The art for art's sake men take a position opposed to that of the Romantics on the subject of truth in art. Indeed, they go so far as to deny the value of content. "To art's subject-matter," Wilde says, "we should be more or less indifferent."[214] He finds that an artist who has something to say would create a tedious result.[215] With such ideas as these Pater, for one, would

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[212]See above, p. 52.

[213]The Picture of Dorian Gray, Preface, p. 7.

[214]"The Decay of Lying," Intentions, Writings, X, p. 24.

[215]"The Critic as Artist," Intentions, Writings, X, p. 220.

not agree: in his later criticism, at least, he declares that good art depends upon matter.[216] Thus both Pater and Symonds, among the later men, as Miss Rosenblatt indicates,[217] fail to come out clearly for the principles of the artfor art's sake men.

Whatever may have been Pater's reason for not joining the ranks of the "aesthetes" of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, I feel that Symonds' reason for not doing so was based in part on his comparative isolation from intercourse with English writers during the last years of his life, and in larger part on his close adherence to the psychological in the criticism of art, to his general allegiance, in short, to what the Romantics had taught. To him the content of art was psychological and found its source in universal human nature; to extremists like Wilde and the early Swinburne, on the other hand, content in art was subordinate to form, and universal human nature was of less moment than the characteristics of the individual.

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[216] Appreciations, p. 38.

[217] Louise Rosenblatt, L'Idée de l'Art pour l'Art dans la Littérature Anglaise pendant la Période Victorienne, Bibliothèque de la Revue de Littérature Comparée (Paris, 1931), pp. 53-4.

c. The Perceiver: The Effects of Art

1. The Moral Effect

The Romantic critics, it will be remembered, think that art has a value and integrity of its own, that it is not subservient to any other human endeavor; they also agree that one of the effects of art is moral. I have noted that Symonds makes the distinction between the moral purpose and the moral effect of art, and that he finds the source of the moral effect in the moral qualities of the artist. The purpose of art is not to teach morals, he says, although art may have a moral and ennobling influence.

Schiller earlier had declared that art is educative, that it ennobles man and fits him to create a better state.[218] But the point of view of Goethe is nearer to that adopted by Symonds. In speaking of the dramatic poet, Goethe says that he "der seine Bestimmung kennt, soll daher unablässig an seiner hohern Entwicklung arbeiten, damit die Wirkung, die von ihm auf das Volk ausgeht, eine wohlthätige und edle sei."[219] A poet with "den hohen Gehalt der Seele," he maintains, will always exert a moral influence, do what he will.[220]

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[218] Werke, VIII, pp. 208-17

[219] Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe, Dritter Teil, (1. April, 1827), p. 90.

[220] Ibid., (29 März, 1827), p. 90

Of the English Romantics, Wordsworth and Shelley expressed belief in the ethical effect of art. Wordsworth in his "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1800) says, as I have pointed out, that a poet is a man speaking to men[221] and that "our moral feelings influencing and influenced by these judgments of [Poets ancient and modern] will, I believe, be corrected and purified."[222] Shelley, who excited Symonds' imagination more than Wordsworth did, described the ethical effect of art more emphatically:

> Ethical science arranges the elements which poetry has created, and propounds schemes and proposes examples of civil and domestic life. . . But poetry acts in another and diviner manner. It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. . . .The great instrument of moral good is the imagination. . . Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb.[223]

Pater, like Symonds himself not always concerned in his practical criticism about the moral effect of art, has some words to say on this subject in his essay on Measure for Measure:

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[221] Prose Works, II, p. 87.

[222] Ibid.,

[223] "A Defense of Poetry," Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism, p. 131.

> It is not always that poetry can be the exponent of morality; but it is this aspect of morals which it represents most naturally, for this true [poetic] justice is dependent on just those finer appreciations which poetry cultivates in us the power of making, those peculiar valuations of action and its effect which poetry actually requires.[224]

Symonds is, then, in agreement with this, as well as with other statements I have quoted, on the ethical effect of art.

What Symonds says in his theoretical work about the moral effect of art seems to refute Hugh Walker's statement that, though a disciple of Ruskin, he gave in his criticism too little attention to the ethical aspects of art.[225] As regards Symonds' practical criticism, Walker is not far wrong. And even when one compares Symonds' theoretical criticism with that of his greater contemporaries, one is aware that they place a greater emphasis on the ethical function of art than he does. Carlyle, for instance, adopts the idea that the poet penetrates the sacred mystery of the universe; that he seizes "that sacred mystery. . . .on what the Germans call the aesthetic side, as Beautiful, and the like"; that, in Goethe's

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[224] Appreciations, with an Essay on Style, p. 184. See also Miss Child, The Aesthetic of Walter Pater, pp. 38-51.

[225] "Critical and Miscellaneous Prose," Cambridge History of English Literature, 15 Vols. (Cambridge, 1916), XIV, p. 157.

words, "'The Beautiful. . . .is higher than the Good; the Beautiful includes in it the Good.'"[226] Ruskin speaks of a Moral Faculty, under which he places the entire aesthetic experience, but his use of the term "Moral" is misleading, as is also his use of the term "didactic."[227] Arnold's emphasis on the ethical function of art is well-known: the best poetry possesses "truth and seriousness";[228] is "nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth";[229] is the "powerful application of ideas to life."[230] Symonds does not have the conviction of these men that art has a moral function--in other words, that it teaches. But neither does he disregard the ethical effect of art, as Walker suggests he does.

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[226] "The Hero as Poet," English Critical Essays, Nineteenth Century, ed. Edmund D. Jones, Oxford World Classics (Oxford, 1935), pp. 257-8.

[227] This subject is authoritatively discussed by Henry A. Ladd in The Victorian Morality of Art (New York, 1932), in various places, but especially in Part II, Chapter II.

[228] Prose and Poetry, ed. Archibald L. Bouton (New York, 1927), p. 87.

[229] Ibid., p. 179.

[230] Ibid., p. 102.

2. Art as an Animating Force

And what does art do for the observer? The answer is that it quickens his feeling, leads his "soul through all the labyrinths of life as in a vision"; it "satisfies the desire of man for fidelity of record, for excellence of workmanship, and for permanence." It allows man to enjoy vicariously many things which are not consistent with the point of time or place in which he lives: this art achieves (Santayana is quoting Hegel, I believe) by means of the "wonderful shadow-work of forms." It satisfies man's longing for romance; it fills up the void of daily experience: "Men," he quotes from the French, "Rien n'est si joli que la fable, si triste que la vérité." Art creates a world like the Greek Elysium. In that world the effect of human tragedies is softened, and human joys are less crude.[231] Art, however, does not lead to action, but the "self within us. . . . is steeped in the luminous atmosphere of reverry"; Santayana says that what he means by this is what Aristotle meant when he said that the end of tragedy was the purgation of the emotions through pity and terror; and what Milton meant when he said that the poet's function was "To allay the

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[231] I am reminded at this point of a similar assertion by Santayana, who explains that all subjects, even the most repellent, can be treated in art: "Art does not seek out the pathetic, the tragic, the absurd; it is life that has imposed them upon our attention, and enlisted art in their service, to make the contemplation of them, since it is inevitable, at least as tolerable as possible" (op. cit., p. 167).

perturbations of the mind and set the affections in right tune." But art also stimulates emotions which have a powerful effect on the formation of character. It arouses an "indefinite illimitable desire,"--Symonds' own mystical desire for the Absolute, in the fashion of Amiel?--and in the desire which it raises, the artist has, by his moral qualities, an effect on the moral character of man.[232]

Of the things which Symonds maintains art does for man, two statements stand out: that art quickens feeling--acts as an animating force, in other words; and that it allays perturbation of mind.

The idea that art quickens feeling is not a new one, and it is not confined to the Romantics and the Victorians. It is found in Hobbes, who said that agitation or motion is the beginning of delight.[233] This idea was entered in the work of numerous eighteenth century writers, notably Addison,[234] Du Bos,[235] Dennis,[236] Hume,[237] and many others, and it was an important idea in Romantic theory. "The end of poetry," Wordsworth says, "is to produce excitement in

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[232] Essays, pp. 163-7.

[233] The Elements of Law, ed. F. Tönnies (Cambridge, 1928), Part I, Ch. VII, pp. 21-4.

[234] Spectator, 412.

[235] Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture, 1719.

[236] The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, 1701.

[237] "Of Tragedy," 1757.

co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure."[238] Wordsworth discovers the importance of the subject of a poem in its ability to excite the mind:

> For the human mind [he says] is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants. . . .It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged; but this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor.[239]

Coleridge speaks of the drama as able to arouse "the public mind" from its "dead palsy."[240] Keats in a letter to George and Thomas Keats says that "The excellence of every art is in its intensity."[241] This idea, that art stimulates and arouses, Symonds must have met in countless writers. There is further observation to be made, how-

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[238] "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1800), Prose Works, II, p. 94.

[239] Ibid., Prose Works, II, p. 83.

[240] Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 45.

[241] John Keats, Works, Cambridge Edition (New York, 1899), p. 277. A similar idea, I believe, is found in the famous passage of Pater beginning: "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life" (The Renaissance, p. 197). Art contributes to this burning sense of experience.

ever, and that is that the idea may have been reached through the channel of experience.[242]

3. Art as a Soothing Agency

The second idea in connection with the direct psychological effect of art on man, the notion that even though it animates, it sometimes allays perturbation of mind, is also one which Symonds must have held because of personal experiences with art. He occasionally speaks about art as a drug, as a something which soothes him when he is distressed.[243] It is an instrument inducing forgetfulness; it offers one a Lethean existence, a Lethean state of mind. It fulfills the desire of the escapist; it offers him romance and reverie; it fills up the void of daily experience. Although Symonds says that art quickens life and satisfies "the desire for fidelity of record, for excellence of workmanship, and for permanence," yet he paints a more delightful picture of art as a consoler

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[242] Another writer who expressed the idea under discussion was Arnold, who in a letter (November 30, 1853) to Clough wrote: "Homer *animates*--Shakespeare *animates*--in its poor way I think Sohrab and Rustum *animates*--the Scholar Gipsy at best awakens a pleasing melancholy. But this is not what we want. . . .What they ["the complaining millions of men"] want is something to *animate* and enoble them--not merely to add zest to their melancholy or grace to their dreams.--I believe a feeling of this kind is the basis of my nature --and of my poetics" (Quoted by Carleton Stanley, *Matthew Arnold* [Toronto, 1938], p. 66).

[243] Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

and healer of the mind.[244] It may be pertinent to remark that James Branch Cabell's escapism is different from this, for Cabell speaks about the "dynamic illusions" evolved by romance, which he thinks of as a controlling force in the minds of men.[245] Cabell's escapism is therefore a necessary part of man's way of looking at the world, man being what he is. Symonds' escapism is a true drowning of the mind in a river of forgetfulness. But Symonds, it might be said in fairness to him, realizes that the excessive preoccupation with art leads to "pernicious habits."[246] Had he been a healthy man, he might have seen life steady and whole, as he hoped to do. It may be added that there is frequently a note of regret in much that he says about a life devoted to art: he seems to think that art took him away from a mental

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[244] In a letter to his future biographer he says: "I am reconciled to literature and study as palliatives. I do not believe in them as substantial factors in life. Only when I am in fairly good spirits do they amuse me and help me to pass the time" (Letters and Papers, p. 233). In an earlier letter to Henry Sidgwick he had said: "I come to feel that literature, except under the pressure of æsthetic or scientific impulse, is good only to the littérateur as a flimsy protection against ennui" (ibid., p. 69). These feelings are rarer, I believe, than the biography by Brown or the Letters and Papers seem to indicate. They make the first book one of the more depressing biographies--as well as one of the most curious--on record.

[245] Beyond Life (New York, 1919), p. 19.

[246] Brown, op. cit., p. 119.

equilibrium which he desired.[247]

Before summarizing Symonds' theory of art and showing its relation to critical thought of the nineteenth century, I should like to mention earlier critics who belong to the psychological tradition.

C. Pre-Victorian Psychological Critics

The psychological approach in criticism has a long history. I have already mentioned Aristotle as a critic belonging to the tradition. Indeed, it may be said that, with Plato, Aristotle is one of the first of psychological critics, because from these two stems the "faculty" psychology, the theoretical system whereby the human mind is divided into compartments such as the imagination, the will, the fancy, and so forth. Plato and Aristotle advanced ideas which influenced succeeding thinkers on the subject of the imagination.[248] The Stoics compared phantasy and reason,

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[247]The idea of escape was of course not new in Symonds' day. It is found in Bacon (Advancement of Learning, Works, ed. J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis and D. E. Heath, 15 Vols. (New York, 1869), VIII, Bk. II, Ch. XLII, p. 441), not to mention others. I do not indicate other exponents of the idea in my text because I wish to state my conviction that this idea found its source in experience and not especially in his reading.

[248]Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, The Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1940), p. 26. I am greatly indebted to this book for this part of my discussion.

and believed in the control of the former by the latter. Plutarch, Cicero, Quintilian, Longinus, Philostratus, Plotinus--these were the ancient writers who anticipated the modern critics who explain the creation of art in psychological terms.[249] Medieval writers who made much of the "faculty" psychology were Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas.[250] Renaissance writers who saw divisions in the mind were Cardanus, Telesio, Campanella, and Huarte.[251] These men were also interested in art as a creative process.

But every art-work undergoes a double process: it is made and it is observed; it is created and it is apprehended. Many of the critics whose names I have mentioned, therefore, had something to say about poetic effects also. Thus Aristotle discussed the pleasure "proper" to each kind of art; in the Poetics he discussed the emotional effects of tragedy,[252] and in the Rhetoric he advanced a theory of pleasure.[253] Cicero and Quintilian

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[249] Ibid., pp. 27-35.

[250] Ibid., pp. 37-8.

[251] Ibid., p. 39-43.

[252] See The Poetics, pp. 14, 27-9.

[253] See The Rhetoric, Book I, Ch. XI.

found pleasure to be one of the effects of good oratory.[254] Longinus was greatly interested in emotional effect, and made a famous statement that poetry must "transport" the mind.[255] St. Augustine agreed that poetry should move and delight, but he believed with his predecessors that it should also teach.[256] St. Thomas Aquinas saw in aesthetic perception a sort of union of mind and sense.[257] Since most of them were interested in the moral end of art, Renaissance critics contributed little to the discussion of poetic effects.[258] Baltasar Gracián, a Spanish critic, did not, however, follow the prevailing didactic tendency of his age. He declared that man should enjoy the beauties of nature and of art. The effect of such enjoyment he found to be an elevating and renewing of the soul through joy.[259]

English Renaissance critics accepted many of the ideas of continental thinkers about the "faculties" and poetic effects. Puttenham, for instance, declared that the imagination combined with "sound and true judgment"

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[254] Thorpe, op. cit., pp. 48-9.

[255] Ibid., pp. 55-6.

[256] Ibid., p. 57.

[257] Ibid., p. 58.

[258] Ibid., p. 59.

[259] Ibid., p. 64.

in inventive processes which account for almost everything that man does and knows.[260] Sir Philip Sidney said that poetry should teach, but also that it should move and delight. Sidney admired the ancients and recommended that they be imitated, but in describing the effect upon himself of the old ballads, he unwittingly declared for the value of the poetic emotional experience.[261] Bacon contributed more than did his contemporaries to psychological criticism. According to Professor Thorpe: "He assigns poetry to the imagination, and in so doing restates the theory of ideal imitation in such a way as to make it almost new."[262]

The important contribution to the psychological approach to art was made by Hobbes. The first Englishman to come to grips with the conception of the creative fancy, he rejected the old "faculty" psychology, but he used its terms in new ways, and sometimes inconsistently.[263] The philosophical basis of Hobbes' psychological theory was the idea that everything was matter and motion, whether in the mind or not. Hobbes is as uncompromising a materialist as is Grant Allen later. But he adds to his materialism the

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[260] Ibid., pp. 64-5.

[261] Ibid., pp. 66-8.

[262] Ibid., p. 69.

[263] Ibid., pp. 79-80.

idea of fancy, which can include memory, sense, judgment, and the passions.[264] Hobbes, near the middle of the seventeenth century, conceived of beauty as subjective,[265] and recognized the subjectivity and relativity of the aesthetic experience.[266]

During, roughly, the century and a half after Hobbes, the legacy of Renaissance criticism as it eventuated in traditionalism was in the ascendancy, and the type of criticism which Hobbes represented held only a secondary place, if that. Aspects of his influence, however, can be found in the work of Davenant and Charleton,[267] and in Dryden,[268] the third of whom sometimes used the same terms as Hobbes and on occasion came to similar conclusions. Part of the influence of Hobbes, like that of Longinus, was in the direction of psychological criticism.

John Dennis in his The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry (1701) belongs to two traditions in criticism--the psychological and that based on the practice of imitating the ancients. As a psychological critic he follows Longinus and declares that the end of art

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[264] Gilbert and Kuhn, op. cit., pp. 209-14.

[265] Thorpe, op. cit., p. 120.

[266] Ibid., p. 122.

[267] Ibid., Ch. VI, pp. 170-88.

[268] Ibid., Ch. VI, pp. 189-220.

is to move, to "transport"; that passion is the chief end of poetry; that the passion of poetry must be different from ordinary passion, and must be enthusiasm.[269]

Addison is in part in the tradition of psychological criticism as it is exemplified by Hobbes, Dryden, and Dennis. He is concerned with the creation of art, and with its effects. He shows that Paradise Lost is a great epic not only because it follows the neoclassical "Rules" but because it contains the effects of beauty, sublimity and novelty.[270] Addison stresses the appeal of poetry to the imagination, and in eleven Spectators[271] discusses the pleasures of that faculty, which he divides into two groups--the primary and the secondary. He uses terms like "wit," "fancy," and "judgment" to designate the faculties whereby the artist creates his work. But his most significant contribution to psychological criticism is perhaps his concept of the creative imagination, which foreshadowed a similar concept of Coleridge.

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[269] See Chapters IV-VI in The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry. A Critical Discourse in Two Parts (London, 1701), pp. 20-33.

[270] See The Spectator, Nos. 267, 273, 279, and 285.

[271] Nos. 411-21.

One aspect of psychological criticism in the eighteenth century was the idea of the sublime. Dennis, Addison, Bailey, and Hume had something to say on the subject; but the most noteworthy explanation of emotional reactions to sublime objects in nature is that of Burke. In his Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful Burke contrasts the effects of the sublime and those of the beautiful and explains their difference on psychological grounds. Pain, he finds, is the foundation of the sublime, pleasure the foundation of the beautiful; the sublime he connects with the feeling of self-preservation, the beautiful with social feelings; clear, small ideas he connects with beauty, vaguely awful ideas with the sublime.[272]

In Wordsworth and Coleridge psychological criticism came into its own. These men emphasized the human mind both as it creates a work of art and as it apprehends such a work. Wordsworth maintained that poetry was the impassioned expression of human nature depending not on poetical convention, but upon the mind of the poet. He stressed experience which precedes poetic creation and the emotional responses to poetry. In poetry, he thought, ordinary incidents and events are colored by the imagination;[273]

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[272]See A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, Works, 12 Vols., 4th Edition (Boston, 1871), I, pp. 67-262.

[273]"Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1800), Prose Works, II, p. 81.

poetry itself is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" of a man who has "organic sensibility" and who has thought long and deeply.[274] The poet is a man speaking to men; he has a knowledge of human nature; he delights in "his own passions and volitions."[275] He describes the passions, but he aims at disclosing general truth. He appeals to his readers by pleasing them, by arousing their emotions: "The end of poetry," Wordsworth says, "is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure. . . ."[276] Wordsworth had a theory that the imagination allowed one to unite oneself with the infinite, but his theory was never developed on the lines of Coleridge's idea of the creative imagination.

Coleridge contrasts the creative imagination with fancy. The imagination itself he gives two parts:

> The Imagination then [he says] I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the primary in the <u>kind</u> of its agency, and differing only in <u>degree</u>, and in the <u>mode</u> of its operation.

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[274] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 82.

[275] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 87-8.

[276] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 94.

> It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create: of where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.[277]

In Fancy Coleridge sees the memory emancipated from time and place, and tempered by choice. Here the law of association operates.[278] In Coleridge, as in Wordsworth, one always finds concern for how the human mind works. Pleasurable emotions, the truths of human nature and the heart, the balancing of images in the human mind: such matters are the basis of psychological criticism, not only as it considers the human mind in the act of artistic creation but also as it tries to indicate methods of judging the objects which have been created for artistic contemplation.

D. Victorian Psychological Criticism

After the middle of the nineteenth century such art criticism as began with universals and "moved downwards" seemed dead. Schelling, Hegel, and Kant had discussed art as an emanation of the Idea, of the Absolute. It was Gustav Theodor Fechner who first seems to have declared that art must be studied "from below," that observation

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[277] Biographia Literaria, Works, III, pp. 363-4.

[278] Ibid., Works, III, p. 364.

of facts must precede generalization.[279] This is the scientific method, of course, and underlies the empirical procedure which is the basis of psychological criticism. Aristotle, Longinus, Hobbes, Wordsworth, Coleridge, whatever their differences, had described the act of artistic creation or that of artistic experience as they knew it; after 1850, however, the criticism of art became, at the hands of certain theorists, more and more scientific in tone, to the exclusion of metaphysical hypotheses like those of Schelling, Hegel, and Kant. It should be added that even though men who wanted to be scrupulously scientific discarded metaphysical notions, they did not discard certain general ideas. And, therefore, side by side with the attempt to apply the inductive method to art were such general ideas as these: that aesthetic pleasure breeds feelings of human fellowship (Spencer, Gosse, and others), that beauty derives from God (Fechner), and that there are mental elements in beauty (Fechner).[280]

The three outstanding psychological critics in the England of Symonds' day were E. S. Dallas, Herbert Spencer, and Grant Allen.

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[279] In Vorschule der Aesthetic, 1876, This material is from Gilbert and Kuhn, op. cit., p. 525.

[280] Ibid., pp. 527-8.

The first of these three, E. S. Dallas, began with what sounds like an echo of the old "faculty" psychology, for his Poetics: An Essay on Poetry (1852) attempts to explain poetic pleasure in terms of the imagination. His second book, however, seems in effect to be a recognition of the failure of the Poetics. The Gay Science (1866) emerges from an attempt to find in contemporary science a theory of an unconscious mental activity which will explain the imagination. Dallas, according to a recent study, discarded metaphysical and transcendental theories for a wholly psychological explanation of poetic experiences.[281]

Spencer explains art not only in its own terms but also in terms of a more general kind. For Spencer the comprehensive reality is a compound of nature and society. Man has an animal nature, Spencer thinks, and therefore in his discussion of art he adds both sociology and physiology to his critical theory. That theory, derived as it is from Schiller's play hypothesis, is based on the idea of utility: everything in nature and human society, each functional part and structural feature, has its use; all of man's physical and mental powers and faculties aim at preserving the individual or at maintaining the species --all except art and play.[282] Since art and play subserve

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[281] See Francis X. Roellinger, E. S. Dallas: A Study in Victorian Criticism, Ph. D. Thesis, University of Michigan, 1938, p. 237.

[282] The Principles of Psychology, Vol. II, Part IX.

no discernible result or change in human affairs, they seem in Spencer's art-theory not only to be identical in that art is a kind of play, but also to represent useless activity.[283] In his most exclusively critical work, The Philosophy of Style (1852), Spencer combined the principle of economy with the ideas of the recipient's "attention"[284] and of his "sensibilities."[285] As Professor Denton has pointed out, the underlying features of The Philosophy of Style are psychological, and three--the faculties, fatigue, and attention.[286] The word "philosophy" it would seem, might in the title of Spencer's essay be well discarded in favor of the word "psychology."

I cannot see that the criticism of Grant Allen has much to do with art though he calls his book Physiological Aesthetics. Gilbert and Kuhn declare that Allen's science of beauty may be called a "Science of beauty without a sense of beauty."[287] To my way of thinking, Allen's work is

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[283] Gilbert and Kuhn, op. cit., p. 541.

[284] Herbert Spencer, The Philosophy of Style, together with An Essay on Style by T. H. Wright, ed. Fred N. Scott (Boston, 1892), p. 3.

[285] Ibid., p. 36.

[286] George Bion Denton, "Herbert Spencer's Principle of Economy," The Fred Newton Scott Anniversay Papers (Chicago, 1929), p. 66.

[287] Op. cit., pp. 526-7.

the reductio ad absurdum of psychological criticism. It smells not of the painter's oils, but of the mustiness of the laboratory. Allen prides himself on not being "an excessive devotee of fine art in any form."[288] In his preoccupation with the physical qualities of man which make for reactions to art, Allen follows Darwin.[289] He takes over Spencer's play theory, and concocts a definition of the "aesthetically beautiful" as "that which affords the Maximum of Stimulation with the Minimum of Fatigue or Waste, in processes not directly connected with the vital functions."[290] Allen thus concurs with Spencer as to the essential uselessness of art. He puts reactions to art on a pleasure-pain basis, and he indicates the qualities of the senses which make for pleasurable experience, but he admits that the pleasures of the intellect have a place in art. Allen's book represents a one-sided kind of psychological criticism; in spite of certain concessions to intellectual and psychological factors, it is an examination of the senses through which art is perceived.

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[288] Grant Allen, Physiological Aesthetics (New York, 1877), p. viii.

[289] Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

[290] Ibid., p. 39.

E. Symonds' Theory of Art in Nineteenth Century Criticism

It is possible to think of English Romantic criticism as being composed of these elements: the combined ideas of Reason, Understanding, Fancy, and Imagination, found in Coleridge and resembling the "faculty" psychology of medieval writers but receiving their immediate inspiration from the strain of critical theory beginning in Hobbes and modified by the ideas of Kant; the metaphysical ideas; and the general ideas concerning the autonomy of art, the effects of art, and art as the revelation of personality. The metaphysical ideas seem to derive from the German Idealists and to find their focal point in Coleridge. The general psychological ideas derive from the Schlegels, Schelling, Hegel, Kant, Goethe, and Schiller, and find their expression in English in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley. Now, from English Romantic criticism Symonds seems to have retained only the general ideas. His point of view regarding the "faculties," for instance, is similar to that of Addison, who in one place said: "there is no such division [as found in faculty psychology] in the soul itself, since it is the whole soul that remembers, understands, wills, or imagines."[291] Neither does Symonds resort

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[291] The Spectator, 600 (Joseph Addison, The Spectator, 8 Vols., 12th Edition London, 1739 viii, p. 171). I am, of course, aware that Addison usually accepts the faculty psychology, and that this is the only instance of his repudiating it. The quotation is apropos, however.

to metaphysical language or to metaphysical explanations for the art experience.

The picture of psychological criticism of Victorian England is somewhat different from that of the preceding age. The idea of the imagination remains (in Dallas) from the "faculty" psychology, but it is not treated as philosophically as it had been at the hands of Coleridge, and, furthermore, it is allied with a theory of the unconscious. With the rapid development of science, a new note was added to criticism. This new note was that illustrated by Grant Allen's book--the scientific study of human faculties or senses. The play theory, which had not been widely accepted by the Romantics, was revived. And certain metaphysical ideas remained in critics like Pater. General ideas, too, of the autonomy of art, of the effects of art, and of art as a revelation of personality remained, and these, and these only, are the ones which Symonds accepted.

In short, though Symonds is a psychological critic, he rejects the scientific aspects of psychological criticism just as he did the metaphysical aspects of Romantic criticism. He realizes, I suppose, that in effect scientific psychology gets no place because it emphasizes human abilities and not the aesthetic experience, just as metaphysical theories emphasized conjectural ideas about Universals and not the aesthetic experience. He rejects all remnants of the "faculty" psychology and implies--

though he does not say so--that to art the whole personality reacts (and he suggests likewise that the whole personality <u>creates</u>). Similarly, he rejects the play theory of Schiller, Spencer, and Allen, because I suppose, he could not relegate art to the sphere of the utterly useless. Symonds' theoretical criticism is, then, never composed of ideas which refer to anything but art itself or the artistic experience. In other words, Symonds discards highly conjectural theories and such ideas as seem to him untrue (the play theory) and those which seem to be beside the point in aesthetic experience (scientific psychology). But he never departs from the position that in art it is the human mind which imitates and the human mind which apprehends.

It is possible to see Symonds' position as a psychological critic as a sane, commonsense one. He seems always to take a middle position: he does not intellectualize his criticism as does Arnold; nor does he place as much emphasis on sensuous perception or on the ideal nature of music as art, as Pater does. He does not take a metaphysical position like Carlyle's; he does not take the scientific attitude of Spencer and Allen (or, it may be added, of the Frenchman Émile Hennequin). If he resembles anyone greater than himself, it is Goethe, whose dicta on art have the same qualities of sanity and balance, as do his.

Since Symonds' psychological criticism seems to be Romantic in origin, the question may be raised: To what kind of judgment of his criticism does this fact lead? To this, I think--that Symonds does not carry psychological criticism one iota beyond where it was in the Romantic period. Indeed, he reduces the scope of that criticism, narrows its horizons, as it were, in not taking over other than just the general ideas about art and in tacitly rejecting such concepts as that of the creative imagination.[292] On other points judgments will vary: to him who places value on metaphysical explanations for the phenomenon of art, for instance, Symonds' criticism will seem to lack distinction and to have a quality of ordinariness; to him who thinks of metaphysics as a highly conjectural body of thought which might well be dispensed with, Symonds' criticism will seem an intelligent criticism because it always refers directly to art and because it has the appearance of a theory based on experience.

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[292] This is, I suppose, not strictly true. In his diary Symonds writes: "There is a passive and an active imagination. The one creates, the other sympathizes. The one makes new things for the world, the other appropriates whatever has been made, informing the past with something of fresh life" (Brown, op. cit., p. 240). This hardly constitutes more than an outline of a theory of the imagination, and, furthermore, the passage, as also the idea it expresses, is given no place in critical sections of Symonds' published works. To make of these sentences a theory of the imagination is to make something of an idea that is never developed, and which apparently did not take a large enough share in a general philosophy of art to warrant its inclusion in any book on that subject.

I feel, however, that the truest and fairest estimate of Symonds' theory of art can be arrived at by determining how individual ideas were treated in the nineteenth century. I shall therefore refer again to the ideas which I have discussed in this chapter and show how Romantic writers, Symonds, and the men of the last quarter of the nineteenth century agree or disagree about them.

1. The Autonomy of Art: In order to show the autonomous character of art, Symonds describes a rather devious route. He finds it necessary to show that goodness, truth, and beauty are identical. In so doing he agrees with Romantic critics, but whereas they give metaphysical reasons for their belief, Symonds gives a psychological one. The art for art's sake men, on the other hand, would in general say that goodness, truth, and beauty are separate matters; they would emphasize beauty in art and call truth something partaking not to universal human nature, but to isolated facts shown to be true by experience or through scientific investigation.

Goodness is, of course, closely allied to morality. Now, the Romantics think that there was a close relationship between morality and art; indeed, to them the content of art is moral truth. Though Symonds agrees with them that morals are reflected in art, and though

he agrees with Goethe that the moral condition of the artist is reflected in his work, he calls the content of art "spiritual," not "moral," and he therefore tacitly denies as close a relation of art to morals as the Romantics would give them. But he does not go so far as the art for art's sake men, who deny that art has no properly moral effect and that, if it does, the effect has nothing to do with the work of art as such.

Nor does Symonds allow a didactic purpose to art. His Romantic predecessors do not in general say that art should preach; Hazlitt especially is opposed to the transfer of the tone of the pulpit to art. Neither do the Romantic critics think that art should in any way propagandize. They believe, however, that art should teach indirectly and that it should point out universal human truths. A self-conscious didactic purpose they do not give to art, and on this point the art for art's sake men agree with them.

Truth, in this trinity of goodness, truth, and beauty, is related to the problem of science and art. The Romantic critics see truth, moral or intellectual, as the content of art; Symonds sees "spiritual" matters as the content of art; the art for art's sake men give neither truth nor "spiritual" matters a place in art. But the word "truth" means something different to the Romantics and to the men who come later in the

century. To the Romantics it means something related to universal human nature or to a kind of absolute. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, the word stands for the relative and the demonstrable, and, as a matter of fact, it is used frequently, as in Pater, in the plural. Consequently, truth at the end of the nineteenth century means something nearer the results of scientific research. Now, both the Romantics and the men later in the century agree that art and science are separate; but the Romantics speak about a truth which is intuitive and not scientifically demonstrable, whereas the men later in the century think of truth as something relative and shown by investigation to be verifiable. There is a further observation to be made: The Romantics compare science with poetry; the men later in the century compare it with art.

In a similar fashion, the Romantic critics speak about the effect of poetry in part as a feeling of pleasure, and the later men, and Symonds speak about the effect as one of beauty. Indeed, the Romantic critics are little concerned with beauty. They use the term, it is true, and the adjective "beautiful" as well, but they do not identify beauty with art. Symonds uses the word "Beauty" to designate something which he never defines but which is an attribute of an art-work that its creator has given to it. Symonds' theory of art

suggests that he does not cultivate the beautiful as the "aesthetes" did. But in his practical criticism, as I shall show, there is more evidence of a kind of cult of beauty associated with the art for art's sake movement than Symonds' theory of art would prepare one for.

On the whole, it seems that the German Romantics make more definite pronouncements than do the English Romantics about the special province of art; it appears that Goethe, Kant, and Schiller think that an object should be judged upon its own merits as a work of art and that, though there is a suggestion of a similar opinion among the English Romantics, these latter make more of truth and morals. At any rate, the relationship which Miss Egan has shown to exist between the art for art's sake movement and the early German philosophers and writers would suggest that the latter prepare the way for the effort by the men of the later nineteenth century to divorce art from any but artistic considerations, to make art criticism the criticism of art and to ignore the extra-aesthetic matters which do not bear upon the work of art as an autonomous phenomenon. The logical end of the idea of the autonomous character of art can be observed, it seems to me, in the aesthetic philosophies of Clive Bell, and Roger Fry, and to some extent in that of Herbert Read. But Symonds makes no rational attempt to isolate the purely aesthetic quality of art, as do these

later men, and he allows a place in the artistic experience to spiritual matters which may, strictly speaking, be thought of as extra-artistic in appeal.

2. Art, Progress, and Democracy: Though Pascal long before the Romantic period and though Hazlitt during it had indicated that art and progress are not related, as are science (or knowledge) and progress, yet men like Shelley and Whitman think that the one has an effect upon the other. Symonds, of course, agrees with them. If the art for art's sake men had anything to say on this subject, they, I am sure, scorned the very idea that art is influenced by progress, the latter of which suggests science and commercialism, against both of which they protested.

And similarly with the idea that art and democracy will effect a kind of fusion. Whitman and Symonds believe in a coming Democratic Art; the men of the later nineteenth century, however, deplore democratic movements and ideas, since art in democracy means bringing a levelling influence to bear upon what they think to be a field of activity for a kind of initiated aristocracy.

3. Art as a Human Activity: Since the poet, in Wordsworth's words, is a man speaking to men, he is neither a medium through which the Absolute speaks nor a molder of beautiful objects which are understood only by men who have a special aesthetic sensibility. The broadly human in art always interests Symonds, and he is there-

fore closer to the Romantic position than to that of the art for art's sake men, who nourish a feeling for exclusiveness in artistic activity. Also, it will be remembered that to Symonds the content of art is necessarily that which appeals to the spiritual in man. Furthermore, he seems to adopt the stand of the Romantic critics, that since content is of first importance in art, form may be expected to grow directly out of the content itself and to conform to its requirements. The men of the latter part of the nineteenth century, on the other hand, believe that form is the best part of art, and in recent years such art critics as Clive Bell and Roger Fry (the latter of whom in his youth knew Symonds well) find the essence of art--of the aesthetic experience--in form. Symonds seems to be between the two positions. Though he sees the importance of content in art, he seems to give equal emphasis in art to content and form.

4. The Effects of Art: Though the Romantic critics are much more specific about the many effects of art than Symonds and the men later in the century, Symonds agrees with them on several points. That art has an ennobling effect upon the beholder the Romantics and Symonds agree. The art for art's sake men, however, seem to be indifferent to any effect of art which is not strictly "aesthetic"; to them art which is ennobling in effect carries with it extra-artistic implications which have nothing to do with

art as such. On the idea that art is an animating force the Romantic critics and Symonds are, again, in agreement. I believe, incidentally, that Wilde's suggestion that it is not to life that we must go, but to art, for the fulfillment of our experiences[293] points in the same direction, though Wilde's position is extreme.

On the other hand, the idea that art is a soothing agency is almost foreign to Romantic thought, at least to Romantic criticism. It suggests that art is an escape, as Wilde describes it to be.[294] The greater Romantic critics, except for Hazlitt on occasion, write about poetry not as an escape from life, but as a revelation of it. To Symonds poetry and art are a means of shutting oneself away from life, but they are also related to life so closely that they reveal the best in the spiritual existence of human beings.

5. Art as Closely Related to the Artist's Personality: I have already said that as the poet is the object of critical reflection in the early part of the century, so the artist is the object in the last part. The poet, however, is a man writing for men; the artist is a craftsman, a specialist. Symonds combines both ideas.

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[293] "The Critic as Artist," Intentions, Works, X, p. 184.

[294] See ibid., Intentions, Works, X, p. 185.

Now, the English Romantic writers are less concerned with the poet's personality than are German writers like Goethe, who thinks of art as in part a revelation of the artist's personality, and whom Symonds seems to have used as a model. Wilde's idea that all art is absolutely subjective,[295] would suggest agreement with the notion that art in part reveals the personality of the artist. Though the art for art's sake men see art as an individual creation, however, they do not agree with Romantic writers--or with Symonds--that the moral effect of an artist's personality is discoverable in art.

The importance which Symonds gives to the artist in relation to his work is most clearly illustrated by his notion of the ideal which conditions the art-work. The Romantics in general, and William Blake, Hazlitt, and Ruskin in particular, oppose Reynolds' generalized ideal; to these men the ideal is to be found in nature. To Symonds, however, the ideal is the individual's--neither something general in human beings nor possible in nature, but always the creator's. Symonds is here again following Goethe, who stresses the idea of art as a product of the individual.[296]

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[295] "The Critic as Artist," Intentions, Works, X, p.201.

[296] I have not discussed or mentioned the concept of the creative imagination in this list. The reason is patent: Every remnant of the "Faculty" psychology, except what was

It is clear, I think, that Symonds' theory of art is on most points close to the theories of Romantic writers, closer, in fact, than it is to the body of opinions of the critics of the end of the nineteenth century. His intellectual position can in general be quite simply indicated by referring to his idea of the relation of art to life. Now, to the Romantics, as I have said, there is a decided rapport between the two, for to them art and poetry serve human beings as human beings. In a writer like Hazlitt art is something less than Nature, and to writers like Coleridge and Wordsworth art reveals the truth of life. Life, so far as I can see, and human beings are of first importance. The reverse position is that of Pater, later in the century, who thinks that the individual should attempt to make an art of life itself,[297] an idea which was accepted and distorted by Wilde.[298] But Symonds, as before,

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[296] footnote continued

left in Dallas, seems by the end of the century to have disappeared. At any rate, there is no theory of the creative imagination in Symonds. I do not know that Symonds agreed with Pater, who seems to have underrated Coleridge's distinction between the Imagination and the Fancy. Neither do I know that he would agree with Herbert Read and others that there is really no distinction between these two faculties.

[297] See Child, The Aesthetics of Walter Pater, p. 11.

[298] See ibid., as well as the many statements about art and life in Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," Intentions, Works, X.

seems to follow the Romantics. His idea that art is less than life (or that life is deeper than art) places emphasis on life; it does not make life an art, nor does it make of art a substitute for life. In short, "literary, aesthetical, with a certain bias to scholarship and curiosity" as he was, Symonds knew that art was only a part of life and not a renunciation of it.

I should like to close this chapter on a conjectural note. How, I should like to ask, is one to explain the differences there are between Symonds' theory of art and the Romantic theories, which he seems to have followed? One does not, of course, expect the two to be identical: Symonds was, after all, a Victorian Englishman, not a contemporary of Shelley. But the explanation for the departures from Romantic theory of art which I have observed lies, I think, in what might be called the "relative spirit," which was encouraged by the scientific thought of the nineteenth century. Pater in his essay on Coleridge's writings pointed out the difference between the absolute spirit of Coleridge and the relative spirit of his own day. Symonds, despite his yearning for the absolute, shared in that scientific spirit, and it prompted him to explain in psychological terms (not in metaphysical ones) that the good, the true, and the beautiful are identical; that truth is relative and only a matter of what had been proved through scientific investigation or direct

experience; that art is an individual creation; that the ideality in art lies in the individual mind of the artist, not in any generalized conception or idea; that the qualities of expression, beauty, composition, and characterization are the work of the artist, and are, consequently, found to be of different kinds and in different degrees in various art-works. Indeed, the relative spirit makes for the conviction that the art-work is primarily the product of the mind of the individual artist, and that the various qualities of the work are an index to the personality of the artist himself. Even this relative spirit, however, is not foreign to the thoughts of certain Romantic writers, though it finds its greatest exponent not among English critics, but among the Germans. It was not for nothing that Symonds found so much inspiration in the writings of Goethe.

CHAPTER III

SYMONDS AS AN IMPRESSIONISTIC CRITIC

Heretofore I have referred to ideas; in this chapter I shall treat of a critical method. The ideas of Symonds which I have been discussing are parallel to those of great Romantic critics like Goethe, Wordsworth, and Coleridge; the method which I shall discuss is that which Symonds found as a part of the critical practice of men like Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge, and De Quincey.

Indeed, Symonds seems to have equated that critical method, which, as the title of this chapter suggests, is that of the impressionist, with all of Romantic criticism: he declares, for instance, that the "romantic" critic is he who describes his impressions, is one who points out the beauties which he finds to be inherent in an art-work. Symonds therefore uses the term "romantic" much as Babbitt and Miss Powell do. He says, as I shall show in my next chapter, that there are three kinds of critic: the classical, the romantic, and the scientific; the first judges, we are told, the second records his impressions,

the third studies the conditions under which an art-work is created.[1] Thus it should be noted that, though Symonds always allows the critic the privilege of judging, yet he seems to assume that critics of the Romantic period did not do more than record their impressions.

This assumption is, of course, fundamentally false. There is no more abused term in criticism anyway than "Romantic," and Symonds is not alone in his superficial examination of the critical writing of the Romantic period, or at least in his failure to see the entire body of that work in his preoccupation with one aspect of it. Were this s tudy a defense of Symonds, I might say that, after all, he preceded by some years recent writers whose views are no more valid than his. Even today "Romanticism" seems to be all things to all men, depending upon what a critic wants to look for. Thus H. A. Beers, Irving Babbitt, and Miss Powell, each finds in Romantic poetry and criticism exactly what suits his purpose. Babbitt selects aspects of "Romanticism" which especially displease him and he equates them with the whole movement; Miss Powell finds evidences of Crocean "expression" in the Romantic poets, and she speaks as though her discoveries are typical of the entire Romantic

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[1] Essays Speculative and Suggestive, New [Second] Edition (New York, 1894), pp. 65-7.

movement. Similarly, Miss Rosenblatt in her study of the art for art's sake men tells only part of the story:

> C'est un lieu commun [she says] de définir l'attitude romantique comme essentiellement antirationaliste, comme, en ses termes les plus simples, une réaction contre le rationalisme formel du XVIIIe siècle. Élever l'imagination, l'intuition, les facultés mystiques et irrationelles de perception au-dessus de la raison, voilà ce qui caracterise les penseurs romantiques depuis William Blake, qui offre peut-être l'exemple le plus extrême de l'élévation constante de l'émotion sur la raison. Pour William Wordsworth, comme pour Samuel Taylor Coleridge et leurs successeurs romantiques, "Toute bonne poésie est l'effusion spontanée d'émotions puissantes." Le poète doit avoir réfléchi longtemps et profondément, mais la valeur de son oeuvre résulte de l'émotion, de la passion, du sentiment qui l'ont inspirée.[2]

Unfortunately, Miss Rosenblatt gives "Romanticism" a definition too commonly held, and, like Babbitt and Miss Powell, she ignores much of the <u>thought</u> of the Romantic writers. Her very quotation from Wordsworth is inaccurate, or at least aspects of it are given false emphasis. It cannot be denied that Wordsworth said that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," but it must be observed that he adds:

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[2]Louise Rosenblatt, <u>L'Idée de l'Art pour l'Art dans la Littérature Anglaise pendant la Période Victorienne</u>, Bibliothèque de la Revue de Littérature Comparée (Paris, 1931), pp. 53-4.

> . . . .and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply.[3]

Emotion, "organic sensibility," thought--these three Wordsworth mentions in his definition of poetry, and of these Miss Rosenblatt emphasizes the first, puts the last in second place, and ignores "organic sensibility" entirely. Thus Symonds is no more wrong about the Romantic critics than are some later writers, though he may be wrong in fewer words.

An explanation for the inexactness of most descriptions of the Romantic period lies, I suppose, in the propensity of the human mind to over-simplify. The truth is that the Romantic period was more complicated than most critics and historians are willing to admit. A reason for the one-sidedness of the interpretations of the age lies, I believe, in the commonly accepted explanations of its historical origins. The thought of the period is a reaction against eighteenth century rationalism, we are told. But we are also told that the seeds of the thought of the period are found deep within the eighteenth century itself. If that is true, how can the ideas current during the Romantic period be anything but tendencies which existed in the eighteenth century and which were

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[3]William Wordsworth, "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1800), Prose Works, ed. the Reverend Alexander B. Grosart, 3 Vols. (London, 1876), II, p. 82.

in a subordinate position to the rationalism of that period? If one accepts the principle that historical changes occur gradually, then the ideas of Romantic writers were more the full flower of tendencies which had been in bloom for some time than phenomena appearing with a certain suddenness. And so, in fact, they were: the emotions, for instance, were not ruled out of criticism and poetry before 1798 and taken in after: Hobbes, Dryden, Dennis, Addison, Burke--all allowed them a significant share in human experience, as we have seen.

There are other aspects of Romantic criticism and poetry besides an exalted emotionalism, however. Spontaneity, primitivism, the past, the feelings--these were admired in different degrees by the Romantics, it is true; but these represent only part of the body of thoughts and ideas of the poets and critics of the age.

For one thing, Romantic critics were philosophical. Coleridge and Shelley, and (later) Emerson connected art (and other human activities) with the Idea, which was a transcendental concept. Coleridge, for instance, thought that the true critic "can no more be such without placing himself on some central point, <u>from which he may command the whole, that is, some general rule, which, founded in reason</u>, or the faculties common to all men, must therefore apply to each . . . . "[4]

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[4]"Shakspeare's Judgment Equal to his Genius," <u>Lectures on Shakspeare</u>, <u>The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge</u>, ed. William G. F. Shedd, 7 Vols. (New York, 1854-64), IV. p. 53. The italics are mine.

Shelley maintained that the poet "participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and space and number are not . . . . "[5] "Poetry is indeed something divine," he says later; "it is at once the centre and circumference of all knowledge . . . . "[6] Emerson, with echoes from Carlyle and perhaps from Shelley, says:

> The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is a sovereign, and stands on the center. For the world is not painted or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the universe. Therefore the poet is not any permissive potentate, but is emperor in his own right.[7]

The Romantic writers, as we have seen, also had ideas about the relation of morals to art, and about the relation (which they saw as close) between art and life. They were concerned about truth as one aspect of art. Nothing that the greatest of the Romantic writers did was anything but serious: in the thought of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley there is always an attempt to get at the bottom of things, to see clearly and deeply.

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[5]"A Defence of Poetry," Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism, ed. John Shawcross (London, 1909), p. 124.

[6]Ibid., p. 152.

[7]"The Poet," Emerson's Essays, Second Series (New York, n. d.), p. 6.

The Romantic critics developed to a point beyond which it seems even now hardly to have passed a theory of criticism and poetry based on psychological principles. If they reacted, as they did, against the neoclassical "rules," they did not try to dispense with rules entirely; for those which they rejected they substituted psychological ones. Thus Coleridge says that no one can understand Shakespeare who is not acquainted, among other things, with the heart of man. He further says that in order to judge in a disinterested fashion on subjects of taste and literature the critic will "require, as the spirit and substance of a work, something true in human nature itself, and independent of all circumstances . . . . "[8] As a matter of fact, Romantic writers attempted to find the very substantial bases for judgment which Babbitt says they disregarded. The emotionalism of the Romantic writer was tempered by thought of philosophical and psychological nature; his purpose in criticism was in part to find valid criteria for judgment. It was not in artificially imposed rules that these criteria were to be found, however, but in the

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[8]"Shakspeare, A Poet Generally," Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 53.

permanent qualities and characteristics of human nature.[9]

Symonds is mistaken, then, when he defines "Romantic" criticism as that which "substituted sympathies and antipathies for rules, and exchanged authority for personal opinion."[10] The Romantic critics did not substitute sympathies and antipathies for rules; they tried to substitute psychological rules for arbitrarily imposed ones. They did not exchange authority for personal opinion; rather, they exchanged arbitrary authority crystallized in tradition for personal judgment based on experience with art and literature and founded on a recognition of psychological principles. In short, Symonds, because he uses the term "Romantic" in too facile and uncritical a fashion, falls into the error of confusing Romantic critical method as a whole with a tendency to indulge in egotistic emotionalism

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[9]Something which resembles Babbitt's "inner check" can be discovered in Coleridge, if one looks for it. In the Lectures on Shakspeare we find these words: "The ideal of earnest poetry consists in the union and harmonious melting down, and fusion of the sensual into the spiritual,--of man as animal into man as a power of reason and self-government" (Works, IV, p. 25). The italics are mine.

[10]Essays, pp. 66-7.

in criticism and poetry,[11] in an egotistic emotionalism which in criticism is often called impressionism.

But there are really two kinds of impressionistic critic. The one is represented by Anatole France, by the man who has adventures among masterpieces and whose critical writing is a veritable transcript of his emotions when he is in the presence of art, rather than a judgment of some art-work itself. This kind of critic, the sybarite of artistic experience, is the Des Esseintes of criticism. Like a child, he is the center of his own universe. This is the impressionist in as pure a state as he can exist.

The second type of impressionistic critic is represented by men like Lamb, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Pater, and Swinburne. Realizing that the logical end of pure impressionism is solipsism, this kind of writer not only describes his reaction to art and points out the beauties in it, but he tries to treat art objectively as well; he tries to judge of its worth. As the first kind of impressionistic critic thinks of his individual

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[11] Hazlitt, surprisingly enough, may have seemed to second the idea. "The great fault of a modern school of poetry," he says, "is, that it is an experiment to reduce poetry to a mere effusion of natural sensibility; or what is worse, to divest it both of imaginary splendour and human passion, to surround the meanest objects with the morbid feelings and devouring egotism of the writers' own minds" ("On Shakspeare and Milton," Lectures on the English Poets, Collected Works, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glorer, 12 Vols. [London, 1930], V, p. 53).

psychology as unique, so this second kind sees his uniqueness as a clue to the psychology of the generality of men. Instinctively he feels that criticism is more than personal experience only; but he knows that it must begin with personal experience. He is frequently the critic who seems to be feeling his way, whose criticism, like that of Pater, for instance, appears to be in the country between thought and feeling, between objectivity and subjectivity. The second kind of critic, unlike the first, is concerned with standards of criticism, though he may have no standards except those which he discovers himself; and his standards are not usually mechanical ones, but those, the matter of mere technique aside, which may be called broadly human.

It would be a mistake to say that impressionism has no place in Romantic criticism; it would be equally incorrect to say that impressionism is <u>all</u> of Romantic criticism. All criticism, it may be added, <u>begins</u> with impressions, with the inter-play of feeling, sense and intellect with some object: even judgment based on Arnold's "touchstone" theory begins with personal impression. But the Romantics, as I have said, believed also in judging art, and if their standards were not easily classified and if their standards were not elaborately objectified, they were none the less profound for being grounded in human nature. Thus, Hazlitt and

Lamb, who are frequently called impressionists, are not content merely to record their reactions to art or literature.

Lamb, for instance, may be called a creative critic, so able is he in penetrating to the unique characteristic of a writer's mind. He thinks of the imagination as a kind of fusing or blending force. He asks for unity of effect and structure; in drama he asks for depth of character; he compares the merits of authors he discusses. Although he refuses to judge Restoration drama by moral standards, he judges Hogarth so, and he explains his method of selecting examples for his Specimens (1808) on the ground that his "leading design was, to illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors."[12] He speaks about "a beauty and truth of moral feeling" in Middleton and Rowley.[13] Like De Quincey in his essay on the knocking at the gate in Macbeth, Lamb interprets effects or makes judgments according to psychological principles. Thus he explains his disappointment with stage presentations of Shakespeare on the ground that the stage levels all plays in the minds of the audience so that the greatest play seems no better

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[12]"Characters of Dramatic Writers Contemporary with Shakspeare," Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, ed. E. V. Lucas (London, 1903-5), I, p. 41.

[13]Ibid., Works, I, p. 46.

than a poor one; and he shows that the actor on the stage is always thinking about his appearance. He says also that in meditating on Shakespeare's characters we desire to think of their "ambition, the aspiring spirit, the intellectual activity, which prompts them to overleap . . . . moral fences;"[14] he points out that to us the greatness of Lear lies in its intellectual "dimension," and that when we are reading the play, "we are in [Lear's] mind."[15]

Even in Lamb, then, who is commonly held to be an impressionistic critic, and who, indeed, is primarily one, there is more than a concern with what Hazlitt calls a "devouring egotism" of his own mind.[16] He is not indifferent to morals and he does not hesitate to make judgments,[17] though the latter are, to be sure, erected on psychological rather than on conventional foundations.

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[14]"On the Tragedies of Shakspeare Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation, 1811," Works, I, p. 106.

[15]Ibid., Works, I, p. 107.

[16]"On Shakspeare and Milton," Lectures on the English Poets, Works, V, p. 53.

[17]Other judgments are those on George Barnwell, on Goethe's Faust, on Byron and Shelley--all of these except the first deficient, perhaps, but judgments none the less.

A Romantic critic like Lamb or Hazlitt may be an impressionist, but he may have standards and he may make judgments. In determining how closely the criticism of any man approximates that of the great Romantic critics, therefore, these questions may be asked: Is he content with merely recording his impressions? Does he have standards? Does he make judgments? Are his judgments, if any, based on psychological principles? It is these questions applied to Symonds which I shall try to answer in this chapter.

I think that it is best to confess at the very beginning of this discussion that Symonds is almost completely an impressionist. Though that is true, his writing is not without worth of a certain kind. The value to the reader of impressionistic criticism is that the writer, when he does not wander too far from his subject in order to display his own thoughts and feelings, seems always to have the art-work directly before him. There is, too, the further advantage that the impressionistic critic by the very nature of his task must re-examine an art-work before he can write truthfully about it. That is what Symonds does. When he writes the section of the Renaissance in Italy called The Fine Arts--which is Book III of the entire work--he bases his

criticism on personal observation.[18] When he writes about Elizabethan literature, it is usually evident that he has just read the literary examples he talks about. In other words, the value of this kind of criticism lies in its concentration on the chief object of interest, the work of art.

The question which arises at this point is, How closely is Symonds' theory of art related to his practical criticism? His ideas on art need not be related to his critical practice, of course; but this much at least is certain: that Symonds' theory of art is reflected in his criticism as it describes the reactions of the appreciator to art; for his theory of art is essentially that of the observer, not, as is Coleridge's, that of a creator who has philosophical leanings; and his practical criticism is the work also of the observer, of, it may be said, a teacher lecturing to a large class. In his writings on English Renaissance literature, therefore, Symonds treats art as an autonomous creation, as he said in his theory of art that it was; he describes it in such a way as to suggest its delightful, its animating, or its soothing qualities. He attempts, but in vain, to show the relationship of content to form which he describes in his theory of art. Especially does he find the

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[18] Renaissance in Italy, 2 Vols. (New York, n. d.), I, pp. 587-8.

personality of the artist in his work. But his practice does not always measure up to the standards he sets up in theory. Nor does he illustrate all the points he makes in his theory.

A. The Autonomy of Art

But one fact is clear: that Symonds never thinks of art as anything but an autonomous phenomenon. Therefore he writes about Shakespeare's "single-hearted sincerity as an artist"; he says that this "single-hearted sincerity" is discovered in Shakespeare's "exclusion of religious comment, of marked political intention, of deliberate moralising"; he says that these things are "a source of intellectual stimulus and moral insight," "that they create an atmosphere of mental energy, which makes his plays the school of human nature for all times"; and he adds that Shakespeare did not allow these things to distract him from his task[19]--the task, I take it, of creating art-works. The artist's sphere of operations is thus defined: he is to begin

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[19] Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama (New York, 1913), p. 5. This "single-hearted sincerity" I take to mean what some critics call Shakespeare's anonymity--this because in his work there is no expression of opinion of which we may say, "This is what he thought." It is, too, I suppose, what Keats called his "Negative Capability" (John Keats, Complete Poems and Selected Papers, ed. Clarence De Witt Thorpe [New York, 1935], p, 528), and what Hazlitt meant by the "generic quality" of Shakespeare's mind (Works, V, p. 47).

with "permanent relations" of human beings and put his material in a new form. The critic, for his part, must indicate what these "permanent relations" are and how the artist treats them. Here is the problem of content and form. The content of art must always be psychological in nature, since it must have some connection with human thoughts and emotions; but extraneous subjects destroy, do not improve, the essential nature of art. The artist and the critic are not required to look beyond the confines of art and treat its specimens as illustrations of the solutions of moral, political, social, or economic problems.

As for the other ideas in my last chapter which I classified as not belonging to the psychological tradition, none of these receives a place in Symonds' practical criticism. He makes little of the relation of morality or of science to art; he does not mention the operation of progress in art;[20] he does mention, however, certain pieces of literature and certain writers [21] who seem to go in the direction of a Democratic Art.

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[20]Except, perhaps, as progress is implied in "evolution," the latter of which, as I shall show, holds a prominent place in his "scientific" criticism.

[21]Essays, p. 287. These works are Blake's lyrics, George Sand's village stories, Gotthelf's Ulrich, George Eliot's Silas Marner, Pierre Loti's Mon Frère Yves, Kipling's Soldiers Three, Clough's Bothie, some of Hardy's Wessex novels. To this list he adds the work of Turgeneff, Tolstoi, and Dostoieffsky.

B. Psychological Aspects of Symonds' Practical Criticism

Symonds' practical criticism does illustrate in part the ideas which I considered in the last chapter that are in the psychological tradition. But it illustrates only a few of them. It should be noted in the following pages that Symonds shows how art reveals the personality of the artist, but that he has nothing to say about the artist as creator; that he makes much of the effect of form in art, but that he says what for all practical purposes amounts to nothing about the human, about the spiritual matters which he maintains are the content of art; that he is moved almost entirely by art as an animating force, but that whatever he thought was the moral effect of art, he does not say anything about the latter in his criticism of English Renaissance literature. In short, the psychological criticism of Symonds as it is put into practice seems to be almost entirely that of an impressionist.

1. Art as the Revelation of Personality

Symonds' study of Elizabethan drama includes a kind of psychological study of the dramatists themselves. Similarly, he studies the personalities of artists and writers in all of his critico-biographical works. Thus

he illustrates his idea that art is a revelation of personality.

The descriptions found in Symonds of the characteristics of certain writers remind one of a kind of connoisseurship of the qualities of personality. These descriptions are as subjective as anything can be in criticism; they represent the impressions which the writers' personalities, elusive and indefinite, make upon the critic, of subjectivity playing on subjectivity. These are the most impressionistic of impressionistic criticisms.

Of Dekker, for instance, Symonds says that he was a "master of sweet April comedy," " a poet of silvery purity," a writer with a cheerfulness all his own, who had a fancy "of lustre and limpidity combined, which distinguished him from his Elizabethan brethren as an independent genius."[22] He agrees with Lamb that Thomas Heywood is a "prose Shakespeare,"[23] and he calls Heywood's namesake, John, a prose Chaucer.[24] Johnson

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[22]"The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker," Academy, V (February 7, 1874), p. 136.

[23]Thomas Heywood, ed. A. Wilson Verity, with an Introduction by J. Addington Symonds, Mermaid Series (London and New York [1888]), p. vii.

[24]Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 151.

he calls "saturnine and humorous."[25] Greene he calls a Titan, mistakenly, I think.[26] He objects to the "want of absolute sincerity" in Beaumont and Fletcher.[27] He believes that Tourneur was "infected by some rankling plague-spot of the soul."[28]

On Marlowe, in whom he finds the elemental qualities which he admired in Italian Renaissance men like Cellini, he pronounces a resounding benediction:

> About Marlowe there is nothing small or trivial. His verse is mighty; his passion is intense; the outlines of his plots are large; his characters are Titanic; his fancy is extravagant in richness, insolence, and pomp. Marlowe could rough-hew like a Cyclops, though he was far from being able to finish with the subtlety and smoothness of a Praxitèles . . . . He is the sculptor-poet of Colossi, aiming at such effects alone as are attainable in figures of superhuman size . . . . His characters are . . . . types of humanity, the animated moulds of human lusts and passions which include, each one of them, the possibility of many individuals.[29]

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[25] Christopher Marlowe, ed. Havelock Ellis, with an Introduction on the English Drama during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I, by John Addington Symonds, Mermaid Series (London, 1893), p. xxiv.

[26] The practice of using the term "Titan" with reference to any great figure, a practice employed with irritating effect in Symonds and Swinburne, may derive from A. W. von Schlegel, who called Shakespeare "this tragical Titan" (A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. John Black [Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, 1833], p. 297; see also Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst and Literatur, Sämmtliche Werke, ed. Eduard Boecking, 12 Bände [Leipzig, 1846-7], VI, p. 196).

[27] In the Key of Blue (London and New York, 1893), p. 221.

[28] Christopher Marlowe, p. xxv.

[29] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 484.

Symonds does not go so far as Swinburne, who affirms[30] what the former denies,[31] that Marlowe had a sense of humor. But even so, he praises Marlowe so highly that the reader asks for a return of common sense and reason.

The finest tributes of which Symonds is capable, however, go to Sidney, whom he admired as a sort of ideal man. Sidney is "that marvellous youth"; he is accomplished, beautiful, great as a man.[32] He was the English gentleman, the "hero of our Renaissance."[33] He was greater as a man than as a writer, however[34]--an assertion which illustrates how right Symonds' instinct can be on occasion. Sidney interests Symonds because youth, adolescence, and physical beauty always moved him, either each of them alone, or, as in Greek art, where they appear in combination.[35] Thus Sidney was chivalrous

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[30]Charles Algernon Swinburne, Complete Works, Bonchurch Edition, 20 Vols. (London and New York, 1925-27), XI, pp. 277-8.

[31]Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 485.

[32]Sir Philip Sidney, Englishmen of Letters Series (New York, 1929), pp. 2-3 and 194-5.

[33]Ibid., p. 193.

[34]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[35]Ibid., pp. 193-4; Horatio F. Brown, John Addington Symonds, Second Edition (London, 1903), pp. 32-7.

and pious;[36] his education was liberal;[37] his breeding was fine, his loyalty patent;[38] he was an Englishman independent in spirit and controlled by loyalty to the state.[38] He was the "ideal of his generation," and for Symonds "the sweetest interpreter of its best aspirations."[39]

But it would be futile to continue offering examples in support of a fact that is obvious enough--that Symonds makes an attempt at showing how personality is revealed in art, but that in so doing he is relying almost entirely on subjective prejudices and enthusiasms. This kind of criticism is a kind of hero-worship, a hedonistic hero-worship, perhaps, and I cannot say that I think it very valuable as criticism goes.

It is in sharp contrast, for instance, to the kind of criticism which we find in the work of Sainte-Beuve. Whereas Symonds is content to revel in what are the almost imaginary virtues of authors and artists as they are reflected in their works, Sainte-Beuve has a more scientific method. He is a particularizer; he focuses close attention, as I show later, on the immediate influences of a person's life. Sainte-Beuve is a

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[36] Sir Philip Sidney, p. 195.

[37] Ibid., p. 197.

[38] Ibid., p. 198.

[39] Ibid., p. 199.

biographer; no detail about his subject is too unimportant to find a place in his criticism. Symonds, for all his interest in great personalities, however, does not burden himself with searching examination of the formative influences operating upon any artist; he is the appreciator., one to whom emotional enjoyment takes precedence over intellectual understanding. It may be said that there is less curiosity in Symonds than in Sainte-Beuve.

2. Content and Form

Symonds' theory of art, it will be remembered, made provision for attention in criticism to the content of art and seemed to follow closely theories like that of Coleridge to the effect that the form of an art-work should grow out of the matter. That Symonds gave more than lip service to this idea it is difficult, however, to believe. A reading of his work on English Renaissance literature reveals what Hugh Walker called a "certain lightness in the intellectual foundations," because attention seems to be concentrated on matters of emotional effect and form.

Like Pater and Swinburne, Symonds has been accused of being a hedonist, and such, to a certain extent, he is. The term "hedonism" is of course broad, and usually denotes a lack of sympathy between the person who is using it and

the person against whom it is directed; it serves the purpose of most name-calling, and it is no more critical than that method of casting aspersions on some person's qualities ever is. We are all hedonists at bottom, though it must be admitted that a critic like Symonds gives the impression at times of a certain wallowing in pleasurable emotional experiences. Unfortunately, his style considerably contributes to the acceptance of such an opinion. It is true, also, that moral teaching or didacticism, which might give the effect of a kind of tempering of the crude emotional metal, is absolutely foreign in his mind to art. It will be remembered, however, that, though he did not think that it is the purpose of art to teach men how to live better, he did not deny that art might do even that. But he did assume, with Goethe, that art must represent the bleibende Verhältnisse of human beings. His preoccupation with form and emotional effect is modified, therefore, by an interest in psychology.

I must admit that it is true that Symonds does not discuss the contents of literary specimens with sufficient thoroughness and that he gives more than enough space to considerations of aesthetic effect. By "contents" I do not mean plots; summaries of these he gives, and unsatisfactory enough some of them are. Neither do I mean the

"message," the "moral," the teaching of an art-work. I mean, rather, what Symonds himself must mean when he uses the term "abiding relations"--the aspects of a work of art which are universal. His Elizabethan studies and reviews disappoint as much as anything because there is in them no attempt to indicate what in the plays has universal significance, though he does deal with what may be called the broadly human.

Thus he praises Heywood for his "homely art and honest humanity,"[40] and for his ability to reach the heart by the simplest means, means which "are often deep and effectual."[41] He finds, as I have indicated, the desire for the impossible in Marlowe--a desire which is comparable, it seems to me, with the "indefinite illimitable desire" which he thinks is aroused by art. He finds that Marlowe's characters, in the words of Swinburne, "'are the embodiments or the exponents of simple qualities and single forces.'"[42] In Faust he sees a character whose noble spirit is perverted.[43]

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[40] Thomas Heywood, p. x.

[41] Ibid., p. 21.

[42] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 484. An article by one of his contemporaries which Symonds mentions as saying much the same thing is E. Dowden's "Christopher Marlowe," Fortnightly Review, VII, n. s. (January, 1870), pp. 69-81.

[43] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 509.

He objects to the lack of the psychological in the plays of Ben Jonson, whose characters, he finds, are "abstractions which a powerful rhetorician has gifted with mechanical vitality."[44]

His psychological bent is exhibited also in the attention he gives to motive in drama. Thus he finds insincere motives in Tourneur,[45] and he believes that Webster is superior to Tourneur because of the "greater variety [in his plays] of situations which reveal the struggles of the human soul with sin and fate."[46] Chapman, he says, cannot handle motives.[47] And he discovers something which Dryden earlier pointed out, a lack of unity in Jonson's Volpone because one motive is exhausted at the end of Act IV, and because there is "no adequate motive for Mosca's introduction of Bonario into Volpone's palace, at the moment when Corbaccio is coming to execute his will, and Celia is being brought by her unworthy husband."[48]

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[44] Ben Jonson, English Worthies Series (London, 1919), pp. 64-5.

[45] Introduction to Webster and Tourneur (London, 1888), p. xi.

[46] Ibid.

[47] "Chapman's Dramatic Works," Academy, IV (September 1, 1873), p. 321.

[48] Ben Jonson, p. 86. I am aware, of course, that these observations about motive are also criticisms of dramatic form.

Symonds' interest in psychology in literature is an offshoot of a feeling for personality and individuality which was common during and after the Romantic movement and which he, like Swinburne, had to an unusual, if not to an inordinate, degree. But critical discussion of dramatic characters was certainly not new in Symonds' day. Addison had remarked that Shakespeare excelled in drawing characters which excited the reader's imagination but which do not come from nature.[49] Dr. Johnson saw Shakespeare's characters as "the genuine progeny of common humanity . . . ."[50] Thomas Whately (Remarks on Some of the Characters of Shakespeare) in 1785, William Richardson (Philosophical Analogies and Illustrations of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters) in 1774, Maurice Morgann (An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff) in 1777, A. W. von Schlegel (Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literature) in 1809-11, Charles Lamb ("On the Tragedies of Shakespeare") in 1811, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Lectures on Shakespeare, 1811-18; first published in Literary Remains, 1836-39), and William Hazlitt (Characters of Shakespear's Plays) in 1817--these men had discussed Shakespeare's characters in detail. Symonds does not, however, follow their example;

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[49] Spectators 160 and 279.

[50] "Preface to Shakespeare," in Johnson on Shakespeare ed. Walter Raleigh (Oxford, 1925), p. 12.

he never writes anything about the characters of Shakespeare, or, in fact, about the characters of any dramatist, in the intense psychological spirit of these men. And therefore, though he has a feeling for personality in the drama and though he indicates a fondness for discovering the qualities of personality, he does not give the impression of being as thorough, as thoughtful, as careful about his treatment of character in the drama as most of these other writers.

On the whole, therefore, his treatment of these matters is undeniably superficial. And the dominant impression one carries away from reading Symonds is that he is primarily interested in aesthetic effect and artistic form, and that the deeper qualities of the content of art seem to escape him.

3. The Effects of Art

The reader is, I am sure, prepared to be informed that Symonds does not in his practical criticism show a concern for the deeper and more intellectual matters which the greater Romantic critics like Hazlitt, Coleridge, and even Lamb considered in their judgments of art and literature; and that he does not try to show how art ennobles one, how it reflects universal human psychology or experience, how, in the words of Shelly,

it "awakens and enlarges the mind . . . ."[51] The reader may further learn that in so far as Romantic critics are emotional, Symonds is like them; and that though there is in the work of these earlier men much more than the emotional quality which is commonly allied with impressionism, Symonds is like them only in that he believes in the integrity of the emotions and in that he refers to the emotional effect of art and literature in his criticism.

And, indeed, these statements are quite correct. Symonds' practical criticism might in part be used to illustrate what Irving Babbitt and Miss Powell mean by "Romanticism." Symonds' theory of art and, as will be seen in the next chapter, part of his theory of criticism come reasonably close to Romantic theories. But beside the practical criticism of Lamb, Symonds' ~~Romantic~~ criticism is almost pure impressionism, and Lamb seems to be the prototype of the judicial critic. Symonds' impressionism is, if one may be permitted so extreme an expression, like a veritable exquisite writhing. And one is never more aware of Symonds' emotionalism than when one looks for illustrations of the effect upon him of art.

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[51] "The Defence of Poetry," Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism, p. 131.

The least attractive side of Symonds' practical criticism is found in his descriptions of the effects of art; I say "the least attractive side" because no matter how attractive it may seem at first, it quickly palls. There is too much of it; the reader is always aware of the pleasure which Symonds finds in art.

Furthermore, there is in this criticism a lack of regard for the ethical or moral effects of art. It will be remembered that Symonds maintains that though art need not teach, it may have a moral effect. How, then, does he describe the moral effect of art?

In the first place, one discovers a quality in this criticism which one does not expect to find. "Moral" suggests something which goes to the root of living; it suggests the ethical as a philosophy. But it is possible to detect in Symonds a decorum or moral primness which one associates, rightly or wrongly, with his age. So, for instance, it has always seemed to me that in Shakspere's Predecessors he fails to treat the characters of Greene's plays more fully and do more justice to Greene himself because he cannot approve of Greene's immorality. So it seems, too, that he admires Sidney because his purity of character enabled him to throw off the influence of licentious and depraved courts,

especially of the Italian ones.[52] He dislikes Brome, and not without reason, I think, because Brome shows the coarse side of life "with prosaic ruthlessness": his "view of the world is that of a groom, rather than that of a gentleman,"[53] Symonds adds, with a characteristic snobbishness which asserts itself when he compares the English gentleman with something which does not quite reach that lofty standard. In short, one quite frequently finds in Symonds a cavilling morality, something which one does not expect in view of his enjoyment of the robustness and vigor of the English Renaissance drama and of Medieval students' songs.

It may be said that Symonds makes one attempt to determine the moral effect of art. In Shakspere's Predecessors he asks the question, "What was the moral teaching of our dramatists?"[54] He answers that the tone of the English Renaissance drama is manly and wholesome, and that there are no doubtful hints or examples of vice made interesting.[55] There are, however,

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[52] Sir Philip Sidney, pp. 57-60.

[53] "The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome," Academy, V (March 21, 1874), p. 304.

[54] P. 65.

[55] As, he adds, there are in modern fiction, which is sentimental in tone (ibid.).

exceptions to the healthiness of tone--some subjects (as in some of Fletcher's, Ford's, and Massinger's plays) are corrupt. Almost every play of the English theater "contains much that is coarse in sentiment and gross in language," and this is true especially of the comedies. Symonds sees a utility in the drama which balances its moral lapses: Elizabeth, he says, saw that the drama would serve as a means of public education; certain restrictions she had to impose upon the dramatists, but, Symonds adds in his characteristically patriotic fashion, the government "trusted, not without good reason, to the wholesome instincts of the people, with whom the playwrights lived and wrote in closest sympathy." The deterioration of the stage made itself felt, he points out, "only when the tone of a profligate court began to make itself felt . . . ." Whatever its morality, the stage "formed a school of popular instruction, a rallying-point of patriotism";[56] the stage exerted a strong influence upon the development of English character,[57] we learn, but we are given no evidence in support of the statement. And even the Puritans benefited by the salutary effect of the drama upon the public, for when they adopted the spirit of "public resistance to tyranny,"

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[56] Ibid., p. 66.

[57] Ibid., p. 67.

they "found in the people a nobility of spirit and deeply rooted zeal for freedom, which had been brought to consciousness in no small measure by the stage."[58] Many of these observations seem, however, to be motivated by patriotism rather than by a concern with the moral effect of the drama.[59]

If these statements reflect a conscious attempt to evaluate the moral effect of art, they represent something rare in Symonds. There is enough material in such a work as the Renaissance in Italy about the moral tone of a people, it is true, but there is little about the moral or ethical effects of art. Much more prominent are discussions of what may be called aesthetic (or artistic) and emotional effects.

The truth of the matter is that Symonds is preoccupied almost entirely with artistic and emotional effect, and that this preoccupation is everywhere present in his critical work on English Renaissance literature to such a degree that it becomes an annoyance to the reader. Thus Symonds finds a "spring note" in Gascoigne's Complaint of Philomena which he discovers also in Chaucer,

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[58] Ibid., p. 68.

[59] If Symonds needed any model to encourage his patriotism, he probably found it in Frederick Schlegel, whose extreme nationalism is almost Fichtean in tone. See Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern, Now First Completely Translated, Bohn Edition (London, 1880), passim.

in Surrey, and in early French, Provençal, and Italian poetry.[60] He finds this same "spring note" in the Elizabethan lyric, both in the lyrics appearing in drama and in those composed separately. These poems, he says, have "a freshness and a certainty of cadence, as of some bird's note."[61] He believes, too, that Sidney's Defence is a model of prose writing in an age "when prose writing suffered from Latinity and pedantry of every kind."[62] He does not say much about Milton (though in his book on Dante he compares Milton with Dante) except to discuss his blank verse.[63] He speaks about the effect in Lyly's dramas of scenes suggesting "antique sculpture or the subjects of engraved gems," and about Lyly's "Attic" style.[64] He finds in Webster's blank verse a "lyrical faculty" which is absent in Tourneur's.[65]

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[60]"The Steel Glass," Pall Mall Gazette, VIII, no. 1183 (November 25, 1868), p. 9.

[61]"Lyrics from Elizabethan Song-Books," In the Key of Blue, p. 265.

[62]"The Defence of Poesy," Pall Mall Gazette, VIII, no. 1209 (December 26, 1868), p. 11.

[63]See Blank Verse (London, 1894), pp. 105-8.

[64]Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 412.

[65]Webster and Tourneur, p. xiii. Symonds prefers Webster to Tourneur. In so doing, he follows Swinburne, whom T. S. Eliot commends as a critic of these two dramatists (The Sacred Wood [London, 1920], p. 19). I suppose that Eliot would approve also of what Symonds says about these men.

In Ford he finds a "pointed and glittering" style and an "artistic coldness."[66] In Jonson he finds that "grace, subtlety, emotion, and suggestiveness, are wanting . . . . "[67]

Symonds' frequent concern is with the difference between poetry and rhetoric in drama. He discovers that one of Chapman's weaknesses is that he cannot "distinguish between poetry and rhetoric."[68] He goes to great length in describing dramatic rhetoric in Beaumont and Fletcher, and he shows how much like the poetic type of rhetoric it is.[69]

Now, in Beaumont and Fletcher he finds both poetic and dramatic rhetoric; but he admits that their rhetoric possesses charm, that it suits "the romantic rather than the strictly tragic or comic method," but that the dramatic tension of Beaumont and Fletcher's Heroic Romances "is comparatively slack, and the poetic touch comparatively tame."[70] Shakespeare, as well as, to a lesser degree, Webster, he says, was free of the defects of rhetoric.[71]

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[66]"The Works of John Ford," Pall Mall Gazette, VI, no. 849 (Oct. 30, 1867), p. 10.

[67]Ben Jonson, p. 62.

[68]Academy, IV, p. 321.

[69]In the Key of Blue, pp. 218-9.

[70]Ibid., p. 219.

[71]Ibid., pp. 219-20.

Jonson was free of its defects, but Massinger, Shirley, and Ford were not. Beaumont and Fletcher's work reminds Symonds of Rossini's and of that of the later masters of the Italian opera because they, Beaumont and Fletcher, wrote out everything and left nothing to the actor.[72] Whereas in Shakespeare we feel men and women talking and acting, Symonds says, in Beaumont and Fletcher we feel them talked for.[73]

The concern with artistic and emotional effect is fundamental to Symonds' theory of the proper way to read blank verse--a theory which has been under attack from various quarters ever since it was propounded. It is true that he thinks of blank verse from the aesthetic point of view, as, I believe, he should: "Blank verse," he says with his usual patriotic fervour, "is a type and symbol of our national literary spirit--uncontrolled by precedent or rule, inclined to extravagance, yet reaching perfection at intervals by an inner force and _vivida vis_ of native inspiration."[74]

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[72] _Ibid._, p. 220.

[73] _Ibid._, pp. 220-1. The word "feel" is important in this passage because it supports the point I am making about Symonds' preoccupation with _effect_. I may add that Symonds is using the word "rhetoric" in a way which T. S. Eliot dislikes. The latter does not think of rhetoric as "synonymous with bad writing" (_The Sacred Wood_, pp. 72 and 77). He does say, however, that "Rhetoric, a particular form of rhetoric, was endemic, it pervaded the whole organism [of Elizabethan drama] . . . . " (_ibid._, p. 27).

[74] _Blank Verse_, pp. 71-2.

But it is more than that, he says, since it is a "metre of genius" and a verse-form which "admits of no mediocrity; it must be either clay or gold."[75] It is best suited to forms of poetry which "imply a continuity and development of thought," we are told; it is therefore not suited to the expression of philosophical ideas. It is "adapted especially for thought in evolution; it requires progression and sustained effect."[76] It is, however, an instrument which a poet can use according to his wishes; originally employed in drama, it can be used in the epic, the idyll, the lyric, and in didactic poetry as well.[77] The beauties of blank verse, Symonds thinks, are the result of the liberties taken by writers with its basic normal iambic structure.[78]

The purpose of his essays on blank verse is to show how that verse form is to be read and enjoyed--to illustrate "the rhetoric rather than the prosody of the metre . . . . "[79] Symonds is neither "for nor against" scanning "Blank verse by the traditional feet of Greek and Latin metres";[80] indeed, he says, some such method

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[75] Ibid., p. 71.
[76] Ibid., p. 70.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., p. 1.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., p. 13.

must still be used. But rules applying to Quantitative metre should not be applied to the Accentual; "and . . . . when such application [of the rules] has been made, ... we have still to seek the aesthetic value of the lines in question."[81]

Such is Symonds' position regarding blank verse--that it should not be scanned according to classical metres, but that its own aesthetic quality should be the basis of the placing of the accents. So far as I can see, his idea is reasonable enough. Poetry is an art, surely; its form, at any rate, is essential to it; and since poetry is a marriage of sound and sense, and since the characteristics of blank verse are apparent through sound, it is logical to look for the principles which determine its nature in the sound-appeal which it makes. Symonds believes, however, that blank verse should be read according to its sense, not according to the rules of the poetry of the ancients. Blank verse so read may be irregular, as it is by nature, but it will also be "various and plastic."[82] I cannot see that Symonds' position regarding this verse form is very far from that of Coleridge, who says:

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[81] Ibid., p. 13.

[82] Ibid., p. 16.

> It is true that quantity, an almost iron law with the Greek, is in English rather a subject for a peculiarly fine ear, than any law or even rule; but then, instead of it, we have first accent; secondly emphasis; and lastly retardation and acceleration of times of syllables according to the meanings of words, the passion that accompanies them, and even of the character of the person that uses them.[83]

Certain prosodists do not agree as to the reasonableness of Symonds' position. Mayor deprecates his attempts to show the aesthetic basis of blank verse as "Aesthetic Intuitionism" and he finds in Symonds a confusion "between aesthetic and scientific views of metre"[84]--as if observations about the aesthetic foundations of an art cannot be "scientific." Mayor admits that Symonds' aesthetic analysis is excellent in itself, but he says that it cannot take the place of scientific analysis--[85] meaning, I take it, of scansion. George Dobbin Brown thinks that Symonds allows too great freedom of scansion and speaks of his "subjective judgment of the scansion . . ."[86] T. S. Omond declares that Symonds' position "amounted, practically, to a negation of prosody" and that from his school "students of practical prosody get little or

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[83]"Notes on Beaumont and Fletcher," Works, IV, p. 200.

[84]Joseph B. Mayor, Chapters of English Verse (Cambridge, 1901), pp. 47-8.

[85]Ibid., p. 53.

[86]Syllabification and Accent in Paradise Lost (John Hopkins Ph. D. Thesis, Baltimore, 1901), pp. 22-4.

no help."[87] Egerton Smith, on the other hand, is kinder. He defends Symonds from the charge of anarchism,[88] and says that he did not exaggerate "the possible compass of blank verse.[89] The critic who seems to be most in agreement with Symonds on these points is Saintsbury, who believes that "you must not force a scheme on the verse"--a recommendation of which Symonds would approve, since he believed that in reading blank verse one should attend to the sense and to the pauses.[90]

Like Hazlitt and Swinburne, Symonds was fond of characterizing the effects of the blank verse of various Elizabethan dramatists. One passage will illustrate the practice. Shakespeare, of course, climaxes the list:

> The fluent grace of Heywood, the sweet sentiment of Dekker, Marston's pregnant sentences, the dream-like charm of Fletcher's melody, Marlowe's mighty line, Webster's sombreness of pathos and heart-quaking bursts of rage, Jonson's gravity, Massinger's smooth-sliding eloquence, Ford's adamantine declamation, and the style of Shakspere, which embraces all--as some great organ holds all instruments within its stops--these remain as monuments of composition for succeeding ages.[91]

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[87] English Metrists (Oxford, 1921), pp. 187-8.

[88] The Principles of English Metre (London, 1923), p. 101, note.

[89] Ibid., p. 217.

[90] George Saintsbury, A History of English Prosody, 3 Vols. (London, 1910), III, p. 446, note.

[91] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 70. Symonds spelled the name, variously, "Shakspeare," "Shakspere," occasionally

There are other evidences of Symonds' preoccupation with artistic effect. It is his frequent practice to compare the mood of one art-work with that of another which belongs to the same genre. But one of the more attractive sides of the criticism I am discussing lies in Symonds' ability, like that of Hazlitt and Swinburne, to discuss one art in terms of another. In speaking of Dekker, for instance, he likens Dekker's scenes consisting of stores, inns, taverns, suburban pleasure-gardens, and "places of a . . . . questionable character" to Dutch interiors; in The Honest Whore, he says, Dekker copies "from the life after the patient manner of the Dutch masters . . . . "; and he quotes Hazlitt, who earlier wrote about Dekker's work in terms of painting.[92] I may mention that in Symonds' writings there are many passages illustrating the Andersstreben of the arts. This practice of comparing one art in terms of another is, Symonds indicates, fanciful, and merely an attempt

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[91]footnote continued

Shakespeare"--but usually "Shakspere." I know of no emotional or psychological reasons for this inconsistency in practice. F. J. Furnival, however, ("The Spelling of Shakspere's Name," Academy, v, no. 89 [January 24, 1874], p. 95) says, "Shakspere, then, is the right spelling of the poet's name." Furnival's evidence is Shakespeare's signature.

[92]Academy, V, pp. 135-7. For the quotation from Hazlitt see The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth and Characters of Shakespear's Plays, Bohn Edition (London, 1890), p. 91.

to exprese "our sense of something subjective in the styles of artists or epochs, not of something in the arts themselves."[93] It is one of the most suggestive of ways to discuss art-works and is not the least of the contributions of the impressionist to the criticism of art.

One of the effects of art is the impression of beauty, and, whatever beauty _is_, Symonds, like the nineteenth century "aesthetes," uses the term often. He finds this beauty in Marlowe, for whom he entertained an unbounded and unrepressed admiration.[94] In Marlowe's work he discovers a cult of beauty: Marlowe is, he says, "the hierophant in England of that Pagan cult of beauty which characterized the Italian Renaissance," and he speaks of the "Titanesque pomp and splendour" of the picture in Marlowe's _Hero and Leander_.[95] Symonds finds a leading motive--_L'Amour de l'Impossible_--in the work of Marlowe: this "love or lust of

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[93] _Essays_, p. 367. This practice was encouraged by Goethe, for one. See "Introduction to Propylaea," _Goethe's Literary Essays_, tr. J. E. Spingarn (London, 1921), p. 15.

[94] See _Shakspere's Predecessors_, p. 534. Symonds seems to vie with Swinburne in extolling Marlowe.

[95] "The Works of Christopher Marlowe," _Academy_, I (September 10, 1870), p. 309.

unattainable things" is sometimes discovered in Marlowe's thirst for beauty, we are told.[96]

The consciousness of the effects of Elizabethan literature and of its artistic beauty causes Symonds to think of it not as literature, but as art. He is therefore aware of each dramatist's artistic method. The supreme artist, the dramatist who unites all the artistic qualities of the Renaissance dramatists, is, of course, Shakespeare. In him the English drama is "completed and accomplished."[97] Like Dowden, Swinburne, and earlier, Coleridge, Symonds finds that Shakespeare's art "is Art, mature, self-conscious, working upon given methods with a single aim."[98]

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[96] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 486. Symonds makes the mistake of finding a cult of beauty in, of all things, Tamburlaine. The famous speech on beauty is, of course, part of the play, though certain critics suggest that it is an interpolation. The play itself is one of lawlessness, fury, and blood-lust--of a primitiveness which Symonds seems to have enjoyed, too, in the work of the artists of the Italian Renaissance (See ibid., pp. 490-1).

The leading motive reminds one of Pater's "formula." See Child, The Aesthetics of Walter Pater (New York, 1940), pp. 109-21.

[97] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 4, and similar statements passim.

[98] Ibid., p. 5. For Coleridge's statements see Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare, ed. Mrs. H. N. Coleridge, 2 Vols. (London, 1849), I, pp. 58-67.

As a matter of fact, it appears that the later nineteenth century critics, as well as Coleridge, probably got the idea of the art of Shakespeare from A. W. von Schlegel, who says, "To me he appears a profound artist, and not a blind and wildly luxuriant genius" (op. cit., p. 289; also Werke, VI, p. 182).

We are at the end of our discussion of the psychological elements in Symonds' impressionistic criticism. The result is disappointing at best, and the reason for our disappointment lies in Symonds' apparent inability to objectify his psychological observations. We can never forget that it is he who is talking. His comments, we feel, are always his, and the emotional experiences are always his. Now, in criticism we expect a certain amount of objectivity; we feel that comments should have a general psychological application and that they should have a certain profundity if they are to be worth attending to. Witness such a passage as this from Hazlitt, who says that the storm of passion in tragedy shows us

> . . . . the rich depths of the human soul: the whole of our existence, the sum total of our passions and pursuits, of that which we desire and that which we dread, is brought before us by contrast; the action and re-action are equal; the keenness of immediate suffering only gives a more intense aspiration after, and a more intimate participation with the antagonist world of good . . . .[99]

There is an acuteness of psychological observation which Symonds never reaches and a style which he consequently cannot hope to match. Symonds can describe the effects of art and literature upon himself, but he cannot--or at least he does not--say what any work means for many men.

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[99]"On Poetry in General," Lectures on the English Poets, Works, V, p. 6.

C. "Interpretation"

Thus it would seem that the substantial parts of Symonds' theory of art are not illustrated in his practical criticism. His attitude towards literature, as towards all art, is that it has no extrinsic purpose, and he treats it as a phenomenon of intrinsic value. His ideas of the effects of art are illustrated in part by his practice, but he concentrates on aesthetic effect, and disposes of moral and ennobling effects without comment. He shows how art reveals the personality of the artist, but he really describes only the impression upon him of the artist as he sees that artist in his work. As regards the matter of content and form, he practically forsakes the position which he takes in theory and he divorces form from content in order to give it intensive treatment.

There are other aspects of Symonds' impressionistic criticism which need to be discussed, however. If the critic is ever to be "creative," he is so when, through the use of his imagination, he interprets the meanings of events, or tries to explain the concrete thing in terms of spirit or character. Then he tries to describe the qualities of a body of work, or even of a whole historical period. This is the kind of thing the historian does better, as a rule, than the critic.

I think of Carlyle, Macaulay, Froude, and of Symonds himself. In a sense, however, this activity has less to do with truth to fact, with scientific accuracy, than with feeling. This is a kind of picture-criticism; I call it "interpretation" and it is discovered in what Symonds has to say about the nature of English drama.

What does he think is the nature of this drama? It lacks repose and classic unity of design,[100] he says; its laws are those of "vehement activity and wayward beauty," "the discords and the imperfections of the type" being such that only "genius of the highest order can reduce it to harmony."[101] The playwrights of the English Renaissance, we are told, aimed at describing life as a whole, and consequently they took as legitimate dramatic material everything within man's experience.[102]

But, Symonds adds, all materials and themes were given romantic treatment and style.[103] Exuberance,

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[100] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 29.

[101] Ibid., p. 30.

[102] Ibid. Symonds goes on at this point to explain their use of material from the past: "They rifled the stores of history and learning with indiscriminate rapacity," he says (ibid.).

[103] And so A. W. von Schlegel: "What [the English and Spanish theaters] have in common with each other is the spirit of the romantic poetry dramatically pronounced" (op. cit., p. 274; also Werke, VI, p. 160). Much the same idea is found in Coleridge: see "Progress of the Drama," Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 35.

"superfluity of incident and incoherence of design"--these characterize an art which "suffered from rapidity of execution, excess of fancy, inventive waywardness."[104] Especially lacking in English drama were what "Goethe calls the Motiviren of a situation";[105] English playwrights did not appeal to readers, however, but to an audience "fitted for sudden spiritual transformation";[105] and, we learn, the "final significance of the whole problem of Elizabethan literature lies in one point; the people, at that fortunate epoch, vibrated to Shakspere's delicacy, no less than to the rougher touch of men who had in them the crudest substance of Shaksperian art."[106]

If Symonds sees in the Elizabethan drama an artistic growth which is wild and unrestrained, he finds in the grossness and barbarous quality of the **characters** on the Elizabethan stage a something more than he as a Victorian Englishman can understand.[107] Insanity, he says, is a frequently used tragic motive for the purpose of "stirring pity and inspiring dread."[108] The macabre, representing the "heavy burden of still haunting spiritual horrors"

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[104] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 32.

[105] Ibid., p. 33.

[106] Ibid., p. 34.

[107] Ibid., pp. 34-6

[108] Ibid., p. 36. Symonds is of course echoing Aristotle.

which Renaissance Englishmen retained from the Middle Ages,[109] is everywhere present. The grave and death are frequent themes. Symonds finds an explanation for this fact in the "medieval pre-occupation with the world beyond this world, surviving in the Renaissance,"[110] an explanation, I may add, which overlooks the significance of the subject of death to all living things and which reflects Symonds' intense prejudice against the Middle Ages. "Interpretation" which would ascribe the presence of the theme of death in drama to Medieval religiosity seems to me superficial and smacking of the improbable. But Symonds finds some consolation for this remnant of medievalism in the secular tone of Elizabethan drama. In the "lyrical outpourings on the theme of death," he says, the "purely theological note is never sounded": the "pagan tone . . . . marks them all . . . ."[111]

Hazlitt, whose name appears frequently on the pages from which I am quoting, does not find evidence of the strong secular character of English Renaissance drama which Symonds does. Symonds' ideas of this aspect of

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[109] Ibid., p. 37. Symonds nowhere takes cognizance of the fascination which horror holds for men or of its sheer entertainment value. I wonder how he would explain the "Gothic" novel of the eighteenth century--its popularity, that is--or the popularity of crime and mystery stories today.

[110] Ibid., p. 38.

[111] Ibid., p. 40.

Elizabethan literature, as will be apparent later, are conditioned by his ideas of the Renaissance as a whole, and Hazlitt's words about the primary causes which influenced the literature of the age contradict his dearest notions: "The literature of the age," we learn, " . . . . was strongly influenced . . . . first by the spirit of Christianity, and secondly by the spirit of Protestantism."[112] Hazlitt is speaking about the drama, of course. But the drama is the most important unit in the "literature of this age," and certainly it must come under the same influences as other aspects or types of that literature. Symonds does not recognize the Christian character of English Renaissance literature--a fact which partly explains why he is interested in so little Elizabethan literature outside the drama. It is best, I suppose, if one wishes to see a period as having one moral condition (to echo Taine), that one ignore any evidences which disproves his notion. To such results does the practice of "interpreting" or characterizing a whole historical or literary period lead one.

If this technique in criticism makes for historical inaccuracy, it also makes for a melodramatic way of describing the tonal character of a body of literature. Therefore in the frequency of statements about life and

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[112] Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth, etc., p. 17.

death in English Renaissance plays Symonds finds support for the idea that the drama is characterized by a melancholy tone: "Melancholy," he apostrophizes in hesitant accents, "deep Teutonic meditative Melancholy, which drapes it with a magic pall."[113] A severe criticism of this view is brought by Churton Collins. In his essay on Shakspere's Predecessors,[114] Collins implies that Symonds over-stated the case: "Nothing can be less felicitous than his remark that the drama is draped with 'a tragic pall of deep Teutonic meditative melancholy,' and nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the evidence adduced by him in support of the remark." Collins continues by saying that Symonds' method of proving the melancholy tone of Elizabethan drama is to quote some thirty passages from the speeches of characters who in dramatic scenes are expressing themselves in dramatic language; and that, using the same method of

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[113] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 44. Thus he says that Webster added Teutonic fancy to the Italian stories he dramatized: "To the subtlety and vices of the South he added the melancholy, meditation, and sister insanity of his own climate" (Italian Byways [New York, 1883], p. 167). Webster deepened the color of the Italianate sins he describes; he robbed the Italian character of levity; and the sense of sin he entertained was Teutonic (ibid., pp. 167-8). Webster's tragedies, we are told, are true "not so much to the actual conditions of Italy, as to the moral impression made by these conditions on a Northern imagination" (ibid., p. 175).

[114] In the Quarterly Review, CLXI (1885), pp. 330-81. The essay is reprinted in Essays and Studies (London and New York, 1895), which I use.

proof, one could show that the distinguishing feature of the Homeric poems is "cynical pessimism," of Chaucer is "pensive sentimentalism," of Sophocles and Milton "audacious impiety." Collins holds that Symonds should merely have said that such melancholy passages as he mentions occur frequently, especially in Webster, Marston, Tourneur, and Ford; "but," says Collins, "this school was only one out of many, it is confessedly not a representative school, and its productions are but a small proportion of the literature on which Mr. Symonds is generalising."[115] Again it is clear that some of the interpretations we have been examining, if they are not exactly false, at least give wrong impressions of what is fact.

Another characteristic which Symonds discovers in English Renaissance drama is the spirit of freedom. He shows that the drama grew partly because the playwrights of the English Renaissance had an "unencumbered freedom of development." They were free, he says, from the restraints imposed "by educated opinion or by a cautious Government": men of learning were not the poets of England; the "poets were not scholars in the strict sense of that term"; there was no tyrannous Academy, "like that before whose verdict Corneille had to bow . . . ."

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[115] Essays and Studies, pp. 96-7.

The poets were free from authority; they were given a liberty which "would have been impossible in any one of the small jealous states in Italy," or, continues Symonds, in any country "where the Holy Office held sway." He does not agree with critics who say that some restraints would have been salutary for the English drama, for, he adds, "Great monuments of art must be judged by their own ideal, and not by that of a diverse, if no less commanding excellence."[116] This freedom which Symonds finds among Elizabethan dramatists is the same freedom which he sees as a characteristic of the entire Renaissance period, the idea of which, as I shall show later, seems to stem from Hegel.[117] This same freedom is characteristic of the Victorian age, says Symonds in another place, and is a mark of similarity between the Victorian and Elizabethan periods.[118]

He finds that another point which affected the English drama was what he calls "clairvoyance in dramatic matters";[119] all playwrights of the day had "a special tact, facility,

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[116] Shakspere's Predecessors, pp. 59-60.

[117] See below, p. 321.

[118] Essays, pp. 394-5; 206-7; see also Horatio F. Brown, John Addington Symonds, Second Edition (London, 1903), pp. 206-7.

[119] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 62.

and force of touch upon the Drama"; in other forms of literature they were weak and uncertain, but in the drama they were strong, sure, direct.[120] This clairvoyance, we are told, gave Elizabethan playwrights insight into three things: the nature of man in its entirety;[121] the true nature of their art as drama, not as epical, idyllic, or didactic poetry; the nature of things beyond their experience.[122] This power is due to that "intuition into human nature which was the virtue of the age,"[123] to that attitude towards a "Roman or an Ancient Briton, a Greek or an Italian" which sees him simply as a man. The "truth at which these playwrights aimed was always psychological."[124]

In the cream of English Renaissance drama, to use Symonds' own phrase, he finds a certain lyrism. The conception of character and the choice of situations, he holds, are always poetical: "The tone of the diction

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid., p. 63.

[122] Ibid., p. 64.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid. And so Dr. Johnson: " . . . . Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident; and if he preserves the essential character, is not very careful of distinctions superinduced and adventitious. His story requires Romans or kings, but he thinks only on men" ("Preface to Shakespeare," in Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. Raleigh), p. 15.

proper to dramatic utterance frequently exhales in lyrisms." This lyrical element pervaded all Elizabethan poetry, we are told; "the Elizabethan was the English age of music;" "the bias of poetical literature in England during the Elizabethan Age was lyrical. The drama obeyed that bias." Symonds mentions the lyrical tone of Marlowe's poetry, though he notes that Marlowe's plays contain no printed songs. He quotes "a German who has remarked, Romeo and Juliet combines the sonnet, the epithalamium, and the aubade . . . ."[125] He quotes Coleridge on the "lyrical inter-breathings" of the romantic drama, and mentions passages in Shakespeare in which dramatic speech is "raised to lyrical intensity."[126]

Now, this observation on the lyrical quality of Elizabethan drama does not appear in the earlier Shakspere's Predecessors (1884), but later in In the Key of Blue (1893) and somewhat before that (1890) in the Fortnightly Review. My own theory is that Symonds got the idea from the Germans through Pater. Let me elucidate: Long before Pater, the Germans had made the statement that music is the type of all art; but Symonds does not echo the idea in Shakspere's

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[125]The German may have been A. W. von Schlegel, who thinks that Shakespeare meant Romeo and Juliet to approach a poem. See op. cit., p. 325; also Werke, VII, pp. 88-9. Coleridge expresses a similar idea in his notes on Romeo and Juliet, Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 111.

[126]In the Key of Blue, pp. 241-58.

Predecessors, and he could not therefore have taken it from the Germans. Since the notion appears later in Symonds' criticism, I suppose that he was impressed with the idea as it appeared in Pater, and he therefore used it.

Schopenhauer seems to be responsible for the conception that all arts aspire to the condition of music, though there were other Germans who said the same thing, as Irving Babbitt indicates.[127] Coleridge, who may have got the notion from the Germans, mentioned the lyrical quality of much of the poetry in Elizabethan drama.[128] And Walter Pater described it in this way:

> Poetry, again, works with words addressed in the first instance to the pure intelligence; and it deals, most often, with a definite subject or situation. Sometimes it may find a noble and legitimate function in the conveyance of moral or political aspiration, as often in the poetry of Victor Hugo. In such instances it is easy enough for the understanding to distinguish between the matter and the form, however much the matter, the subject, the element which is addressed to the mere intelligence, has been penetrated by the informing, artistic spirit. But the ideal types of poetry are those in which this distinction is reduced to its minimum; so that lyrical poetry, precisely because in it we are least able to detach the matter from the form, without a deduction of something from the matter itself, is, at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry. And the very perfection of such

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[127] The New Laokoon (Boston and New York, 1910), p. 62.

[128] Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 63.

> poetry often appears to depend, in part, on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding, as in some of the most imaginative compositions of William Blake, and often in Shakespeare's songs, as pre-eminently in that song of Mariana's page in Measure for Measure, in which the kindling force and poetry of the whole play seems to pass for a moment into an actual strain of music.[129]

Symonds' use, then, of what I call "interpretation," which is the impressionist's attempt to analyze prevailing characteristics and tendencies in an historical or artistic period, is amply illustrated by what he says about the nature of English drama. These characteristics and tendencies--whether or not modern scholars would agree that they are true to historical fact--may be summed up as a certain literary and artistic lawlessness and extravagance, a grossness and barbarousness, a secularism, a melancholy tone, a universality of subject-matter, a spirit of freedom, a clairvoyance in dramatic matters, and a kind of lyrism. To be sure, students in general recognize the lawlessness and extravagance of the English drama of the Renaissance period because that drama did not follow classical precedent and because it was "romantic" in nature; but few would find the delight which Symonds does in the drama's elemental and primitive character.

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[129] The Renaissance (New York, n. d.), pp. 112-3.

There is no doubt in my mind but that Symonds lets his enthusiasm run away with him on this point, and that this enthusiasm is aroused by a kind of Rousseauistic delight in primitivism and by the reflection that Elizabethan drama is a spontaneous, indigenous growth. About Symonds' notion of the secularism of the drama there cannot be much disagreement, but I fear that he identifies this secularism with a secularism which he thought dominated the entire Renaissance movement and therefore English Renaissance literature as well. As regards the idea of the melancholy tone of English drama, the student must agree, not with Symonds, I think, but with Churton Collins. About the universality of the subject-matter of this drama there is further agreement, but I wonder if Symonds did not identify Elizabethan drama with Shakespearean drama; and it must be remembered that even "universality" is relative and depends upon what man knows or feels at any point in time. Certainly with Symonds' ideas about the spirit of freedom as it appears in English drama, about the writers' clairvoyance in dramatic matters, about the lyrical quality of the poetry of English drama--certainly with these, most students will agree. But all of these ideas are <u>impressions</u>: they are not conclusions reached after investigation in the scholarly manner. This fact Symonds

himself recognizes. "To conclude a panegyric, rather than criticism, of the English Drama," he says, at the end of a long section of interpretive writing in Shakspere's Predecessors, "it would be well to give some history of opinion regarding so great a treasure of our literature during the past three centuries." And of those of his predecessors in the criticism of English Renaissance drama which he had read, Symonds mentions Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb (he "made selections, which he enriched with notes of purest gold of criticism"), the writers in the Retrospective Review, and De Quincey.[130]

D. Does Symonds Have Standards?

It is pretty difficult to discover standards in Symonds' criticism of English Renaissance literature. He seems on the whole to be content merely with expressing a Swinburnian enthusiasm. He may in general have had in mind the dictum of Goethe that

> Whenever one has to express an opinion on the actions or on the writings of others, unless this be done from a certain one-sided enthusiasm, or from a loving interest in the person and the work, the result is hardly worth considering.[131]

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[130] Shakspere's Predecessors, pp. 71-2.

[131] "On Criticism," Goethe's Literary Essays, pp. 141-2.

In Symonds' writings on Elizabethan drama, however, it is possible to discover certain critical standards, though they are not original ones with him, and though they are not profoundly psychological, as one might expect them to be. Because he defines drama as characters in action, he declares for the importance of plot in drama; he asks also for a certain unity of effect; finally, he expects characters to be clearly drawn.

Symonds was an arm-chair student of English drama. There is hardly more than one reference in the biographical material which I have at my disposal to his having attended a dramatic performance, and that event took place in his youth. That there were similar occasions I do not doubt, but they could not have been many. Either because he was able to visualize action, or because he accepted Aristotle's dictum that a tragedy is an imitation of an action,[132] Symonds says that the end of all dramatic art is "the presentation of human character in action."[133] In speaking of Chapman, to cite an example, he says that there is too much philosophical reflection and political speculation in his plays, which are by their nature meant for action.[134]

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[132] Poetics and Demetrius, On Style, Everyman Edition (New York, 1934), p. 14.

[133] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 5.

[134] Academy, IV, p. 321.

I suspect that Symonds does not call a drama an imitation of an action because, as we have seen, he believes that art was more than an imitation or that imitation was only the first part of the process of artistic creation. But because he sees characters in action, he adopts Aristotle's opinion that the principal part of the drama (Aristotle says "tragedy") is the plot or fable.[135] Symonds is aware at all times of the ability of writers to construct plots. He points out the lack of plot in Lyly's comedies, and their deficiency in dramatic movement.[136] Greene's plots, he says, are not unified, but his stories are well told: Symonds sees in Greene's plays "the hand of the novelist."[137] Dekker cannot devise "a firm and well-articulated fable."[138] Chapman in his tragedies cannot "construct a plot or work out a plan which he [has] laid down with lucidity."[139] Symonds commends Jonson as a craftsman who made his own plots.[140] He suggests that Beaumont and Fletcher's plots, especially

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[135] Poetics, p. 16.

[136] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 412.

[137] Ibid., p. 446.

[138] Academy, v, p. 135.

[139] Academy, iv, p. 321. "With lucidity" modifies "construct" and "work out."

[140] Ben Jonson, p. 52.

in the species called Heroic Romance, "lack inevitability"; that their endings are not prepared for and do not rise out of the dramatic situation;[141] and that the strength of these playwrights lies "in planning some elaborate situation, like the finale of an opera act, carefully planned, long drawn-out, introducing the main agents of the drama."[142] In Brome's comedies, however, Symonds finds plots that "are firmly traced and sustained on one plan throughout."[143]

The word "unified" appeared in the last paragraph in connection with Greene's plots. Symonds, like everyone who studies art and thinks of an art-work as an organic creation, looks for unity in the drama, though of course he does not look for the "classical" unities. He thinks, rather, of a natural completeness, a singleness of effect, such as he misses in Thomas Heywood but which he finds in Marlowe, Webster, Ford, and Fletcher.[144] Symonds finds three unities in Marlowe, but these unities are "unity of action, unity

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[141] In the Key of Blue, pp. 217-8. That is, they do not have Aristotle's beginning, middle, and end (Poetics, p. 17).

[142] In the Key of Blue, p. 223.

[143] Academy, v, p. 304.

[144] Thomas Heywood, p. xx.

of character, unity of interest,"[145] only one of which, the first, is a "classical" unity. Aristotle, of course, was content with the unity of action, and he merely suggested the unity of time,[146] though the unity of place also is discovered in Greek drama. These unities were, however, impossible in English Renaissance drama because of its very nature. The permanent requirement of art is perhaps the unity of effect--in drama, the unity of action--and this requirement Symonds adopts. But he does not demand that English drama should have followed rules which would have violated or altered its function and nature.

Aristotle had comparatively little to say about the characters of a play. The Victorian age, however, had a relish for personality and the individual characteristics of men. The German A. W. von Schlegel, the English Coleridge and Hazlitt in the preceding age had discussed

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[145] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 482. This unity of interest, I feel, comes directly from A. W. von Schlegel, who says: "De la Motte, a French author, who wrote against the whole of the unities, wishes, in the place of unity of action, to substitute the words unity of interest. If the expression is not confined to the interest in the fate of a single person, but is used to signify in general the direction of the mind during the aspect of an event, I should then consider it, so understood, as the most satisfactory and the nearest to the truth" (op. cit., p. 189; also Werke, VI, p. 19). Coleridge speaks, it should be observed, of the "totality of interest" ("Romeo and Juliet," Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 110).

[146] Poetics, pp. 17-8.

the characters of Shakespeare's plays. A strong feeling for personality colors much of the criticism of a man like Symonds. We have seen that for him personality played a major part in art. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that he makes a great deal of character delineation in Elizabethan drama; but it may be remarked that he makes no Aristotelian demands that the tragic character have "a certain magnitude."

His requirement seems to be that characters be clearly drawn--"firmly defined" is his term. He commends Greene's "portrait" of Lady Ida, and he says that here "Greene conceived and half expressed a true woman's character."[147] Lodge, he says, made "an honest effort to trace firm outlines of his principal male characters."[148] One of Dekker's virtues was his ability to delineate character,[149] we learn. Symonds declares that Heywood's men are all gentlemen and that Heywood seems to have had more understanding especially of high-spirited young men than of women.[150] He dismisses Chapman with the statement that he cannot create characters,[151] although he admits that Chapman's plays have

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[147] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 447.

[148] Ibid., p. 463.

[149] Academy, v, p. 135.

[150] Thomas Heywood, p. xxi.

[151] Academy, iv, p. 321.

one attractive personality--Bussy d'Ambois.[152] Though he hardly mentions Shakespere's characters at all--a curious omission--he ventures to say that Shakespeare glorified but did not metamorphose his historical heroes,[153] and that his men and women are magically perfect.[154] Jonson's characters he finds to be not universal--they are "puppets of the moment" who "skip and jump and play their pranks with strange mechanic nimbleness";[155] but Jonson's plays, Symonds says, contain "trenchant character--drawing,"[156] though not "clairvoyance of imagination into the groundwork of personality"; consequently, Jonson's characters are merely "incarnations of abstract properties."[157] Symonds thinks that the "strict definition of their leading humour,"[158] which compels his people "to maintain a certain assumed character,"[159] gives to them "an air of mechanism."[160]

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[152] Ibid., p. 322.

[153] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 291. See also A. Ralli, A History of Shakespeare Criticism, 2 Vols. (London, 1932), II, p. 6.

[154] Shakespere's Predecessors, p. 51.

[155] Ben Jonson, p. 51.

[156] Ibid., p. 57.

[157] Ibid., p. 53.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid., p. 55.

[160] Ibid., p. 53.

His characters are masks and have no souls.[161] Furthermore, they are types rather than individuals.[162] Symonds explains Jonson's deficiencies in character drawing on the score of Jonson's classical ideal of art, but he does not excuse Jonson altogether, for he adds that " [He] does not analyze the type presented, as Molière does, but is contented with displaying and illustrating its outer form."[163] Symonds finds, however, that "No playwright of that age, if we except Shakespeare, had so eminent a power of characterization [as had Jonson]."[164] In Beaumont and Fletcher Symonds finds inadequate character drawing. He attributes to the famous collaborators the qualities of dramatic rhetoric, which explains character by declamation instead of letting character reveal itself in action and unconscious utterance.[165] He also finds that the characters of Brome's comedies "are defined with a coarse outline and a hard rigidity that betray the artifice of their construction." They are not persons; they merely seem to be individuals.[166]

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[161] Ibid., p. 54.

[162] Ibid.,

[163] Ibid., p. 56.

[164] Ibid., pp. 56-7.

[165] In the Key of Blue, pp. 218-9.

[166] Academy, v, p. 305. Herbert F. Allen maintains that Symonds "states the case" of Brome's treatment of character "very fairly" (A Study of the Comedies of Richard Brome, published Ph. D. thesis [University of Michigan, 1912], p. 55). But Allen does not agree with Symonds that all of Brome's characters are only "tricks and humours" (ibid., p. 56).

It is clear, I think, that in judging the people on the imaginary stage which the intelligent play-reader must always have before him, Symonds requires clear outlines of character and a human quality. He demands a certain kind of verisimilitude, but of course not the neoclassical kind. He demands that the men and women seem real, that they be individuals, not puppets. It is clear, also, that in judging dramatic characters Symonds is less judicial than impressionistic. He brings no rules by which to judge character; but he requires that men and women on the stage have a human consistency. It is the individuality of the character which moves him, or, let us say, the personality.

Plot--unity of effect--characters: about these Symonds has something to say, and the few judgments which he passes on individual plays are based on principles which arise out of his ideas about these three subjects. In general, however, his criticism has little to do with judgment and is predominantly the recording of subjective impressions.

E. Symonds' Use of the Imagination--His Style--"Creative Writing"--His Purpose in Criticism

The aspect of Symonds' impressionistic criticism which I have labelled "interpretation" illustrates his use of the imagination, a faculty which allows a person who is reading drama in the closet to interpret dramatic motive, and which allows the critic to present to the reader what he visualizes in studying drama from books. Symonds had a poetic mind, and, consequently, though his manner of writing is often extravagant, his criticism is always suggestive. He has the ability to make phrases; but he is often too picturesque, as when he says of Ford that he "delves with style of steel on plates of bronze his monumental scenes of spiritual anguish."[167]

The greatest fault of Symonds' criticism lies in his style. The style is inadequate because Symonds' tone is too emotional: he does not write about ideas, favorite ones though they are, soberly and thoughtfully; rather, he writes about them with fervor and ecstasy. Statements which he accepts as facts he treats often as expressions of unrealized and utopian ideals. Thus the Renaissance seems in his work to be more than an historical period which should be carefully studied and cautiously

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[167] Christopher Marlowe, p. xxv. I mention this matter here because "picturesqueness" does not usually appear in his "scientific," but only, as might be expected, in his impressionistic criticism.

described; rather, it is a great period which, because it contains great personalities and great examples of art, resembles a sort of golden age, a great age of the past which heralds an even greater age in the future. Since his impressionistic criticism is more emotional than intellectual, in some ways Symonds' exposition of ideas is not very convincing.

The ideas found in Symonds are not very many, and most of them, as the reader must by this time be well aware, can be traced to the works of other writers. Symonds was adept at using other men's thoughts, and those to which he assented, he repeats with deadly monotony. Not only does he make identical repetitions of statements, but he uses them in slightly varied forms as well, and he does the latter so often that one wonders whether he forgets what he has so recently said, or whether he places no confidence in the memory of the reader. The statement, for instance, that in Shakespeare the English drama reached its culminating point is given in some form eight times in as many pages.[168] Even less defensible, I think, is a summary in the chapter on Marlowe in Shakspere's Predecessors of the history of the English drama before that writer. The preceding 468 pages discussed

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[168]See Shakspere's Predecessors, pp. 3 ff. The arithmetic is Collins'. See Essays and Studies, pp. 93-4.

just that subject. Why, then, does Symonds find it necessary to repeat the same material, albeit in condensed form, from pages 468 to 472, and from 482 to 484? Such is the repetition found in one book. And in all of his writing such repetition is common. What ideas he had and what things he knew Symonds pursued relentlessly.

I have mentioned his picturesqueness, which, I suspect, is related to his emotionalism. To illustrate is futile. This picturesqueness is found on his every page. The shrill, lyrical cry of Symonds' style and the unnaturalness of his descriptions repel a critical reader. He himself was aware of his weakness, for in 1874 he wrote to his friend Henry Sidgwick: "About a year's study of history has changed my literary taste. I want to be more full of matter and less picturesque than I used to be."[169] But he seems never to have overcome a predilection for this type of writing.

Like most impressionistic critics, Symonds does a kind of creative writing. He cannot be accused, however, of what has been said to be the characteristic of Jules Lemaître of leaving the subject under critical discussion

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[169] Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds, collected by Horatio F. Brown (New York, 1923), p. 65.

and writing about his own experiences.[170] Symonds' impressionistic criticism always stays close to the subject, and no writer, for all his emotionalism, attempted more conscientiously to be disinterested in his criticism, to see art as it really is, to be sincere, and to be receptive to a variety of artistic phenomena and types. And though Symonds knows that art gives pleasure and that in criticism the pleasurable aspects of art are of utmost concern, he knows also that criticism ends in the making of judgments and depends in part upon what he called "scientific" study for the clearing up of the problems connected with understanding ardart. But he supposes, too, that the critic must point out what is to be appreciated. The result is writing which, faulty as it may be from the standpoint of style, is "creative" in a certain sense of that much abused and rather ambiguous term. Here, for instance, is what he says of Nash:

> Alas, poor Tom Nash! Little enough is left of thee, thy humour and thy satire! The men of our days cannot taste thy honey, and thy aconite has lost its venom. Dust too are the pedants and puritans upon whom it was so freely spilt. Yet something still survives from this dry caput mortuum of an ephemeral medley. The first lyric printed in the 'Golden Treasury' . . . is a spring song from 'Will Summer's Testament' . .[171]

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[170] See Lewis E. Gates, "Impressionism and Appreciation," American Critical Essays XIXth and XXth Centuries, ed. with an Introduction by Norman Foerster, Oxford World Classics (Oxford, 1930), p. 192.

[171] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 462.

Such a passage sounds like an imitation of De Quincey or of Carlyle in Stevenson's worst manner (What an anticlimax is the last sentence!); and like most of this "creative" writing, it is rhapsodic, as are a host of similar such passages in Swinburne. Jonson comes in for his share of praise:

> His throne is not with the Olympians but with the Titans; not with those who share the divine gifts of creative imagination and inevitable instinct, but with those who compel our admiration by their untiring energy and giant strength of intellectual muscle . . . . Moreover, we shall not be far wrong in saying that, of all the English poets of the past, he alone, with Milton and Gray, deserves the name of a great and widely learned scholar.[172]

In these passages there are examples of the stylistic mannerisms which readers of Symonds find most unpleasing. But one must in all fairness bear in mind that Symonds is an enthusiastic student of art and literature, and that, like many critics, he thinks that by expressing his approval of an art-work and by describing his emotional reaction to it, he was turning his readers in the direction of the work itself.

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[172] Ben Jonson, p. 198. Jonson had, of course, been praised before Symonds and Swinburne wrote about him. Dryden in "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" calls him "the greatest man of the last age" (Essays of John Dryden, ed. W. P. Ker, 2 Vols. [Oxford, 1926], I, pp. 42-3), a "learned plagiary" (p. 43), "the most learned and judicious writer which any theater ever had" (p. 81); Dryden says also that "something was wanting in the Drama, till he came" (p. 82).

For Symonds, then, criticism had a definite purpose, and that purpose was to popularize art and literature. Fundamentally, he is interested in a kind of cultural uplift; his purpose in writing was never to produce a work of pure scholarship for its own sake, as it were. What he says in the preface to Shakspere's Predecessors may stand for all his works:

> It has been my intention to bring the history of the English Drama within the sphere of popular treatment; not shrinking from the discussion of topics which are only too familiar to special students; combining exposition with criticism; and endeavouring to fix attention on the main points of literary evolution.[173]

Again he says:

> . . . . a host of eloquent and genial writers have risen to vindicate the honour of that Drama in our times. I have attempted in the preface to this volume to recognize the luminous and solid labours of contemporary scholars in this field. It cannot now be said that the English Drama has not received its due meed of attention from literary men. But it may still be said that it is not sufficiently known to the reading public.[174]

At one time he called himself a "vulgariseur," a popularizer.[175] He tries to indicate the beauties and the values of art and literature, and that is the fact which is of first importance to one who studies his

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[173] Ibid., p. ix.

[174] Ibid., pp. 71-2.

[175] Brown, op, cit., p. 190.

criticism, for not only is the impressionistic criticism I am discussing based upon it, but the "scientific" criticism which I shall consider later finds its reason for existence and its purpose in it. Thus Symonds tries to make popular the works of the great artists about whom he writes--the works of the Greek poets, Dante, Boccaccio, the men of the Italian Renaissance, and the Elizabethan dramatists (the Mermaid Series, to which Symonds contributed, was itself a publishing venture which was to popularize the Elizabethans).

F. Symonds' Inaccurate Scholarship

It is to be regretted, then, that one cannot always rely upon Symonds' opinions; and one cannot always rely upon his opinions because there is evidence that he frequently writes with carelessness and haste. He had what he called a "fatal facility" which allowed him to write voluminously but without giving due consideration to his subject. Most disappointing are his criticisms of English Renaissance non-dramatic literature. The Sir Philip Sidney, for instance, of which much might be expected because of his admiration for the subject, seems to have been written rapidly as if to satisfy the demands of the publisher that it be finished soon. (It appeared among the titles of that commercial venture, the English Men of Letters series.) Symonds

relies on two previous biographers of Sidney--Zouch (1809) and Fox Bourne (1862)--for biographical details.[176] And at best, his treatment of Sidney's works is unsatisfactory. Goldman is right when he finds that Symonds' sense of proportion is false in that he gives fourteen pages in his work to the Arcadia and forty to the sonnets.[177] But that is not all. He treats the Arcadia itself in an inadequate fashion. Zandvoort finds that

> The analysis . . . . is inexact, the remarks on Sidney's sources and style are largely gratuitous; even the text of the extracts is unreliable. If another edition should ever be called for, every chapter ought to be thoroughly overhauled.[178]

This view is, alas, only too well founded. In his discussion of the Defence of Poesy, Symonds does not do much better; therein he makes a glaring error, for he says that he can find no source for the work:[179] this although Sidney himself mentions Scaliger, quotes from Scaliger's Poetics, and refers to Fracastoro and Bembo.[180]

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[176]Sir Philip Sidney, p. v. Symonds mentions also lives by Gray (1829), Lloyd (1862), and an anonymous writer (1859). But Marcus Selden Goldman (Sir Philip Sidney and the Arcadia [University of Illinois Ph. D. thesis, 1931], p. 37) says that he follows Zouch and Bourne.

[177]Ibid.

[178]R. W. Zandvoort, Sidney's Aracadia: A Comparison between Two Versions (Amsterdam, 1929), p. 203.

[179]Sir Philip Sidney, p. 168.

[180]See Goldman, op. cit., p. 37. Symonds must have read Minturno, Scaliger, and Castelvetro. But he does not mention them in the Sidney. Could the relationship between Sidney's Defence and the Poetics of Aristotle and of Horace have completely escaped him? There is some evidence in Shakspere's Predecessors (p. 206) that it did not.

Such being the case, as regards Sir Philip Sidney, at least, the student feels that he must accept Symonds' judgments with care. An opinion which naturally follows such an observation is that Symonds should not have allowed himself too hastily to have produced a critico-biographical work. But so far as I know he felt no twinge of conscience at having done so.[181]

There is reason, however, for the carelessness so apparent in some of his practical criticism, and that reason is to be found in the essentially emotional nature of the man. He admired Sidney the individual, as I have shown, but he did not admire the Defence, which would have placed neoclassical strictures on the English drama, except as a piece of prose-writing. All the critical and biographical work on Sidney gives evidence of what impressionistic criticism can be like if the critic is motivated less by intellectual purposes than by the desire to praise the source of emotional excitement. I do not pretend to take the stand that the critic should not be to a great extent enthusiastic about his work and the subjects about which he writes; such emotion makes

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[181]That the composition of Sir Philip Sidney was rapidly accomplished is attested to by certain statements in the Letters and Papers. On May 7, 1886, Symonds wrote to Brown: "I have rough-hewn 'Sidney' all but the last two chapters (two out of eight)" (p. 189). Four days later he wrote Brown again: "Writing at 'Sidney' has become wearisome now that the work is all finished" (p. 190). His was "fatal facility" indeed.

criticism purposeful. But criticism is fundamentally an intellectual activity and discipline, and it is regrettable that in Symonds' work too much of what is sheer emotion mars a kind of criticism which I feel points towards modern scholarship. Furthermore, because Symonds' impressionistic criticism has for some readers a certain charm, the student is not at first prepared for the inadequate treatment of factual material which he finds, and the result is that the reader who is not a specialist is encouraged to entertain misleading ideas and opinions.

The observation that Symonds' criticism was on the scholarly side not always what it should be, would hardly have been pleasing to him. But enthusiasm for art or for certain personalities is no excuse for the cavalier treatment of facts. Symonds' failure to be accurate and thorough is all the more puzzling in view of his own ideals of what "scientific" criticism should be.

My conclusion to this chapter need not be long. We have seen that Symonds' criticism is chiefly impressionistic and that its weakness lies in an inordinate enthusiasm, in a picturesque style, and in an inaccurate scholarship. We have seen also that even Symonds' more historical passages (those which I labelled "interpretation") are impressionistic, and that he resembles Romantic critics only in so far as he records his own reactions to art,

that, to resort to the negative, he is not like them in that he makes almost no attempt to make judgments based on serious psychological observation.

He does, it is true, have certain standards when he judges drama. But he does not see the close relation between art and life which he apparently declares for in his theory of art and which the English Romantics insisted upon. He does not, like Coleridge, place emphasis on the moral and intellectual elements of art; he makes some mention of morality, to be sure, but I cannot see that this morality is anything but an expression of a cheap patriotism. Furthermore, though the Romantics did allow for feeling and pleasure in the appreciation of literature and art, the greater men, as we have seen, asked for more in criticism than a mere expression of emotional reactions: their psychological criticism, although it was based on personal observation, did not stop with the recording of personal emotions. But Symonds does not do much more than record his emotions. In brief, the psychological elements of his practical criticism are not generalized enough. A passage from Coleridge will illustrate what I mean:

> It is not without forethought [he says], nor is it without its due significance, that the division of Lear's kingdom is in the first six lines of the play stated as a thing already determined in all its particulars, previously to the trial of professions, as the relative rewards of which the daughters were to be made to consider their several

> positions. The strange, yet by no means unnatural, mixture of selfishness, sensibility, and habit of feeling derived from, and fostered by, the particular rank and usages of the individual;--the intense desire of being intensely beloved,--selfish, and yet characteristic of the selfishness of a loving and kindly nature alone;--the self-supportless leaning for all pleasure on another's breast;--the craving after sympathy with a prodigal disinterestedness, frustrated by its own ostentation, and the mode and nature of its claims;--the anxiety, the distrust, the jealousy, which more or less accompany all selfish affections, and are among the surest contradistinctions of mere fondness from true love, and which originate Lear's eager wish to enjoy his daughter's violent professions, whilst the inveterate habits of sovereignty convert the wish into claim and positive right, and an incompliance with it into crime and treason;--these facts, these passions, these moral verities, on which the whole tragedy is founded, are all prepared for, and will to the retrospect be found implied, in these first four or five lines of the play.[132]

Search as he will, one will find no writing like this in Symonds. Coleridge's psychological criticism is intellectual: Symonds' is emotional, and the "psychology" is his own.

In Symonds' practical criticism, then, there is sufficient evidence that he himself is like the "Romantic" critic that he defines; but his work is a far cry from the kind of criticism which the greater Romantics aimed at. Indeed, here he seems to be more like his "aesthetic" contemporaries than like his Romantic predecessors.

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[132]"Lear," Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, pp. 133-4.

CHAPTER IV

SYMONDS' THEORY OF CRITICISM

Three facts emerge from the preceding chapters: 1. that Symonds' philosophical view seems to be derived from literary sources originating in the Romantic movement; 2. that his theory of art is at most points related to the work of the greater critics of the Romantic period; and 3. that his practical criticism resembles the work of the earlier men in the nineteenth century only in that it is impressionistic. To the last of these facts must be added the observation that Symonds' practical criticism is inferior to that of his Romantic predecessors partly because he does not concern himself with the serious and profound, with the moral and ennobling, effects of literature, and partly because he makes almost no attempts at judging or at evaluating the works he has under consideration.

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss Symonds' theory of criticism and to show that it too derives from the earlier writers I have frequently referred to; but I shall indicate also that this theory points in a new direction. My discussion will fall under four headings: A. Symonds' Theory of Criticism and Its Relation to Ideas of the Romantic critics, B. Symonds' Theory of Scientific Criticism, C. Nineteenth Century Scientific Criticism and the Relation of Symonds' Work to It, and D. Symonds' Theory of the Task of the Critic in Relation to His Training.

A. Symonds' Theory of Criticism and Its Relation to Ideas of the Romantic Critics

One inconsistency between Symonds' theory and his practice lies in his failure to evaluate pieces of literature even though he believes that criticism is by definition judgment. "Criticism," he says,". . . . implies judgment . . . ."[1] And again: "The notion of judgment lies . . . . at the root of criticism; and the critic is a man who pronounces judgment upon the work of others."[2] Symonds finds that both the artist and the critic make judgments, but that they do so in different ways:

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[1]Essays Speculative and Suggestive, New [Second] Edition (New York, 1894), p. 63.

[2]Ibid., p. 65.

> The artist presents a view of the world and man gained at first hand from the object. The critic repeats a view of the world and man at second hand with the work of art as object. The artist does not reason or explain. The critic states or implies reasons for his opinion; and it is this difference between the creative and the critical act which imports into the latter an obvious exercise of the judicial faculty. Art itself implies judgment. By his selection of subjects and manner of treatment, the artist betrays a voluntary or involuntary preference, which constitutes his judgment on the things he represents. But the critic, having not merely to clothe impressions in form, but to give an account of them, and if possible to explain his opinion persuasively to the intelligence of the world, brings the act of judgment, which is logically involved in every mental operation, more prominently and deliberately forward.[3]

The critic, we are told, is a "skilled interpreter and judge" who pronounces "opinions with more authority than the rest of mankind."[4]

Since he finds that the act of judgment is "logically involved in every mental operation," Symonds believes that for psychological reasons every kind of critic must make some evaluations of the literature or art with which he concerns himself. But there are different ways of judging, we are told. The "classical" critic, for instance, based his judgments on rules and assumed "the existence of certain fixed principles, from which correct

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[3]Ibid., p. 74.

[4]Ibid., p. 84.

judgments might be deduced."[5] The "romantic" critic "judged by his own preferences and proclivities," Symonds holds, and the rules by which he judged "were open to discussion."[6] The "scientific" critic, who believes in the idea "which takes for granted that the arts are capable of being historically studied in their evolution,"[7] judges also, but he does not do so without understanding the natural and historical conditions of the product under examination, and without making the allowances demanded by his sense of relativity.[8]

One may in all justice ask what Symonds' principles of judgment are. It will be remembered that Coleridge gave the critic the right to judge according to the principles of human nature.[9] Like the critics of the Romantic movement, Symonds would also base judgment on the principles of human nature, but for his own purposes he uses Goethe's phrase, "bleibende Verhältnisse."

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[5]Ibid., p. 66.

[6]Ibid., p. 67. Symonds means, I suppose, that rules and principles were no longer set and that any principle of judgment could be scrutinized so that its validity could be determined.

[7]Ibid., p. 66.

[8]Ibid., p. 67.

[9]Lectures on Shakspeare, Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. William G. F. Shedd, 7 Vols. (New York, 1854-64), pp. 53, 56-7; see also Biographia Literaria, Works, II, pp. 186-7.

These "abiding relations," we are told, "the critic should look for; with the adventitious phenomena of the world, with those that pass, he should not occupy himself."[10] The "abiding relations" are found in man's soul, Symonds adds; and, to be specific, they are the qualities of "truth, simplicity, sobriety, love, grace, patience, modesty, repose, health, vigour, brain-stuff, dignity of thought, imagination, lucidity of vision, purity and depth of feeling."[11] The critic, the man of taste, will judge art according to these qualities which represent the permanently good and beautiful for human beings.

But the meaning of the term "abiding relations" is a broad one. How shall the critic judge in terms of these relations, in terms of human nature? one asks. In answer to this question Symonds would set up two standards of judgment on the basis of the nature of art itself. These standards are founded on the content of

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[10] Essays, p. 60. Here Symonds repeats his "motto" from Goethe.

[11] Ibid., p. 62. This insistence that the critic discard the fashion of the moment and recognize the enduring qualities of art is what drew Howells to accept Symonds' critical views. See Criticism and Fiction (New York, 1891), p. 2. Howells goes so far as to say that Symonds' position is not far from that of Burke in the Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful, in which Burke says (Howells is quoting): "'The true standard of the arts is in every man's power; and an easy observation of the most common, sometimes of the meanest things, in nature will give the truest lights . . . .'" (ibid., pp. 6-7).

art and on its form: on the artist's, as, for instance, on the sculptor's, "intellectual grasp upon [sic] his subject, and also on his technical skill and sense of beauty."[12] Symonds proceeds to illustrate:

> In a picture of the Last Judgment by Fra Angelico we say that the bliss of the righteous has been more successfully treated than the torments of the wicked, because the former has been better understood, although the painter's skill in each is equal. In the Perseus of Cellini we admire the sculptor's spirit, finish of execution, and originality of design, while we deplore that want of sympathy with the heroic character which makes his type of physical beauty slightly vulgar and his facial expression vacuous.[13]

The theme, then, and its sensuous embodiment: these must be considered in criticism, and judgment consists in evaluating the manner in which they are handled.

The specific criteria for the judgment of art and literature Symonds expresses in a series of questions, most of which remind us of ideas we have already met with in the works of earlier men, and especially in the writings of the critics of the Romantic period:

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[12] Ibid., p. 89. Are technical skill and sense of beauty the same? Here is an example of Symonds' loose use of terms.

[13] Ibid.

> Since then all art expresses what the artist has perceived, thought, and felt concerning external nature, mankind, and himself--the world, human life, and his own being--the critic asks: How far in this case is perception just, accurate, penetrative, subtle? How far is the representation of life and nature adequate to fact? To what extent is the product in harmony with the best thought, the noblest emotions, the worthiest sentiments of our race? What kind of individuality is indicated in the work? Does the artist show himself to be a man of normal or abnormal temperament? By right of what particular quality, moral, intellectual, and sensuous, does he claim attention? In what relation does he stand to the permanent facts of human nature? How is he related to the spirit of his age and nation; and what has he contributed to the sum of culture? The substance or content of a work of art being inseparable from its form, the critic connects these questions with a parallel series of interrogations regarding the artist's style, his command of the particular vehicle adopted for expression, his attitude toward the art of his own century, and the genius of the nation to which he belongs.[14]

Now, this passage illustrates how a theory of criticism can depend for its criteria upon a theory of art. There is hardly one idea in this passage but has already been examined, though perhaps it has been expressed in different words. The very first clause of this passage, "Since then all art expresses what the artist has perceived," reminds one of psychological explanations of the origin and purpose of poetry which are found in Wordsworth. And there are other specific points which Symonds makes that seem to derive from his predecessors.

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[14] Ibid., p. 73.

The first question, for instance, "How far in this case is perception just, accurate, penetrative, subtle?" finds its counterpart in Coleridge and Hazlitt of the Romantic period, and in Carlyle of the Victorian. Coleridge, in attempting to distinguish poetry from other forms of activity, and especially from science, shows that a characteristic of the art-form is

> that pleasurable emotion, that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the act of composition;--and in order to understand this, we must combine a more than ordinary sympathy with the objects, emotions, or incidents contemplated by the poet, consequent on a more than common sensibility, with a more than ordinary activity of the mind in respect of the fancy and the imagination. Hence is produced a more vivid reflection of the truths of human nature and of the human heart . . . .[15]

Hazlitt uses the word "perception" itself: all art, he says, is the "intense perception of truth."[16] Carlyle, with much the same idea in mind, speaks of Goethe's "Vision" as an "all-piercing faculty."[17]

The second question which the critic must ask about a work of art, "How far is the representation of life

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[15]"Definition of Poetry," Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 20.

[16]"On Imitation," Round Table, Collected Works, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover, with an Introduction by W. E. Henley, 12 Vols. (London, 1930), I, p. 78. For other statements in Hazlitt similar in content to Symonds' idea, see "Why the Arts are Not Progressive?--A Fragment," Round Table, Works, I, pp. 160-4, passim.

[17]"Goethe," Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, 7 Vols. (New York, 1872), IV, p. 178.

and nature adequate to fact?", reminds one of another passage in the Essays. In pointing out the relation between Realism and Idealism, Symonds asks how the realistic artist can ignore the "sense of a better to which the being tends . . . .";[18] in other words, how

> can the realistic artist afford . . . . to exclude so weighty and indestructible an element of his main subject-matter [as Idealism]? What indeed has he to do but to seek out and represent the whole reality of human nature, extenuating nothing, setting nothing down in malice? His object is to reach and to express the truth."[19]

The artist, we are told in another place, "must use the truest truth of nature, the most scientific grasp on actual form, in the service of imaginative symbolism."[20] Though Symonds' request that the critic discover whether or not the "representation of life and nature [be] adequate to fact" resembles in some degree Coleridge's statements in the preceding quotation from the Lectures on Shakspeare, yet it is more clearly like Hazlitt's requirement that representation be adequate to fact,[21]

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[18] P. 119.

[19] Ibid. It should be remembered that though Symonds uses the word "truth" here, he does not use it for the content of art.

[20] Ibid., p. 148. This sentence illustrates further a point which I made in Chapter II, that "truth" to Symonds and the men later in the nineteenth century had a scientific connotation. The passage comes from an essay on "The Model," in which Symonds recommends that the painter follow his model as closely as possible.

[21] "On Imitation," Round Table, Works, I, pp. 73-4.

and like Hazlitt's insistence upon truth to nature.[22] I may add also that Carlyle said that "all real 'Art' is definable as Fact, or say as the disimprisoned 'Soul of Fact,'"[23] but Carlyle's use of the word "fact" carries with it transcendental implications which Symonds' use of the term does not do.

The critic must judge works of art, then, according to the perception revealed in them and according to the degree to which that perception represents the facts of those wide matters, "life and nature." But he must also judge, we are told, how well the work of art is "in harmony with the best thought, the noblest emotions, the worthiest sentiments" of the race. This last criterion for judgment reminds one of the preoccupation of the critics of the Romantic period with moral truth in art. Ruskin, however, in Symonds' own day, may have been his model: In a passage in Symonds' Essays we read that the critic's verdict must be determined "by the amount of thought, the amount of feeling, proper to noble humanity, which we find adequately expressed in beautiful aesthetic symbols."[24] Similarly, Ruskin earlier had said that the

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[22]Ibid., Works, I, p. 75. Hazlitt says that "truth, beauty, nature are almost different names for the same thing."

[23]"Shooting Niagara: and After?," Essays, VII, p. 220.

[24]p. 63. The italics are mine.

artist should "recognize, or know, beautiful and noble things"[25]--and that he should give the best account of them. Ruskin asked, too, for a noble subject, and he thought that great art teaches what is noble in the past.[26] The critic, therefore, should look for a noble quality in art.

After asking questions about the art-work itself, the critic, according to Symonds, should turn his attention to the artist. The criteria whereby the critic must judge the artist through his work remind one somewhat of the interest in personality and individuality which was common during the Romantic period, but they recall especially Goethe's insistence that all art is personal and that all art reflects the qualities of its creator. The suggestion that the artist reveals himself in his work is not foreign, however, to the thought of one Victorian, Ruskin, who, in denouncing the art of Domenichino, said:

> The man who painted the Madonna del Rosario and Martyrdom of S. Agnes in the gallery of Bologna, is palpably incapable of doing anything good, great, or right in any field, way, or kind whatsoever . . . .[27]

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[25]"The Relation of Wise Art to Wise Science," Lecture III in The Eagle's Nest, Works, Library Edition, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 Vols. (London and New York, 1903-12), III, p. 151.

[26]Aratra Pentelici, Works, XX, p. 300.

[27]Modern Painters, I, Works, III, p. 184.

In a note to the passage I have just quoted, Ruskin adds:

> This is no rash method of judgment, sweeping and hasty as it may appear . . . . [T] here are some pictures which rank not under the head of failures, but of perpetrations or commissions; some things which a man cannot do or say without sealing for ever his character and capacity.[28]

The question which Symonds indicates the critic must ask as to how close the artist stands "to the permanent facts of human nature" sounds like another phrasing of the idea that all art is a creation of the human mind, that the poet is a man speaking to men, that, in the words of Coleridge, the true critic "will . . . . require, as the spirit and substance of a work, something true in human nature itself, and independent of all circumstances . . . . "[29]

The final question which Symonds thinks the critic should ask when he is judging a work of art--"How is he [the artist] related to the spirit of his age and nation; and what has he contributed to the sum of culture?"--seems to point in a new direction; that is, it expresses an idea which was not widely received in the Romantic period. And so it does; for though Hazlitt[30] seems to subscribe to a rudimentary theory that art is the product of its environment, still he does not develop the idea or

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[28] Ibid., Works, III, p. 184, note.

[29] "Shakspeare, A Poet Generally," Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 53.

[30] See below, Chapter VII, p. 427 .

put it into practice; and though Coleridge declares that the critic "will estimate genius and judgment according to the felicity with which the imperishable soul of intellect, shall have adapted itself to the age, the place, and the existing manners,"[31] and though he declares that art should be studied against the background of the age in which it was created,[32] yet he does not do more than state the principle. Indeed, the problem of how art belongs to its age and nation is related to the kind of criticism which Symonds calls the "scientific." As for the artist's contribution to culture, that criterion for judging a man's work sounds like a concern not of the men in the early part of the nineteenth century, but of the Victorians, as Arnold's preoccupation with that phenomenon will testify.

It is clear that at every point Symonds' theory of criticism is like, if it does not actually derive from, the work of earlier men, and especially from that of greater Romantic critics. He emphasizes the critic's duty to judge; he finds the act of judgment "logically involved in every mental operation," and practically maintains that every critic, whether he is "classical,"

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Shakspeare's Dramas," Lectures on Shakspeare, Works, IV, pp. 57-8.

"romantic," or "scientific," makes judgments according to some kind of principles. Like Coleridge, Symonds thinks that judgment should be based on the principles of human nature, though he uses Goethe's phrase, "bleibende Verhältnisse" to express his idea. He asks that the critic determine the qualities of perception revealed in the art-work, and in so doing he reminds one of Hazlitt and Coleridge; he asks that representation in art be adequate to fact, and he reminds one especially of Hazlitt; he asks that the critic decide how well the art-work is in harmony with the best in human thought and with the noblest emotions, and in so doing he reminds one not only of the preoccupation of the greater critics of the Romantic movement with moral truth in art, but especially of the opinions of the Victorian, Ruskin, who thought that art should have a noble subject. He sets up criteria for determining the quality of the artist as he reveals himself in his work, and he thus reminds one of Goethe. He thinks that the artist should have some relation to the "permanent facts of human nature," and Coleridge comes to mind. Finally, he asks that the critic determine how an artist's work stands with regard to its environment; and, though similar ideas are found in Hazlitt and Coleridge, Symonds, as will be seen, gives the notion an emphasis which the earlier men never did.

It is tempting to find in the work of Goethe the source for many of the criteria for judging art and literature which Symonds sets up. Goethe's name appears so frequently in Symonds' works that to me his actual influence is indubitable. But Goethe's critical formula is rather narrow in scope as compared with the critical theory which Symonds expounds. Goethe asks only that the critic discover what the artist was trying to do and how well he succeeded in carrying out his plan.[33] In short, Goethe is content if the critic concentrates on the art-work itself; he does not, in the manner of Symonds, place confidence in the criticism which is based on the study of the circumstances amid which the artist works. In fact, according to Saintsbury, Goethe "distinctly discourages and disparages that historic study of Comparative Letters which is the distinguishing nineteenth-century principle."[34] Though Symonds agrees with Goethe, then, that the permanent relations of human nature must

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[33]The critic, according to Goethe, in working constructively asks: "What did the author set out to do? Was his plan reasonable and sensible, and how far did he succeed in carrying it out?" ("On Criticism," Goethe's Literary Essays, tr. J. E. Spingarn [London, 1921], p. 140). And, in similar fashion, Carlyle says that "First, we must have made plain to ourselves what the poet's aim really and truly was, how the task he had to do stood before his own eye, and how far, with such means as it afforded him, he has fulfilled it" (Essays, I, pp. 219-20).

[34]A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe, 3 Vols. (New York, 1931), III, p. 372.

be of concern to the critic of art, he goes beyond Goethe and English critics of the Romantic period (or, at least, he goes in a different direction from theirs) by maintaining that a statement of an artist's significance cannot be achieved until he is seen in his historical relations.[35]

Symonds praises the criticism of his own age (though, so far as I know he has no specific critics in mind) for having thrown off "academical dogmatism," for having based the study of art "upon sounder historical and comparative methods," and for showing taste which has become more "catholic, open-minded, and unprejudiced."[36] In other words, he praises the criticism of his own age because it aims at being "scientific," and it is the scientific kind of criticism as he describes it that I shall now discuss.

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[35]The study of art in its historical relations was not, however, a new thing in the latter half of the nineteenth century. A. W. von Schlegel, years earlier, had written thus (and, it may be added, had attempted to put his idea into practice): "Aesthetic . . . . is of the utmost importance in its connexion with other inquiries into the human mind; but, considered by itself, it is not of sufficient practical instruction; and it can only become so by its union with the history of the arts. We give the appellation of criticism to the intermediate province between general theory and experience or history" (A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. John Black [Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, 1833], pp. 1-2; also Sämmtliche Werke, ed. Eduard Boecking, 12 Bände [Leipzig, 1846-7], V, pp. 3-4). Symonds' terminology may be more "scientific" than Schlegel's, it is true, but that his "scientific" ideal is very different from Schlegel's I cannot see.

[36]Essays, p. 60.

B. Symonds' Theory of Scientific Criticism

I should like to indicate that at this point I am beginning what is virtually a new subject. In the preceding chapters of my study, I have on the whole been concerned with that part of Symonds' criticism which seems to be a reflection of the theory and practice of the great Romantic writers. To repeat here the ideas which I have shown to be related to the opinions of the earlier men would, I think, be useless. I should like to remind the reader, however, that in my introduction I mentioned the fact that Symonds' criticism gives a dual impression, that it is related not only to Romantic criticism but also to what is a quite different kind of thing, to "scientific" criticism. It is with Symonds' work as "scientific" criticism that the rest of this study will, in the main, deal.

The term "scientific" may be confusing, especially because I used it in an earlier chapter with reference to "scientific psychology," and also because I indicated that as a psychological critic Symonds ignored the methods and results of scientific psychology. But, as we shall see presently, when Symonds speaks about scientific criticism he does not specifically rule out psychology of the scientific kind. According to his theory, scientific criticism is objective; it includes the study

of whatever is related to a work of art, and especially to what must be known if it is to be understood and appreciated. The scientific critic observes and classifies; his aim is knowledge. By definition, then, this kind of criticism comprises everything which is concerned with the art-work under observation; its field of operation is the framework of phenomena (of "natural and historical conditions," to use Symonds' phrase) among which the art-work is created. And its purpose is to make an art-work more intelligible by making the spectator a kind of contemporary of the work or of its creator.

Science was to Symonds the second great fact of the nineteenth century, and I cannot but feel that he was unique among English men of letters for having attempted to give the scientific "spirit" such a large share in criticism. He did so because he thought that the effects of science would make themselves felt in and would penetrate to every aspect of human existence; he therefore believed that there was no virtue in following the example of other Victorian poets and critics who objected to what promised to be the inevitable progress of science and who deplored its increasing consequence in human affairs. Science, he thought, should find a place in criticism: science, or at least the "spirit" of science, could, if properly applied, increase the understanding and

appreciation of art and literature through practical historical scholarship and through investigation of all the facts necessary to the understanding of art or literature. His fundamental conviction was as simple as this: art could better be enjoyed if the facts about it were known; likewise, it could better be evaluated. This was the conviction too, of Sainte-Beuve, and it is the reason for Symonds' seeing in the scientific spirit and method a contribution of the nineteenth century to the criticism of art and letters.

The very purpose and objective of the scientific critic lies in his duty to make judgments. He arrives at his conclusions, we learn, "after preparatory studies in history, psychology, scholarship, by means of which he hopes to ground his judgment on sufficient demonstration."[37] He judges, as we have seen, after he understands the "natural and historical conditions" of the art-work he is examining and after he makes allowances "demanded by his sense of relativity." But scientific criticism, as Symonds describes it, is more than is implied by these statements of what the scientific critic must do before he judges; ideally and theoretically, it includes any kind of investigation which will permit judgments to be given some firm support.

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[37] Ibid., p. 67.

> Scientific criticism [we are told] proceeds by induction, historical investigation, morphological analysis, misdoubting the certainty of aesthetic principles, regarding the instincts and sensibilities of the individual with distrust, seeking materials for basing the canons of perfection upon some positive foundation.[38]

Here we see that scientific criticism, as Symonds thinks of it, has a purpose which is consistent with the idea of critics like Coleridge and Wordsworth that judgment should be based upon the principles of human nature: these "principles," which resemble the "canons of perfection"[39] that Symonds mentions, were supposed by these earlier critics to be the "positive foundation" upon which criticism could be erected. Symonds' idea of scientific criticism, however, reveals a certain feeling of skepticism: aesthetic principles are not certain, he feels, and "the instincts and the sensibilities of the individual" are to be distrusted. His idea also suggests that the process of induction in the study of a work of art will eventuate in a solid basis for aesthetic judgment. And this "solid basis for aesthetic judgment" is exactly what Symonds'

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Though the use by two writers of identical words, and especially of one word, does not indicate positively that one man influences another, yet it is worth pointing out, I think, that Arnold also uses the word "perfection": "Culture," he says, "is then properly described not as having its origin in curiosity, but as having its origin in the love of perfection; it is a study of perfection" ("Sweetness and Light," Prose and Poetry ed. Archibald L. Bouton [NewYork, 1927],p. 254). Whether or not Symonds' "canons of perfection" derive from Arnold I am not willing to say, but there is a decided possibility that they do.

greater predecessors in criticism wanted; Symonds therefore differs from them less in his aim than in the method he recommends.

Symonds finds it incumbent upon himself to show the relationship between criticism and learning, since it is of learning that scientific criticism is chiefly composed. He wants to know, "What is the real value of laborious learning--bibliographical, historical, philological, etc.--for the higher culture?" He answers that no knowledge is unimportant for the purpose of criticism:

> Every rill of minute investigation [he says] swells the main current of criticism. Each limitation of the subject matter under consideration acts like a useful dam against the irruption of conceit and fancy in the critic. The more he knows of fact, the less can he expatiate in regions of conjecture.[40]

But scientific criticism, Symonds adds further on, encounters certain dangers: it may encourage the critic to be too much concerned about externals,[41] and, if not controlled by good sense, it may lead him to lose himself in devising "what may be described as a nidification of mare's nests," which (Symonds explains) is "a malady most incident to ingenious but flighty theorists, who nourish the grotesque fictions of their ignorance upon the milk of their ill-assimilated learning."[42] Learning, properly

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[40] Essays, p. 79.

[41] Ibid., p. 82.

[42] Ibid., p. 83.

used, however, though it cannot supply the critical faculty, is a necessary foundation of criticism.

Although Symonds recognizes the close relationship between criticism and learning, he does not think of criticism itself as a science. It may be a science, he says, only as ethics and political economy are sciences; "that is to say," he adds, "a department of systemised and co-ordinated knowledge."[43] What should be its task?". . . . [the] classification and history of all mental products in the past; [and] . . . . the determination of definitions and canons whereby such products should be estimated."[44] But, Symonds, feels, "criticism is not of the same nature as science"; it is, rather, "an instrument or organ ancillary to all sciences and to every branch of investigation which implies the exercise of judgment." Criticism can, however, be "exercised in a scientific spirit . . . ."[45]

If Symonds wants us to be aware of what the scientific method can do in criticism, he wants us to be equally cognizant of its deficiencies.

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[43] Ibid., p. 70.

[44] Ibid., p. 71.

[45] Ibid.

> It is something to have gained a clear conception of the critical method [he says]. It is even more to have become aware of its limitations. To this extent, then, through the perception of what criticism ought to be, through the definition of its province, and through the recognition of what is inevitably imperfect in its instrument, the method tends to being in its own way scientific. Each year adds to our systematic knowledge of arts and literatures; and with each extension of that knowledge the body of undisputed facts, the sum of accepted opinions, are enlarged.[46]

Regardless of the method which is employed in criticism, however, a final verdict on a work of art can, we are told, be reached only slowly. Each person has a limited perceptive faculty; he is further limited by the state of the age in which he lives:

> It follows that a final verdict regarding works of art can only be arrived at very slowly, and after considerable variations of opinion among those even who are the best qualified to judge. The consensus regarding Homer, Pheidias, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, now amounts to certainty. The agreement about a poet like D. G. Rossetti has not reached that point. A man who utters authoritative opinions for or against Rossetti carries the weight only of his own perception, backed up in either case by the perceptions of a limited number of men who feel like him. In the long-run, Rossetti will be definitely placed by the accumulation of such perceptions.[47]

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[46] Ibid., p. 78.

[47] Ibid., Appendix, p. 437.

No one person, then, but generations of critics, will give the verdict about a work of art.[48]

Early in an examination of Symonds' critical work the reader is aware of his preoccupation with the relation of science to criticism. Symonds recognizes the fact that critics no longer seek after "a fixed ideal" and that "transient theories founded upon idiosyncratic and temporary partialities" have been exploded. He believes, therefore, that the scientific spirit must "make men more and more capable of living in the whole,"[49] and more and more conscious of "permanent relation." Science, he observes, will discover the place of man in the world; men will "refuse to accept anything which is not positive and solid"; and they will then discover "what is simple, natural, truthful, honest" and in what proportion these qualities are found in artistic products.[50] The critic who adopts the scientific method, Symonds thinks, like all critics, must judge, but he carries out his task only

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[48] I am reminded at this point of a statement of Addison to similar effect. In speaking about the old ballads he says that "it is impossible that anything should be universally tasted and approved by a multitude, though they are only the rabble of a nation, which hath not in it some peculiar aptness to please and gratify the mind of man" ("Chevy Chase," Spectator 70). Though Addison and Symonds both mention a majority of men, Addison has in mind man in the mass, Symonds has in mind the specialist.

[49] Here he is, of course, echoing his favorite motto from Goethe.

[50] Essays, p. 64.

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after he has had a thorough training in preparatory studies, such as history, psychology, and scholarship; ultimately, his purpose is to discover the positive foundations upon which criticism can be based. But, as I have said, the aim of the critic as Symonds sees it is not far different from that aim as his predecessors in the Romantic period saw it; it is only his method which is different, a method less intuitive, perhaps, but more nearly inductive. Any kind of learning which has relevancy to the problem in hand, Symonds maintains, is of value to criticism, but he rightly warns us that learning has its dangers and may obscure the critic's primary function. However serious is Symonds' conviction that criticism must partake of the scientific "spirit," he sanely recognizes the fact that criticism can never be a science; it is best, he feels, to know that scientific criticism has its limitations. Whatever method of criticism is used, however, the final judgment of an artist or of his work, Symonds holds, cannot be stated by any one man, "scientific" though he is, but must be determined by generations of critics.

I should like now to compare Symonds' theory of scientific criticism with that of other critics of the nineteenth century.

C. Nineteenth Century "Scientific" Criticism and the Relation of Symonds' Work to It

Symonds' effort to point the way to a scientific criticism was not the only one of his century, though in many respects it is more inclusive and it seems more reasonable than other similar efforts. After the middle of the nineteenth century a change in the methods of criticism seemed as imminent as was a change in poetic ideals at the end of the preceding century. Literary criticism was seeking for more exact methods than those it had known and it was therefore beginning to emulate the methods of science.

Though Matthew Arnold, who may have been the greatest critic of the age, was writing in England, criticism itself flourished most vigorously at this time in France. Here Comte with his doctrine of positivism and his theory of the relations of phenomena had been preparing the way for the acceptance of the method of science in criticism. Of the French critics, one of the earliest to use the word "science" was Edmond Scherer, who in 1864 in an essay on Sainte-Beuve wrote thus:

> The importance which criticism has acquired in our days may seem exaggerated. Its role answers, however, to a need of our times. And, indeed, criticism has changed. We demand today that it explain to us men, things, and actions. Criticism is no longer a simple reflection upon works of genius; it has become one of the

> numerous instruments, or, one may say, one of the applications, of modern science. As such it tends each day to enlarge its sphere.[51]

A year later there appeared, also in France, Taine's Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise (English translation, 1871), in which an attempt is made to treat scientifically the literature of a people. The principle which Taine follows is that of the relations of phenomena. "Vice and virtue are products," we are told, "like vitriol and sugar; and every complex phenomenon has its springs from other more simple phenomena on which it hangs."[52] Taine would therefore discover the moral basis in "some very general disposition of mind and soul," and he assumes that if the moral factor is found, then all social phenomena--and among them is art--can be explained. He therefore bases his history of English literature on the theory of the milieu, to which I refer later.

During the 1870's scientific criticism received fresh impetus from varied sources. In 1875, Léon Dumont's Théorie scientifique de la Sensibilité was published in France, and two years later, in England, came Grant Allen's Physiological Aesthetics (1877), which, as I have

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[51] In Etudes sur la Littérature Contemporaine. Brightfield's translation. See Myron F. Brightfield, The Issue in Literary Criticism (Berkeley, California, 1932), p. 1.

[52] H. A. Taine, History of English Literature, tr. H. Van Laun, 2 Vols. in One (New York, 1885), I, p. 6.

noted, followed the principles laid down in Herbert Spencer's Principles of Psychology (1855). These books, with Eugène Veron's L'Esthétique (1870), are the contributions of the decade to the scientific study of aesthetics.[53]

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[53] I do not wish to leave the impression that the scientific study of aesthetics was a new thing in the 1870's or that it was an innovation in 1855, whe Spencer's work appeared. As early as 1828 a certain David Ramsay Hay, F. R. S. E., published a work called The Laws of Harmonious Colouring. This was followed in the 1840's by such treatises as The Natural Principles and Analogy of the Harmony of Form (1842), Proportion, or the Geometric Principle of Beauty Analyzed (1843), The Principles of Beauty in Colouring Systematised (1845). Hay attempted to devise or discover scientific laws of proportion with reference to the human head, face, and figure (1849, 1851, 1852). The Harmonic Law of Nature Applied to Architectural Design (1855) and The Science of Beauty as developed in Nature and applied to Art (1856) are in the same scientific vein. The works of Hay illustrate an attempt to explain the laws of beauty in mathematical terms--just as Pythagoras tried to explain the laws of musical sound in mathematical terms.

Symonds must have known the works of Hay, since his father's Principles of Beauty (1857) is in large part based upon them. This book covers the subject of "beauty through Sensations": sight and hearing; conditions of pleasant sensation, viz. variety, continuity, and similarity; muscular sensation; beauty of lines, single and composite; beauty of form; Mr. Hay's theory of harmonious proportions; applications [of the theory] to the human face and head; application [of the theory] to the human figure; architecture; the author's physiological explanation of the pleasure of beauty of form; colour; beauty in variety. The reader will observe that this catalog of subjects names topics similar to those discussed in Allen's Physiological Aesthetics. But just as Grant Allen saw that there was such a thing as pleasure of the intellect, so Dr. Symonds adds intellectual, moral, emotional, and ideal beauty to the beauty of sensation. The material-physiological explanation of beauty, then, seems by itself to be unsatisfactory. It is evident that if John Addington Symonds, fils, did not concern himself with psychological and physiological aesthetics, it is not because he did not have first-hand acquaintance with the subject.

The 1880's saw the appearance of two books of scientific criticism--Ernst Grosse's Die Literatur-Wissenschaft (1887), which was another effort to follow the principles of Herbert Spencer; and Émile Hennequin's La Critique Scientifique (1888). The method of the latter might well be described: Hennequin says that criticism must proceed on three sorts of analyses:[54] 1. the aesthetic, 2. the psychological, and 3. the sociological. These are described by Robertson in this fashion:

> To put it in detail, an all-round survey of a work of literature or art must involve 1. a careful study of the book (or picture) to the end of noting the way in which the writer or artist makes his technical effect--that is to say (in the case of a writer) of his vocabulary, his cadences, his way of framing and tying sentences and paragraphs, his very punctuation, his tone or pitch of expression, his ways of picturing and describing, his choice of subjects, scenes, times, personages, characters, and abstract themes, and the nature of his effects, in terms of syntax, colour, metaphor, tone, use of association; 2. a similar analysis of the author's personality, by way of an explanatory hypothesis or statement of his characteristics, squaring these with their results as seen in his book; 3. a survey of the relation of public to author, noting the types of his admirers in the different classes (whether lettered or unlettered, old or young, expert or inexpert), with special reference to the different classes of his works. Each analysis ends in a synthesis . . . .[55]

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[54] I follow John Mackinnon Robertson, New Essays Towards a Critical Method (London and New York, 1897). This book is itself "scientific" in intent and in certain ways resembles the kind of criticism which Symonds recommends.

[55] Ibid., p. 28.

In 1889 appeared a work by Ferdinand Brunetière called L'Evolution des Genres dans l'Histoire de la Littérature: L'Evolution de la Critique depuis la Renaissance jusqu'a nos Jours. This was one of the landmarks of scientific criticism, describing as it did the application of the theory of evolution to literature. So high has this particular phase of Brunetière's effort been rated that students have assumed that it constitutes the major portion of his contribution to criticism and that its author was the first to apply the evolutionary theory to art. Both notions are false. The first is irrelevant here; but the second is apropos, because earlier writers had anticipated Brunetière by following a theory of development with reference to art and literature which was closely allied to the evolutionary theory.

"Scientific" criticism of the nineteenth century, as it is found in the works of the men I have just mentioned, consists then of the following kinds of study: 1. that of the artist or the work of art in terms of its milieu, as in Taine; 2. that of aesthetics considered from the point of view of the physiological-psychological faculties of man, as in Dumont and Grant Allen; 3. that of the artist or his work considered in terms of the evolution of the species, as in Brunetière; and 4. that of the detailed examination of the artistic effects of a work considered in terms of technique, of an analysis of the

artist's personality, and of an inquiry into the kind of audience to which the artist appeals, as in Hennequin.

In determining how Symonds' "scientific" criticism is related to that of these other men, one must make a distinction between his theory and practice. In theory, it will be remembered, there is no single device and no single conception which Symonds finds it reasonable to stress. "Every rill of minute investigation," we have been told, "swells the main current of criticism." Under "learning," it has been seen, Symonds includes matters that are "bibliographical, historical, philological, etc.," or, in fact, <u>any</u> kind of knowledge. In theory, then, Symonds' ideal of scientific criticism includes the methods of all of the scientific critics I have mentioned, the methods of Taine, Dumont and Grant Allen, Brunetière, Hennequin--and it includes considerably more.

How is Symonds' practice related to scientific criticism of the nineteenth century? It may be said, in the first place, that his practice is more limited in scope than his theory would lead one to expect. As a matter of fact, he has a concept of the <u>milieu</u> like Taine's, and an idea of evolution in art like Brunetière's; incidentally, it is interesting to note that though he seems in part to derive his theory of the <u>milieu</u> from Taine, he anticipates Brunetière by some five years, because it was that long before the publication of the work of Brunetière which I

have mentioned that Symonds' Shakspere's Predecessors appeared. Furthermore, Symonds adds to the concept of the milieu and to that of evolution in art a theory of tradition and art which seems to be a coalescence of the first two of these ideas. In practice, as I hope to show in later chapters, Symonds points in the direction of modern scholarship. But he avoids, as I have said before, the study of aesthetics considered from the point of view of the physiological-psychological faculties of men; and much as he admires the work of Hennequin, he never imitates that critic by making the detailed and statistical analyses which Hennequin recommends. In theory and as an ideal, scientific criticism as Symonds sees it covers every kind of investigation which is relevant to the understanding and enjoyment of works of art and literature; in practice, however, scientific criticism as Symonds illustrates it is based on three ideas: that of the place of the milieu in the study of art, that of evolution in art and literature, and that of artistic tradition.

Before examining Symonds' practical "scientific" criticism, as I intend to do, I should like to indicate briefly what he thinks should be the training of the man who strives to reach the ideal of the scientific critic.

D. Symonds' Theory of the Task of the Critic in Relation to His Training

Symonds thinks, as we have seen, that there are three types of critic, and that the true critic must combine all three of them. One conception, he holds, is that the critic is a judge; a second idea is that he is a showman, that he points out the beauties inherent in art and literature.

> These [he adds] depend on radical and fundamental points of difference in our interpretation of the term. They are harmonised, to some extent, in a third and still more modern conception. According to this, the critic is neither a mere judge nor a mere showman. He must become the natural historian of art and literature, must study each object in relation to its antecedents and its consequents, must make himself acquainted with the conditions under which the artist grew, the habits of his race, the opinions of his age, his physical and psychological peculiarities. Only after having conscientiously pursued this method, may he proceed to deliver judgments; and these will invariably be qualified by his sense of relativity in art and literature.[56]

All of this sounds familiar: The critic must judge, we learn; he is a judge, a showman, a "natural historian." But what is his duty as a critic? How does he stand in relation to his readers?

> It is the critic's function [we learn] to act as interpreter and balance-holder, to lead and enlighten the common intelligence which forms the final court of appeal in matters of taste, to shape and express the judgments of the φρόνιμοι

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[56] Essays, p. 66.

> or men of sober wisdom. How difficult his duty is, and how ill it is performed for the most part, none knows better than one who has attempted to discharge it in a sincere and modest spirit. Common sense, sagacity, justice of perception, openness to ideas, susceptibility to beauty, sufficient information, the power of weighing evidence and estimating the worth of testimony: these qualities constitute the critic, and whoever possesses and exercises them is a critic, whatever else he may be.[57]

The critic, Symonds thinks, must at all times be true.[58] His desire to be original must not stand in the way of his being so. But above all, says Symonds, (perhaps in imitation of Goethe),[59] the critic must have the critical faculty, which must be inborn and cannot be acquired. That faculty Symonds describes as "trained perception in a man endowed with common sense and sound imagination."[60] The common sense and the imagination are inherent in the critic, as is also the power to perceive. But the perceptive abilities of the critic must be brought to a high point of development through training.

Taste being as fickle as it is, we are told, the task of the critic is to discover the permanently good and beautiful in art without too much dependence upon

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[57] Ibid., pp. 72-3. The reader will notice in this passage the autobiographical element which almost unobtrusively and very frequently creeps into Symonds' work.

[58] Ibid., p. 69.

[59] See Goethe's Literary Essays, p. 276.

[60] Essays, p. 84.

reputation or upon the tradition of orthodox authority. The critic must, however, do a second thing: he must also make "an enthusiastic effort to appreciate and exhibit what is sincere and beautiful in works to which our forefathers were obtuse and irresponsive."[61]

Now the critic, Symonds thinks, is Aristotle's wise man: he gives the ultimate verdict in matters of taste: and he will become Aristotle's wise man by fastening upon the "bleibende Verhältnisse" which Goethe stressed.[62] In attempting to follow Goethe's precept the critic must "derive assistance from the commanding philosophical conception of our century," which is that of evolution.[63] This "conception," however, we are told, makes for a recognition of the eternal flux of things, not of their "bleibende Verhältnisse." The duty of the critic, then, "is to abide by commanding principles, and, living in the whole, to appreciate the correlation of the subject he has chosen with the complex of man's intellectual and moral nature."[64] The critic must recognize what is of permanent

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[61] Ibid., pp. 59-60.

[62] Ibid., p. 61.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., p. 85. I have not thought it necessary in this part of my chapter to indicate similarities between the ideas here expressed and those of Symonds' predecessors. Sections of this study involve some repetition, and many of the notions reviewed in this section have appeared before, sometimes more than once. I may remark that Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Goethe all seem to be echoed in

value in <u>any</u> art-work. He must know something of the craft of the artist, though he need not be a good craftsman himself. It must be possible for him to determine the ability of the artist as a craftsman, but he must never be so blinded in judging of the artist's ability as to miss a more important observation--whether or not the artist has a soul; for with mere skill and without a soul, the artist never achieves anything.[65]

In order to carry out his task, the critic, according to Symonds, must combine in himself the three types of the literary and artistic judge: the "classical,"[66] the

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[64]Footnote continued

the previous paragraph: "living in the whole" is from Goethe; "man's intellectual and moral nature" is from all three of these men. I should add, also, that Symonds' use of the word "moral" here is in direct contrast to his use of the word "spiritual" when he refers to the content of art; by that I mean that though he does not emphasize moral truth in art, as did his predecessors of the Romantic period, yet he thinks that the critic should know the moral nature of man.

[65]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 63 and 72.

[66]This statement does not mean that Symonds was in sympathy with the judgments of that system of criticism under which the supposed "rules" were used as criteria for the judging of art and literature, and in which restraints were imposed on spontaneity and on the natural flowering of literary art. Symonds' attitude towards neoclassical writers is usually supercilious. Of writers whose leanings are "classical" only Jonson seems to merit praise. Likewise, much as he admires Sidney as a man, Symonds places him among those influences which attempted to turn English Romantic drama from its natural course (<u>Sir Philip Sidney</u>, English Men of Letters Series [London, 1909], pp. 203-6). He writes some articles on blank verse in order to show the falseness of Dr. Johnson's position regarding that verse

"romantic," and the "scientific." He must be judicial, impressionistic, scholarly.[67] But the critic must, Symonds warns, avoid a super-abundance of subjectivity in criticism. The subjective element is unavoidable he admits, and it is difficult to keep under control because the

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[66] Footnote continued.

form, to show that the rules for Quantitative metres which the English neoclassicists derived from Greek prosody are not applicable to English blank verse (Blank Verse, [London 1895], p. 14). In speaking of Dryden he makes an unfair criticism, the only unfair one which Van Wyck Brooks declares he has known Symonds to make (John Addington Symonds: A Biographical Study [London, 1914], pp. 181-2): "Jonson was a Rhadamanthus of justice," Symonds says; "Dryden, a parasite of popular caprice. Jonson trampled, Dryden fawned, on public taste." (Ben Jonson, English Worthies Series [London, 1888], p. 33). Though he must have known Dryden's magnificent tribute to Shakespeare opening, "To begin, then, with Shakespeare. He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul" ("An Essay on Dramatic Poesy," in Essays of John Dryden, ed. W. P. Ker, 2 Vols. [Oxford, 1926], I, p. 79)--though Symonds must have known this passage, he says that Dryden was blinded to Shakespeare's supremacy because Shakespeare adopted "the Romantic style as it had been created by his predecessors; and [because] his immediate successors were as yet incapable of discerning the whole difference between his use of it and Beaumont's or Fletcher's" (In the Key of Blue, [London and New York, 1893], p. 221). Such being his attitude towards writers whose tendencies are neoclassical, one hardly expects him to take over the principles which the neoclassical writers followed.

And, indeed, he does not do so. But he always gives the critic the privilege of judging, though he believes that judgments should follow observation and need have nothing to do with accepted rules or preconceived notions.

[67] Essays, p. 68.

critic, who has his own temperament and milieu, judges the work of an artist who has his own temperament and milieu. The difficulty in criticism, then, is that of correct interpretation.[68] Patient and exhaustive investigation is necessary to avoid critical distortions of art-works when they are under examination.[69]

One assumes that there must be a way of training the intelligent person who has the critical faculty, in order that he may more fully realize the ideal in criticism which Symonds describes. There is such a way: The critic must desire to develop his abilities; he must seek self-culture. This is what Symonds himself tried to do, as his doctrine of self-effectuation testifies. One account of how he tried to realize his own possibilities, an account which has echoes from Goethe and Carlyle, is found in a letter he wrote to Horatio F. Brown:

> In your letter you asked what I meant by a "completed career". . . . I suppose I alluded to my favorite doctrine, so often recently expressed, that a man must work his life out to the full by self-effectuation--that he will never attain to the completion of his proper sphere in existence without achieving self-consciousness, command of his internal resources, knowledge of his aims, by action and experience--audacity and trust.[70]

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[68] Ibid., p. 75.

[69] Ibid., p. 78.

[70] Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds, coll. by Horatio F. Brown (New York, 1923), p. 114.

This self-effectuation is allied in Symonds' mind with culture:

> In its most generalised significance [he says], culture may be identified with self-effectuation. The individual attempts to arrive at his real self, to perfect the rudiments supplied by Nature on the line for which he is best qualified, and by so doing to arrive at independence--what the Germans call Selbständigkeit . . . . Goethe points out in two famous lines that this self-effectuation, which is the highest end of culture, demands different environments according to the different quality of the mental force to be developed . . . .[71]

Symonds therefore indicates that the critic must persist in "self-effectuation" through the humanistic studies so that he may learn to recognize, when he sees it, the permanently human in art.

"Criticism," we learn, "in order to be methodical, implies a previous metaphysic," and the critic must have views "regarding art in general, and the functions of the several arts." He should understand the abstract terms he uses. Symonds recognizes the empirical basis of much English criticism, but he maintains that the empirical system of deducing laws of criticism is not as

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[71] In the Key of Blue, pp. 197-8. See also Goethe, "Noch ein Wort für junge Dichter," Sämmtliche Werke, Jubiläums Aufgabe, Vierzig Bände (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1902-7), XXXVIII, p. 325. It is interesting to note that though Symonds and Arnold both believe in an ideal of culture, the former looks for it in the individual (in his self-effectuation), whereas the latter looks for it in conduct (and it has, therefore, social motives) ("Sweetness and Light," Prose and Poetry [Bouton], pp. 253-4).

different as it appears from the metaphysical systems of Kant, Hegel, Kuno Fischer, Schopenhauer, and Lotze.[72] Just how the empirical and metaphysical systems are alike is not clear.

But more important than a metaphysic, Symonds finds, is a knowledge of history. The ideal critic, the man who would be scientific, must study natural development, and he must be able to use the inductive method. Though he should have a certain amount of practical skill, the critic need not be a metaphysician, an historian, or a practical artist.[73] Of what, then, should his training consist? Clearly of humanistic studies--history, literature,

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[72] Essays, p. 71. The only explanation I can find for this enigmatical statement is in the sentence following: "The two systems differ less than they appear to do; for whether general notions are empirically borrowed or logically demonstrated, notions of some sort underlie all judgments, and the real acumen of the critic is displayed in his application of them to particulars rather than in his philosophical ingenuity" (ibid., pp. 71-2). To me the statement is not very illuminating. It seems in effect to say this: The critic must have a metaphysic, but what it is does not matter, since his acuteness as a critic is measured by his judgment of specific works of art. Why, then, I ask, is a metaphysic necessary at all? Because, since he has to judge by some standard, the critic may probably find a metaphysic necessary.

[73] Ibid., p. 72.

art, and law.[74] These studies are "of greater moral and mental importance to humanity" than mathematical and natural science, and as discipline they are not inferior.[75]

The ideal critic, then, combines in himself all kinds of critic; he must see his first duty as that of judging works of art and literature; he must have an inborn critical faculty; he must recognize the permanently good and true in art; he must develop his own abilities by undergoing a period of training which involves the humanistic studies. Having fulfilled all these requirements, the critic will then have the perception which will be

> the taste of a mentally healthy and impartial person, who has made himself acquainted with the laws of evolution in art and in society, and who is able to test the excellence of work in any stage from immaturity to decadence by discerning what there is of sincerity and vigour in it.[76]

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[74]The inclusion of law is peculiar. I suggest that Symonds included it because his own (unwilling) study of law assisted him in criticism, though I know of no instance in which he expressed the fact that it did. Can there be some connection between his idea of law as a study in preparation for criticism and the suggestion of Jowett, who in 1865 wrote to Symonds: "I think that you are very likely right about the desertion of the Bar. Still I would urge you to be called, and to finish the elementary study of Law as a branch of literature or philosophy. In Hallam's 'History of Literature' it strikes me that you see the advantage to be had from legal knowledge" (Horatio F. Brown, John Addington Symonds, New Edition [London, 1903], p. 192). Further than this there seems to be nothing to explain the inclusion of the study of law as a preparation for the profession of criticism.

[75]Essays, p. 69.

[76]Ibid., p. 64. See also Renaissance in Italy, 2 Vols. (New York, n. d.), II, p. 900.

All of the principles of Symonds' theory of criticism, then, seem to derive from earlier writers, and the first in importance of these ideas is the notion that the critic must judge according to the permanent facts (the "abiding relations") of man's emotional and intellectual existence; another idea which he may have found in the earlier English critics[77] was the notion that an art-work should be judged partly in terms of the age during which it finds its origin. But he places more emphasis than did his English predecessors or his German model, Goethe, on the "natural and historical conditions" surrounding an art-work; he is impressed by the "scientific" spirit of his own age, and he therefore tries to define a criticism that is "scientific." The concept which emerges seems to represent a compromise between the position of Coleridge that fixed canons of criticism should be deduced from the nature of man (which in turn is related to permanent and immutable spiritual reality),[78] and the scientific method. As a matter of fact, Symonds' theory of scientific criticism is more inclusive than is that of any other nineteenth century critic. And the ideal critic whom he describes is a man of natural critical ability who looks for the permanently good in art, and

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[77]Though, of course, he need not have done so, since, as we shall see, the idea was popular enough among historians and among German and French critics.

[78]Biographia Literaria, Works, III, p. 186.

who undergoes a period of study in the humanities so that his efforts at judging art and literature may be based on a trained perception.

The last three chapters of this study will be concerned with Symonds' "scientific" criticism. The subjects which I shall discuss are these: 1. The theory of the *milieu* and Symonds' use of it in his criticism; here the influence of the historians who write in the *genre* of *Kulturgeschichte* and that of the proponents of the theory of the *milieu* come to bear; 2. Symonds' theory of evolution and art, and his application of it to English Renaissance literature: here is felt the influence of philosophers and scientists who adopted the principle of development or who declared for the validity of the doctrine of evolution; 3. Symonds' idea of art and tradition, and his work as historical criticism of the modern type. These last chapters will in part be an attempt to evaluate Symonds' work in terms of the ideal of scientific criticism which he espoused.

CHAPTER V

SYMONDS AND THE CONCEPT OF THE *MILIEU*

A. The Concept of the *Milieu* in the Study of Art

In his chapter on the Bolognese school of painting, near the end of the *Renaissance in Italy*, Symonds says that the main business of the critic is to answer two questions, the first of which is, "[W]hy did the epoch produce such art, and why did it rejoice in it?"[1] This is as close as Symonds ever approaches to a formulation of a definite theory of the *milieu* as related to the study of art. The problem of how an art-work is produced by the epoch in which it appears is, however, a leading one in his discussions of art or literature. In speaking of Italian architecture, for instance, he says that

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[1] *Renaissance in Italy*, 2 Vols. (New York, n. d.), II, pp. 900-1. I may add that the second question is, "[H]as this art any real worth beyond a documentary value for the students of one defined historical period; has it enduring qualities of originality, strength, beauty, and inspiration?" (p. 901). This second question, it will be observed, is not "scientific," but really finds its place in section A of Chapter IV.

> In no way is the characteristic diversity of the Italian communities so noticeable as in their buildings. Each district, each town, each has a well-defined peculiarity, reflecting the specific qualities of the inhabitants and the conditions under which they grew in culture. In some cases we may refer this local character to nationality and geographical position.[2]

Here we encounter an assumption that local conditions—the *milieu*—modify art and in part make it what it is.

Even if Symonds never formulated a *specific* theory of the place of the study of the *milieu* in the study of art, he knew of such a theory by the Frenchman, Taine.

It is possible to find in Taine the same idea about Shakespeare and his contemporaries—the idea of the artistic *milieu*—which Symonds so frequently stresses: we learn that

> The artist himself, considered in connection with his productions, is not isolated; he belongs to a group (*ensemble*), one greater than himself, comprising the school or family of artists of the time and country to which he belongs. For example, around Shakespeare, who, at the first glance, seems to be a marvellous celestial gift coming like an aerolite from heaven, we find several dramatists of a high order—Webster, Ford, Massinger, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher, all of whom wrote in the same style and in the same spirit.[3]

Taine also gives a description of what he thinks are all the factors which enter into the process of artistic creation, and he defines what may be the concern of the

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[2] *Ibid.*, II, p. 608.

[3] H. Taine, *The Philosophy of Art*, tr. from the French, and rev. by the author (London and Paris, 1867), pp. 5-6.

critic (or, at least, of the historian) if he is to evaluate properly the individual artist and his work:

> A general situation, provoking tendencies and special faculties; a representative man, embodying these predominant tendencies and faculties; sounds, forms, colours, or language giving this character sensuous form, or which comport with the tendencies and faculties comprising it, such are the four terms of the series; the first involves the second, the second the third, and the third the fourth, so that the slightest variation of either involves a corresponding variation in those that follow, and reveals a corresponding variation in those that precede it, permitting abstract reasoning in either direction in an ascending or descending scale of progression. As far as I am capable of judging [says Taine in all confidence], this formula embraces everything.[4]

"This formula" is in another place condensed; "A work of art," we are told, "is determined by a condition of things, combining all surrounding social and intellectual influences."[5]

Now, Symonds admires Taine's effort, but he finds that his theory is deficient because it does not take into account the degree to which the individual resists his environment:

> Honour should here be rendered to M. Taine, [he says], who was among the first to apply natural physiological principles to the study of what is understood as culture. His method drew attention to the milieu, the ethnological conditions, the climatic and social environments, which modify each particular product of human genius in art and literature. He was on the right track; but there remained something stiff and formal, a something

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[4] Ibid., pp. 161-2.

[5] Ibid., p. 77. The italics are Taine's.

> inconsistent with the subtlety of Nature, in his philosophy of culture. In particular, it did not make sufficient allowances for the resistance which the individual offers to his milieu, for the emergence in him of specific strains of atavism, and for the peculiar phenomena of mental hybrids.[6]

Symonds does, however, accept the idea that an art-form or an art-work grows out of its environment; and the drama seems to do so more than any other art:

> At all periods of history [we are told] the stage has been a mirror of the age and race in which it has arisen. Dramatic poets more than any other artists reproduce the life of men around them; exhibiting their aims, hopes, wishes, aspirations, passions in an abstract more intensely coloured than the diffuse facts of daily experience. It is the function of all artistic genius to interpret human nature to itself, and to leave in abiding form a record of past ages to posterity; but more especially of the dramatic genius, which rules for its domain the manners, actions, destinies of men. The result attained by a great drama in those few ages and among those rare races which can boast this highest growth of art, is twofold. On the one hand it shows 'the very age and body of the time his form and pressure'; it is strictly local, national, true to the epoch of its origin. But it is more than this; it is on the other hand a glass held up to nature, reflecting what is permanent in man beneath the customs and costumes, the creeds and policies, of an age or nation.[7]

The drama, we are told, grows out of its milieu and reflects that milieu. It is to be noted, however, that drama shows the permanent in human nature, too—the permanent which Symonds, like Coleridge and Wordsworth, expected to find in art. But more relevant to the subject of this chapter are the

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[6] Essays Speculative and Suggestive, New [Second] Edition (New York, 1894), p. 7.

[7] Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama (New York, 1913), pp. 18-9.

statements that dramatic poets exhibit the "aims, hopes, wishes, aspirations" of the men around them; and that dramatic art is "strictly local, national, true to the epoch of its origin."

B. Kulturgeschichte and the Concept of the Milieu before Symonds

Though the concept of the milieu assumed great importance in the nineteenth century, its sources appeared much earlier. For one thing, it seems to me that the idea comes to criticism from history, and that it receives its formative influence as much from the historians who write in the genre called Kulturgeschichte as from the writers who specifically use it as a basis for critical discussion of art and literature. Indeed, Kulturgeschichte is so closely related to the concept of the milieu that to reach any conclusions about which is first seems as hopeless as deciding which comes first, the hen or the egg.

Kulturgeschichte is the genre of historical writing to which Symonds' Renaissance in Italy belongs. The history of culture—the history of a people—the history of the mind of a people: these phrases describe the type. This kind of writing was begun by Voltaire, who in his Siècle de Louis XIV attempted to portray the whole life of a nation, and who continued on the same historical path with his Essai sur les Moeurs. But German, not French, writers followed Voltaire's example. And of these German

writers, according to Gooch in his History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century, Winckelmann

> treated the history of ancient arts as a revelation of the Greek mind . . . . Herder and the Romantics listened to the whisperings of the Folk-soul . . . . Yet the full importance of Kulturgeschichte was rarely recognized during the first half of the nineteenth century . . . .

It was not until the Revolution of 1848, when the attention of historians was directed to the Fourth Estate, that the literary genre was given vitality, and grew. Riehl and Freitag both became historians of "culture" after 1848. Riehl, it is true, never produced a great work, but he preached the doctrine of historical sociology; and Freitag in his publications attempted to "reconstruct the historic life of the German people." Riehl and Freitag with Jacob Burckhardt made this literary genre popular.[8]

It will be observed that the idea of the milieu which is assumed to be valid by historians who write in the genre of Kulturgeschichte is a rather limited one, and that this milieu is a kind of synthesis called "mind" or "spirit." Now, Symonds is fond of the word "spirit"; he talks about the human spirit, as Hegel does, he speaks about the "spirit" of the Renaissance. As Winckelmann saw in Greek art a revelation of the Greek mind, so Symonds sees Italian painting and architecture as a revelation of the mind of the Italians of the period of the Renaissance, and English Renaissance drama as a revelation of the English

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[8] G. P. Gooch, History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1935), pp. 573-4.

Renaissance mind. Like Herder and the German Romantics, he concerns himself with the art which he supposes to have emanated from the "people." "There is profound truth in what Herder taught to the younger Goethe," he says, "that really great poetry has always been the product of a national spirit, and not the product of studies confined to a select few."[9] Like Riehl and Freitag, he attempts to follow the principles of historical sociology: the philosophical background of his chief works is the Hegelian concept of the Mind of man, and that Mind he sees as being always in progress. It may be added that Symonds shares with other historians who write in the genre of Kulturgeschichte the feeling of scientific optimism and the belief in progress. Symonds believes too in the validity of the methods of scientific naturalism, but he does not practice them himself: he is in most respects not an independent investigator, but rather, an historian content to use secondary sources.

Symonds sees English drama itself as a natural growth rising spontaneously from the consciousness of the English people; that is why I say that his critical works on literature resemble Kulturgeschichte. And since he believes that the drama is a people's art, he entertains a patriotic jealousy for the integrity of the English literary form which is the romantic drama. Much as he admires the work

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[9] In the Key of Blue (London and New York, 1893), p. 211.

of Ben Jonson, therefore, he is careful to point out that Jonson's "genius [was] originally of the romantic order," but that the education of a scholar, and definite literary theories of the task of the poet turned him from the stream of English romantic drama[10]—a verdict, incidentally, with which Jonson's most recent editors agree.[11] For Symonds the English drama is the Romantic drama; it is the normal, natural product of the people of the English Renaissance. That is why he believes that strictures like those Sidney would have placed on English drama are attempts to repress the growth of this species of English literature.

"The scientific critic judges," we have been told, "but does not do so without understanding the natural and historical conditions of the product under examination, and without making the allowances demanded by his sense of relativity."[12] The "natural conditions" of English Renaissance drama—Symonds does not treat English non-dramatic literature from the "scientific" point of view—are those of the period of the Renaissance and those of Renaissance England. Here the student recognizes at once the nineteenth century doctrine of the milieu. I should

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[10] Ben Jonson, English Worthies Series (London, 1888), p. 7.

[11] Ben Jonson, the Man and His Works, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, 5 Vols. (Oxford, 1925), II, p. 237.

[12] Essays, p. 67.

like now to examine briefly the various manifestations of the theory as it appears in criticism and as it becomes a tradition.

The theory of the milieu is often thought to begin with Hegel, but, long before Hegel, writers and historians of art declared for this type of criticism. The study of art-works in terms of the milieu, in fact, antedated Hegel by some years. As early as 1748 Du Bos' Critical Reflections (Paris, 1719) was published in London, and in Volume II of the work, Du Bos argues that physical cases, rather than moral ones, have a share in art.[13] Some years later, in 1764, Winckelmann's famous book Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums was published in Dresden. That the work exerted a strong influence on Symonds is beyond a doubt, though it would be irrelevant to prove it here. To Winckelmann goes more than a little credit for the "Hellenic" Revival as it was carried on by Arnold, Symonds, Pater, Andrew Lang, Swinburne, and others of the nineteenth century; he gets a whole essay from Pater in his History of the Renaissance,[14] and Symonds writes a long article about him.[15] But more significant

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[13]See l'Abbe Du Bos, Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture, 3 Vols., Septieme Edition (Paris, 1770), especially II, Sections 14 and 15.

[14](New York, n. d.), pp. 147-93.

[15]Mentioned again below; see p.322.

for this study than Winckelmann's Hellenism is his assumption "that specific geographical and social conditions were responsible for the characteristics of various artistic periods"—an assumption, according to Ladd, found also in Goethe, Lessing, and Herder.[16] A resulting theory, which is suggested in Willis' Reflections on the Architecture of the Middle Ages (1835), is that style may illustrate the social conditions of a people.[17] These writers all devoted their attention to art. In men of his own century who devoted their attentions to other fields than that of art, however, Symonds could find expressions of the theory of the milieu.

The nineteenth century thinkers who most encouraged the notion were Hegel and Comte. The former describes his theory or refers to it many times in his Aesthetik; in one instance he says this:

> The real Ideal . . . . is not confined to the shadow-like world of the emotions, but in its perfected whole must freely borrow from the definite structure of external objects of sight in every direction. And the reason of this is that man himself, whose nature is the central source that gives to that Ideal all its significance, is alive, and his life is only actual in a particular place and time, as one with the Present, as the individualized type of infinity; and in short the opposition of an external garland of Nature is a fundamental characteristic of his life and its association with him and his activity is imperative. It follows that if this activity is to

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[16]Henry Ladd, The Victorian Morality of Art: An Analysis of Ruskin's Esthetic (New York, 1932), p. 42.

[17]Ibid., pp. 42-3.

> be apprehended by art, not merely as belonging to man alone, but in the specific form it may take in that world of appearance, the mode of its existence there will assert itself as the mobility, reaction, and animating force of life itself in contact and transfusion with the material complex which surrounds it.[18]

Again, Hegel holds that "there are two essential conditions to any effective presentation of a real personality [in art]; we must have before us both the reflection of the man's inner life and the natural environment which surrounds him."[19]

Comte, convinced of the truth of the theory of the relativity of all things, believed in the application of that principle to all forms of human existence and to every state of human experience. His was the conviction that since we can know only phenomena, our knowledge is relative, not absolute. We know only the relations of facts, and these relations are constant: these constant relations are called laws. Comte thus concluded that the laws of phenomena are all that we can know about the phenomena.[20] He therefore believed in the possibility of studying human beings in their relations to one another and to their environment. The philosophical expression of Hegel and the scientific naturalism of Comte, who thought

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[18] G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Fine Art, tr., with Notes, by F. P. B. Osmaston, B. A., 4 Vols. (London, 1920), I, p. 328.

[19] Ibid., I, p. 343.

[20] See John Stuart Mill, "The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte," Westminster Review, XXVII, n.s. (April 1, 1865) p. 342.

that man is a continuation of nature, or a being like the other creatures of the universe called animals, contributed to the acceptance of the idea that art arises from its environment.

A critical work which added much to the acceptance of the theory of the milieu was Mme. de Staël's De la Littérature considérée dans ses Rapports avec les Institutions Sociales (1800). In this book the author recommends a new literature for each age, and says that because literature changes with society, the literature of the North of Europe (which she calls "Romantic") and the literature of the South of Europe (which she calls "Classical") differ because their milieux differ. According to Mary M. Colum, Mme. de Staël seems to have inspired Sainte-Beuve, Taine, and the Marxians.[21] Two works which resemble de Staël's are Stendhal's Racine et Shakespeare (1823-5), in which the author agrees that there must be a new literature for each new age, and in which he justifies the pleasure found in his day in Romantic literature as compared with the pleasure found in former days in Classical literature; and Guizot's Histoire de la Civilization en France (1830), which exhibits interest in the life and social conditions of the French people.

The Rationalistic-Positivistic-Naturalistic approach to history was given its most marked treatment in England

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[21] From These Roots (New York, 1937), p. 127.

in Buckle's incomplete History of Civilization in England (1857–61), which was to the theory of the milieu what Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) was to the theory of evolution. Buckle, according to Professor Shotwell, attempts to "work out the influences of the material world upon the formation of societies."[22] He stresses "the supreme importance of food, soil, and general nature." But "he assigns to these factors an ever-lessening function as civilization advances, ... he postulates mind as much as matter, and with almost Hegelian vision, indicates its ultimate control."[23] Thus Buckle finds that mind and nature influence one another:

> On the one hand, we have the human mind obeying the laws of its own existence, and, when uncontrolled by external agents, developing itself according to the conditions of its organization. On the other hand, we have what is called Nature, obeying likewise its laws; but increasingly coming into contact with the minds of men, exciting their passions, stimulating their intellect, and therefore giving to their actions a direction which they would not have taken without such disturbance. Thus we have man modifying nature, and nature modifying man; while out of the reciprocal modification all events must necessarily spring.[24]

In Taine Symonds must have found the literary counterpart of Buckle, for Taine's History of English Literature (1856–9) is an attempt "to seek [in the history of a

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[22]James T. Shotwell, An Introduction to the History of History (New York, 1936), p. 330.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Henry Thomas Buckle, History of Civilization in England, 3 Vols. (London and New York, 1936), i, p. 17.

literature] . . . . the psychology of a people," and is concerned with "three sources [contributing] to produce [the] elementary moral state—Race, Surroundings, and Epoch."[25] Taine, too, like Buckle, postulates mind as much as matter, but he uses the term "moral condition":

> Given a literature, philosophy, society, art, group of arts, what is the moral condition which produced it? what the conditions of race, epoch, circumstance, the most fitted to produce this moral condition? There is a distinct moral condition for each of these formations, and for each of their branches; one for art in general, one for each kind of art—for architecture, painting, sculpture, music, poetry; each has its special germ in the wide field of human psychology; each has its law, and it is by virtue of this law that we see it raised, by chance, as it seems, wholly alone, amid the miscarriage of its neighbors, like painting in Flanders and Holland in the seventeenth century, poetry in England in the sixteenth, music in Germany in the eighteenth. At this moment, and in these countries, the conditions have been fulfilled for one art, not for others, and a single branch has budded in the general barreness. History must search now-a-days for these rules of human growth; with the special psychology of each special formation it must occupy itself; the finished picture of these characteristic conditions it must now labour to compose.[26]

Among nineteenth century critics who made use of the theory of the milieu, the most noteworthy is Sainte-Beauve. He believed in the importance of the personal, of the ego, in literature; he therefore studied a writer's background, his type of mind, his race, native country, his descendants

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[25]H. A. Taine, History of English Literature, tr. H. Van Laun, 2 Vols. in one (New York, 1885), I, pp. 20 and 19 respectively.

[26]Ibid., I, pp. 18-19.

and ancestors, and, of his immediate family, especially his mother; Sainte-Beuve, then, studied the author's milieu. He spoke about the "natural history of minds." Every artist, he thought, had a master faculty (or dominating quality of mind), as Taine thought also; and he believed that every artist should be studied against the age and immediate environment in which he found himself.

One other French critic professed a belief in the theory that criticism must concern itself with the milieu of a writer or of a work. That critic was Brunetière. A year before the publication of Shakspere's Predecessors, Brunetière published an essay called "The Classic and Romantic," a criticism of a book by Deschanel. Here he says that there is a French, as well as an English and a German, literature "which is deeply imprinted with the mark of national genius, relieved, liberated . . . . from foreign imitation, a literature where a whole race recognizes its own conception of life."[27] In another essay, this time called "Impressionist Criticism," Brunetière says that criticism must classify a work according to the kind of author and his milieu.[28] He is, then, well within the tradition of the historians and critics who see art from the viewpoint of sociology, though I suppose that this element in his work can be easily overemphasized.

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[27] Brunetière's Essays in French Literature, tr. D. Smith (New York, 1898), p. 185.

[28] Ibid., p. 217.

The tradition created by Du Bos, Winckelmann, Goethe, Lessing, Herder, Willis, Hegel, Comte, Mme. de Staël, Stendhal, Guizot, Buckle, Taine, Sainte-Beuve, and Brunetière is a tradition to which Symonds belongs. The milieu which for Symonds explains in part the character of English Renaissance literature is, as one would expect, that of the Renaissance itself and that of the English nation as it was during that period. It is with the first of these that I shall now deal.

C. Symonds' Interpretation of the Renaissance as a Cultural Movement[29]

1. Symonds' Conception of the Period

Symonds sees the Renaissance as a movement in world history, which falls, he says, into five major periods: 1. that of the Eastern empires of remote antiquity, 2. that of the Hellenic system of civic liberty, 3. that of the Roman organization, 4. that of the Church and feudalism, and 5. that of Modern Europe. The last movement is incomplete; it has passed, says Symonds, through three stages—Renaissance, Reformation, and Revolution.[30] This last period has gone through a progressive change from

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[29]Because this theory is fundamental to an understanding of Symonds' point of view concerning the history of English Renaissance drama, I leave his works on that type of literature and turn to material in which his theory is most fully expressed.

[30]Renaissance in Italy, II, p. 465.

tyranny to freedom; it will culminate in the realization of the democratic ideal.[31]

Now, Symonds says that the Renaissance was the first period in the history of Modern Europe. It was the first stage of the history of the process by which the mind of man has been reaching freedom. It was a turning away from Medieval tyranny. It was the first step in the fight of man for freedom, the struggle in which the nineteenth century itself is taking a part.[32]

This greater European Renaissance movement, Symonds believes, was a reaction against the barbaric and ignorant Middle Ages, a time when man's reason was not awake, when man was not aware of his own possibilities. This "first act" in "the drama of liberty"[33] was the secular aspect of the struggle for freedom, as the Reformation was the religious aspect of that struggle.[34] Both Renaissance and Reformation were reactions against the Middle Ages, which to Symonds are truly the "Dark" Ages.[35] He says that the

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[31] Ibid., I, pp. 5-6.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., I, p. 6.

[34] Ibid., I, p. 15.

[35] See Symonds' article on "The Renaissance" in the Encyclopedia Britannica. The article originally appeared in the ninth edition (1886) and is reprinted in the fourteenth (1937), Vol. xix. The reference is to xix, p. 134.

Middle Ages were steeped in profound ignorance,[36] that they were "intellectually barren and inert";[37] that they were a period in which

> man had lived enveloped in a cowl. He had not seen the beauty of the world, or had seen it only to cross himself, and turn aside and tell his beads and pray . . . . [H]umanity had passed, a careful pilgrim, intent on the terrors of sin, death, and judgment, along the highways of the world, and had scarcely known that they were sightworthy or that life is a blessing.[38]

In the Middle Ages "thought of every kind had been concentrated on the world beyond this life";[39] there had been no figurative art; the symbols of Christianity were "little better than fetishes";[40] only architecture—in which was expressed the mysticism of the Middle Ages, and which is an essentially medieval art—flourished.[41] The Middle Ages found reality in the abstract and universal, not in the world in which men live.[42] Therefore, even Dante, says Symonds, "though born to be the poet of all time, was still a scion of his epoch. He could not altogether escape the influence of a misleading conception."[43]

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[36] Renaissance in Italy, I, pp. 5, 6, 8, and 11.
[37] Ibid., I, p. 7.
[38] Ibid., I, p. 9.
[39] Ibid., II, p. 424.
[40] Ibid., I, p. 592.
[41] Ibid., I, p. 593.
[42] Ibid., I, pp. 885-6.
[43] Ibid., I, p. 887.

According to Symonds, the Middle Ages were completely under the dominance of the church. Medieval speculation was never divorced from theology.[44] The clergy were coarse and crude, and themselves were responsible, says Symonds, for the Novella in which women were spoken of in obscene terms.[45] But the Renaissance accepted the "light" of reason which had so often been extinguished by the church.[46] Scholasticism was rejected, the classics were treasured, man turned his attention from a way of life which was conditioned by ideas of Heaven and Hell, and he directed it towards a way of life which aimed at making the best of this world and of human existence.[47]

The only aspect of the Middle Ages of which Symonds seems to approve is Goliardic literature, and he admires that for its pagan qualities.[48] It is true, he thinks,

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[44] Ibid., II, p. 426.

[45] Ibid., II, pp. 958-9.

[46] Ibid., I, p. 7.

[47] Ibid., II, p. 426.

[48] He translated some of the Goliardic songs, and published them under the title, Wine, Women, and Song (1884). The edition I have is a later one (The King's Classics, London, 1904). On page 5 we find: "That so bold, so fresh, so natural, so pagan a view of human life as the Latin songs of the Wandering Students exhibit, should have found clear and artistic utterance in the epoch of the crusaders, is indeed enough to bid us pause and reconsider the justice of our stereotyped ideas about the period." And on page 37: "[The love expressed in these songs is] love of the sensuous, impulsive, appetitive kind, to which we give the name of Pagan." This pagan quality Symonds finds in the Renaissance movement, and, as we have noted, in English Renaissance drama.

that the seeds of the Renaissance were sown in the Middle Ages, but because "the time was not yet,"[49] they did not properly develop; and he quotes Michelet when he says that "the Sibyl of the Renaissance kept offering her books in vain to feudal Europe."[50]

Symonds uses the famous "formula" of Michelet in order to express his idea of the difference between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. That "formula"—"la découverte du mond, la découverte de l'homme"[51]—expresses the this-worldly character of the Renaissance, and it is the this-worldly or secular character of the Renaissance which Symonds most strongly insists upon. To him the Renaissance was a transition period between the Middle Ages and the Modern World;[52] it was the period during which the "human spirit" attained "self-conscious freedom" and realized the arts and the knowledge which had "long lain neglected on the shores of the Dead Sea which we call the Middle Ages."[53] The Renaissance was an intellectual movement; it brought about the emancipation

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[49] Renaissance in Italy, I, p. 7.

[50] Ibid. See, too, Jules Michelet, Histoire de France, 26 Vols. (Paris, n. d.), VII, p. 46: "La Renaissance s'était presentée au douzieme siécle comme la sibyle à cet ancien roi de Rome . . . ."

[51] Michelet, op. cit., VII, p. 8.

[52] Renaissance in Italy, I, p. 1.

[53] Ibid., I, p. 2.

of the reason for the modern world.[54] In this period man discovered the world and himself.[55] In it Science was born; furthermore, in it men began to see beauty in the human body.[56]

But, Symonds says, it was "scholarship which revealed to men the wealth of their own minds, ... the importance of human life regarded as a thing apart from religious rules and dogmas."[57] This scholarship restored not only the classics, but the text of the Bible as well. The Renaissance had its roots in Humanism, as did the Reformation also.[58] But Humanism, or the Revival of Learning, was not the entire Renaissance.[59] Symonds sees Humanism, which he says was a revival of Latin culture only slightly affected by Greek models,[60] as a part of the Renaissance impulse towards freedom:

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[54] Ibid., I, p. 5.

[55] Ibid., I, p. 10 and I, p. 10, note.

[56] Ibid., I, p. 11.

[57] Ibid., I, p. 12.

[58] Ibid., II, p. 908.

[59] Ibid., I, p. 3.

[60] Ibid., II, p. 243.

> The essence of humanism consisted in a new and vital perception of the dignity of man as a rational being apart from theological determinations, and in the further perception that classic literature alone displayed human nature in the plenitude of intellectual and moral freedom. It was partly a reaction against ecclesiastical despotism, partly an attempt to find the point of unity for all that had been thought and done by man, with the mind restored to consciousness of its own sovereign faculty.[61]

Humanism was the mother of rationalism, which "has supplied the spiritual life of the last four centuries," which "has created science in all its branches," and which "has sustained the unconquerable soul of man in its persistent effort after liberty and its revolt against the tyranny of priests and princes."[62]

The Renaissance meant freedom not only to man as a whole, but to the individual as well. The milieu, Symonds says, "created by multitudes of self-centered, cultivated personalities was necessary for the evolution of that spirit of intelligence, subtle, penetrative, and elastic, that formed the motive force of the Renaissance."[63] These men of the Renaissance were "comprehensive and many-sided"; their characters were "comprehensive and encyclopaedic."[64] Symonds calls them "universal geniuses,"[64] and he says that

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[61] Ibid., I, p. 362.

[62] Ibid., II, p. 914.

[63] Ibid., I, p. 332.

[64] Ibid., I, p. 335.

they were gifted with a "powerful individuality."[65] For the individuals of the Renaissance, as we have seen, Symonds not infrequently uses the term "Titans."[66] The reader will remember that he uses the word also for Greene, Marlowe, and Jonson.

Symonds believes that the Renaissance found its religious expression in the Reformation. "The German Reformation," he says, "was the Renaissance of Christianity."[67] The Reformation was the religious aspect of the revolt against "tyrannical authority"; it caused the tearing of the "veil which the Church had interposed between the human soul and God"; it established freedom of conscience.[68]

> Connected on one side [Symonds declares] with scholarship and the study of texts, it opened the path for modern Biblical criticism. Connected on the other side with the intolerance of mere authority, it led to what has since been named rationalism . . . .[69]

Just as "Descartes and Bacon, Spinoza and Locke, are . . . . champions of new-found philosophical freedom," so is "Luther . . . . the herald of new-found religious freedom."[70]

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[65] Ibid., I, p. 336.

[66] See also Pater: " . . . . it is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralised, complete" (The Renaissance, [New York, n. d.], Preface, p. xxx).

[67] Renaissance in Italy, I, p. 340.

[68] Ibid., I, p. 15.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

Symonds maintains that both the Renaissance and the Reformation emanated from the same impulse of the peoples of Europe to achieve their freedom. But he qualifies this statement with another: " . . . . these stirrings of the modern spirit [Renaissance and Reformation] assumed externally such diverse forms as made them reciprocally repellent."[71] In one country, England, both movements appeared at the same time.[72]

The Renaissance, then, gave a "new birth to liberty."[73] As the Church "was the school-master of the Middle Ages," so was culture "the humanizing and refining influence of the Renaissance."[74] To Italy goes the credit for bringing about the new birth of liberty. In that country the "true Renaissance" began.[75] At "a time when the rest of Europe was inert, Italy had already begun to organize the various elements of the modern spirit, and to set the fashion whereby the other great nations should learn and live."[76] For Symonds the date of the fall of Constantinople (1453) marks the beginning of the Renaissance, and the date of

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[71] Ibid., II, p. 906.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., I, p. 16.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., I, p. 17. Symonds never explains what he means by the phrase, the "true Renaissance." No doubt he thinks of the earlier French movement as an abortive Renaissance.

[76] Ibid.

the sack of Rome (1527) marks its end.[77] From Italy the Renaissance moved in a westerly direction and finally reached England.[78]

Symonds' theory of the Renaissance, which, it will be remembered, we study as descriptive of the "natural conditions" which influenced English Renaissance drama to be what it was, falls into eight divisions. Symonds maintains: a. that the Middle Ages were ignorant and barbaric; b. that the Renaissance differed from the Middle Ages as day from night, as intellectual light from intellectual darkness; c. that the Renaissance was a secular movement; d. that the Revival of Learning, or Humanism, served as the source of the Renaissance and that it also was secular in nature; e. that the Renaissance encouraged individualism; f. that the Renaissance and the Reformation had a common starting-point; g. that the true Renaissance began in Italy; and h. that the Italian Renaissance extended from 1453 to 1527.

2. Symonds' Probable Sources--Dissenting Opinions of Later Historians and Critics

The problem of interpreting the Renaissance as a cultural movement is a highly complex one. About every aspect of Symonds' theory there is disagreement. His theory, it is true, is the orthodox one, the expression in English of an interpretation which was commonly held

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[77] Ibid., I, p. 1.

[78] Ibid., I, pp. 17 and 583. See also Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 21.

throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. Symonds' theory was not new in his day, therefore, nor was it original with him. I should like to indicate what sources contributed to the formulation of his theory and at what points the opinions of other writers differ from his. In so doing I may indicate the position of Symonds' theory among theories of the Renaissance, and find a point of departure for an evaluation of his views.

The first problem with which we have to deal concerns Symonds' notion that the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were very different periods. He thinks of the Renaissance as a period closely connected with the history of rationalism, and, like Michelet and Burckhardt before him, he is contemptuous of the Middle Ages partly because he believes that they had interrupted the progress of rationalism and science.[79] Symonds' attitude toward the Middle Ages is that, also, of Burckhardt, who has some harsh things to say about the period. During the Middle Ages, he explains,

> Both sides of human consciousness . . . . lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, childish prepossession, through which the world and history are seen in strange hues. Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category.[80]

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[79] Professor Douglas Bush (The Renaissance and English Humanism [Toronto, 1939]) says that to Michelet and Burckhardt the Middle Ages "appeared as not much more than a long cultural lag" (p. 31).

[80] Jacob Burckhardt, The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, tr. S. G. C. Middlemore (London and Vienna, n.d.), p. 70.

Burckhardt denies to the Middle Ages even the right to assist men in matters of religion because the men of this period, he says, divorced themselves from rationalism. The "Middle Ages," he holds, "which spared themselves the trouble of induction and free inquiry, can have no right to impose upon us their dogmatical verdict in a matter of such vast importance as religion."[81]

Two of Symonds' contemporaries take a different attitude towards the Middle Ages. The one is William Morris and the other is Ruskin. Both nourish an enthusiasm for the art of the period, and Ruskin is moved by "the Catholic and chivalrous nobleness of the thirteenth century." Symonds, on the other hand, is moved by "the humanity and naturalism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries."[82]

Symonds' idea that the Renaissance meant the birth of a new spirit was not new in his day, but neither had it been current for a long time. The notion was emphasized, however, by juxtaposing the supposed characteristics of the Middle Ages with those of the Renaissance, by the assertion that Medieval night was followed by Renaissance day, that Medieval darkness was followed by Renaissance light. Goetz says that Vasari and his humanistic

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[81] Ibid., p. 260.

[82] According to Frederic Harrison, who not only read the works of Ruskin and Symonds, but also knew both men at Oxford (Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill and other Literary Estimates [New York, 1900], p. 138).

predecessors are responsible for the metaphor.[33] The term rinascita itself was first used by Vasari,[34] we learn, but it was only with Stendhal (1817), who used the expression renaissance des arts, that the Renaissance began to be thought of as a distinct cultural epoch.[34] Guizot (1828) spoke of a renaissance des lettres;[35] but Sismondi first used the word "Renaissance" in the title of a book, and Libri, a mathematician, used the word similarly some six years later.[36] Renan, in Averroès (1852) drew a distinction between the periods of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: "Le moyen age," he says,

> si profond, si original, si poétique dans l'élan de son enthusiasme religieux, n'est, sous le rapport de la culture intellectuelle, qu'un long tâtonnement pour revenir à la grande école, de la noble pensée, c'est-à-dire à l'antiquité. La renaissance, loin d'être, comme on l'a dit, un égarement de l'esprit moderne, fourvoyé après un idéal étranger, n'est que la retour à la vraie tradition de l'humanité civilisée.[37]

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[33] W. Goetz, "Mittelalter und Renaissance," Historische Jahrbuch, xlix (1929), pp. 53-4.

[34] Ibid., p. 45.

[35] Ibid., pp. 45-6.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ernest Renan, Averroès et L'Averroïsme (Paris, n.d.), Preface, p. viii.

But it was Michelet (1855) who in his famous "formula" first gave crystallized shape to the idea that the Middle Ages and the Renaissance differed, that the one was an age of darkness and the other an age of light, and that in the latter the world and man were discovered.[88] Burckhardt in his classic Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (1860; English translation, 1878) followed in the path broken by Michelet. Certain English writers did likewise. Frederic Seebohm in his Oxford Reformers (1867) declares that with the coming of the Renaissance the

> ice of centuries was suddenly broken. The universal despondency at once gave way before a spirit of enterprise and hope; and it has been well observed, men began to congratulate each other that their lot had been cast upon an age in which such wonders were achieved.[89]

And seven years later, J. R. Green, an acquaintance of Symonds,[90] in his Short History of the English People (1874) speaks of "the slumbering intelligence of Europe" during the Middle Ages, of the exhausted "intellectual energy" of that period, and, as fervently as Symonds himself, he stresses the new liberty, the discovery of antiquity, the progress of science, and the "awakening of rational Christianity."[91]

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[88] Michelet, op. cit., vii, p. 8.

[89] Oxford Reformers (Everyman, New York, 1929), pp. 3-4.

[90] Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds, collected by Horatio F. Brown (New York, 1923), p. 97.

[91] John Richard Green, A Short History of the English People, 2 Vols. (Everyman, New York, 1934), I, p. 287.

If these predecessors and contemporaries of Symonds display the same notions as he does, and create a traditional theory of the relationship of the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, there are others who raise their voices in dissent. I have indicated that Ruskin did not share Symonds' contempt for the Middle Ages; indeed, in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton (January 6, 1876) Ruskin writes of them as "to me the only ages,"[92] and in his Lectures on Architecture and Painting (1854) he praised the art of the Middle Ages because in it truth was "sought before execution and beauty."[93] On the other hand, his works are full of suggestions of the inferiority of the Renaissance to the Middle Ages. The feeling of the Renaissance, Ruskin thought, was one of "indolence, infidelity, sensuality, and shallow pride."[94] In the art of the period, we are told, mere display is aimed at.[95] According to Frederic Harrison, Ruskin took the Medieval point of view, or a "wider view" than Symonds did. "To Ruskin," says Harrison, "the Renaissance is a mere Episode."[96]

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[92] Works, Library Edition, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 Vols. (London and New York, 1903-12), XXXVII, p. 189.

[93] Works, XII, p. 150.

[94] Pre-Raphaelitism (1851), Works, XII, p. 357, note.

[95] Stones of Venice, III, Works, XI, p. 65. See also Stones of Venice, II, Works, X, pp. 400-1.

[96] Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill and other Literary Estimates, p. 139.

Another of Symonds' contemporaries, Emile Beghart, in a review in the Revue des deux Mondes of a French translation of Burckhardt, shows that the Middle Ages were more closely related to the Renaissance than Burckhardt [and, for our purposes, Symonds] says, and that the Renaissance was really a development of the former age.[97]

Indeed, Symonds himself seems not to be absolutely certain about this point, for in one place he says rather elaborately that "the history of civilization is continuous and undivided" and that there has been an unbroken evolutionary change up to the time he writes.[98] In another place he remarks that "The Renaissance in general may be called the Middle Ages in dissolution,"[99] a statement which I find to be strangely inconsistent with the formula of Michelet. But such assertions as these do not change the impression which Symonds leaves with one, that for him the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are very different periods.

Since Symonds' day certain scholars have attempted to refute the notion that the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are distinctly separate, and that the Medieval period is as night compared with Renaissance day. The writers who

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[97]See Goetz, op, cit., p. 49. Also Revue des deux Mondes, 3rd Period, LXXII (November 15, 1885), pp. 342-79, and especially 342-7.

[98]Renaissance in Italy, II, p. 464.

[99]Ibid., II, p. 458.

accept the conventional view commonly picture the mind of man as having been in a state of dreamy half-consciousness during the Middle Ages.[100] Kuno Francke (1916) does not concur with this notion, and his evidence for disagreeing with it is the extant work of French and German artists of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.[101] Huizinga in his Waning of the Middle Ages (1924) treats literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as if it marked the close of the Middle Ages.[102] Turberville (1932), although he defends the generally accepted view of the relationship of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, finds the two periods to be more closely related than the orthodox view would indicate. "The Renaissance was nourished in a new luxury," he says. And again: "The Humanists [of the Renaissance] are found, not in the cloister, but in the court of the prince or the home of the burgher."[103] If the two ages were different, at least they did not differ as do ignorance and intellectuality.

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[100] For Symonds' statement, see Renaissance in Italy, I, pp. 5, 9, 16. For Burckhardt's statement, see p. 305, above.

[101] Personality in German Literature before Luther (Cambridge, 1916), p. 6.

[102] J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (London, 1924), p. v.

[103] A. S. Turberville, "Changing Views of the Renaissance," History (London), n. s., xvi (January, 1932), p. 297.

Since scholars see the two great periods we have been discussing as being more closely related than Symonds and Burckhardt think, they also see that there could not be so great a difference between their essential characters as these writers suppose. They maintain that Medieval religiosity was not supplanted by Renaissance secularism, and that, since (as Symonds maintains) nature does not move by leaps and bounds, the religiosity of the Middle Ages could not have evaporated with the coming of the Renaissance. Michelet's phrase, "the discovery of the world," therefore, while it may express what is partly a truth, does not express the whole truth; it expresses the view of the exponent of Rationalism.

The idea that the Renaissance was the discovery of the world finds its origin in Voltaire[104] and is developed in Burckhardt and Michelet. It is connected with the supposed paganism of the Renaissance period, a paganism which Symonds finds also in English Renaissance literature, as we have seen, and especially in the work of Christopher Marlowe. The nineteenth century seems, on the whole, to have accepted the idea that the Renaissance was a this-worldly, a secular movement. Matthew Arnold, for instance, in "Hebraism and Hellenism" (1868 and 1869) says that "the great movement which goes by the name of Renascence was an uprising and re-instatement of man's intellectual

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[104]Bush, op. cit., p. 14.

impulse and of Hellenism."[105] He maintains that "the central idea of the Renascence [was] the Hellenic idea of pursuing, in all lines of activity, the law and science, to use Plato's words, of things as they really are."[106] In his essay, "Pagan and Christian Religious Sentiment" (1864), Arnold says, "The Renaissance is, in part, a return towards the pagan spirit . . . . ; a return towards the life of the senses and the understanding."[107]

But in the present century the idea that the Renaissance was a secular movement is under examination. Arthur Tilley (1918) finds anti-Christian tendencies in the Italian Renaissance but he calls them only "superficially anti-Christian" ones.[108] Hyma (1924) makes much of the Christian Renaissance of northern Europe. Even in Symonds' day voices were raised to declare that the Christian tradition was the dominant element in Renaissance Italy.

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[105] Culture and Anarchy and Friendship's Garland (New York, 1924), p. 122.

[106] Ibid., p. 123.

[107] Matthew Arnold, Essays Literary and Critical (Everyman, New York, 1909), p. 110. See also The Cornhill Magazine, ix (April, 1864), pp. 422-35.

[108] The Dawn of the French Renaissance (Cambridge [England], 1918), p. 593.

Thode (1885) and Sabatier (1893)[109] stressed the religious character of the period, as did Neumann somewhat later (1903).[110] Thode, for instance, found the beginning of the Renaissance at the first quarter of the thirteenth century, and saw in St. Francis the first evidence of "the Spirit of Religion" of which "the Renaissance was only a more complete development."[111] He saw in the Renaissance a "subjectiv Lyrischen Geistes, der die Schönheit der Welt zurückerobert für die innige, herzensbewegte Frommigkeit."[112] Neumann thought that both the Medieval-Christian and the "Gothic" (barbarian) made up the Renaissance.[113] Among recent scholars,

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[109] H. Thode in Franz von Assisi und die Anfänge der Kunst der Renaissance in Italien (1885), and Sabatier in various works (1893-1898) tended to demolish the lines between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. They represent the religious-romantic reaction against the Michelet-Burckhardt-Symonds rationalistic-positivistic-classical concept of the Renaissance. See H. W. Eppelsheimer, "Das Renaissance-Problem," Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichten, xi (1933), p. 485.

[110] C. Neumann, "Byzantinische Kultur und Renaissance-kultur," Historische Zeitschrift, xci (1903), pp. 215-32; also translated in part and so published in D. C. Munro and G. C. Sellery (eds.), Medieval Civilization (New York, 1907), pp. 524-46.

[111] Goetz, op. cit., pp. 48-9.

[112] Eppelsheimer, op. cit., p. 488.

[113] Munro and Sellery, op. cit., pp. 545-6.

Toffanin (1920 and 1929) and Bush (1939) believe that the movement is Christian in character.[114]

Symonds sees the "Revival of Learning," which was not the entire Renaissance, but an important part of it,[115] as secular in nature also. The Greek and Latin classics taught men what they did not find in the writings of Medieval Churchmen, he thinks; namely, guidance as to how one should live as a human being of this world.[116] Symonds' source for this view of the Revival of Learning is a work by Voigt (1859),[117] which has become a classic. From Voigt Symonds got his division of the Revival in four periods, the date of its beginning, and the idea that it was a secular movement.

In these days one occasionally sees quotation marks around the word Revival in the phrase "Revival of

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[114] Bush, op. cit., pp. 24-5 and 33-5. See also Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry (Minneapolis, 1932). Bush mentions the misconceptions of Burckhardt and Symonds regarding the Renaissance, and especially their exaggeration of the paganism of the period. He also says that the English Renaissance was fundamentally religious in nature (pp. 25-6), a belief with which Symonds would surely disagree. I assume, however, that Bush is nearer the truth than Symonds is.

[115] Renaissance in Italy, I, p. 3.

[116] Ibid., I, p. 360. The ideal of the courtier, he shows, was one of the results of the Revival (ibid., I, p. 94).

[117] George Voigt, Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Altertums. Joel Spingarn in his History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance (New York, 1899), p. 126, note, says (what is obvious enough) that Symonds' division of the Revival of Learning into four periods is based on Voigt.

Learning," because there is doubt in the minds of scholars that there ever was a sudden resumption of the study of the classics. Like so many of the theories about the Renaissance, the idea of the re-birth of the study of letters after the Medieval indifference to them stems from Bayle and Voltaire.[118] But in Symonds' day the notion had already been refuted. The problem surrounding the idea may be phrased in a question: Did the flight of Greek scholars from Constantinople to Italy in 1453 cause a re-birth of the study of letters in Italy, or did it merely bring about an intensification of a condition which already existed? Tiraboschi (1771-82),[119] whose work is one of Symonds' sources,[120] and who follows Hody (1742),[121] writes extensively about the Greek scholars in Italy before 1453, and describes the rise of Greek study in the fourteenth and fifteenth conturies.[122] Hallam in his Introduction to the Literature of Europe (1837-9) bases his work on Tiraboschi. In Volume I, Chapter II, which he calls "Literature in Europe from 1400-1440,"

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[118] Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism, p. 14; Eppelsheimer, op. cit., p. 485.

[119] In Storia della Letteratura Italiana. Gibbon (Decline and Fall of the Holy Roman Empire, 2 Vols., [New York, 1932], II, p. 1293) uses Tiraboschi and Hody (to be mentioned).

[120] Renaissance in Italy, II, p. 329.

[121] De Graecis Illustribus, published posthumously.

[122] Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism, p. 15.

he discusses such topics as "Zeal for Classical Literature in Italy," "Revival of Greek Language in Italy";[123] furthermore, he shows that Greek scholars were in Italy before 1430 and that the spirit of ancient learning was already in Italy in 1440.[124] Hallam does not use the date 1440 as marking an epoch,[125] and says that by 1400 there was a "complete development of an ardent thirst for classical, and especially Grecian, literature in Italy."[126] A modern writer, H. O. Taylor (1920), stresses the interest shown during the Middle Ages in the Latin classics.[127] Symonds, of course, recognizes the fact that an interest in the classics existed during the Middle Ages, but he says that documents were merely preserved and not studied, as they were in humanistic Italy.[128]

But more relevant to our purposes than the problem of whether or not there was a "Revival" is the question as to whether or not Humanism was a secular movement. On this point recent scholars take a view opposite to that

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[123]Henry Hallam, Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries, 4 Vols. (New York, 1867), I, pp. 103-20, passim.

[124]Ibid., I, pp. 120-1.

[125]Ibid., I, p. 159.

[126]Ibid., I, p. 157.

[127]H. O. Taylor, Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century, 2 Vols. (New York, 1920), II, pp. 133 ff.

[128]Renaissance in Italy, I, pp. 358-60.

of Symonds. Louis Einstein (1902) sees a purposive element in Humanism. He maintains that during the Renaissance learning was regarded as a guide to the conduct of life,[129] and that men of the period made an attempt to imitate the life of antiquity.[130] Konrad Burdach (1910 and 1914), on the other hand, thinks that the "Revival" was one of regeneration, one instance in which men attempted to realize the ideal of regeneration.[131] Toffanin (1929) and Bush (1939) take the stand that the "Revival" was religious and orthodox.[132] Toffanin sees classical Humanism "as an anti-individualistic wall of learned orthodoxy," as something anti-democratic and anti-heretical.[133] Bush defines Humanism in the Renaissance as "Christian faith in alliance with God-given reason."[134]

If Symonds' view of the Renaissance and the Revival of Learning is in question, his assertion that the Renaissance encouraged individualism is even more so. Like Burckhardt, Symonds speaks of the artists (especially) and of other of the great men of the Renaissance period as

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[129] The Italian Renaissance in England (New York, 1902), pp. 2-3.

[130] Ibid., p. 316.

[131] Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism, pp. 22-3.

[132] Ibid., pp. 24-5.

[133] Ibid., p. 24. The words are Bush's.

[134] Ibid., p. 54.

Titans. He always suggests that they have a something elemental and primitive, a something spontaneous, a something grandly unrestrained. But he does not define the term "individualism," although he declares individualism to be a characteristic of the period.[135] According to Symonds, the Renaissance allowed a freedom to the individual which permitted him to take the first steps towards the realization of the ideal of political democracy.[136] Man, as Michelet said, had discovered himself. Man found that he was a sentient being in a world to be experienced and enjoyed.[137] He looked at life on this planet, and in the arts he proclaimed to himself "the glad tidings of [his] goodliness and greatness in a world of manifold enjoyment created for [his] use."[138] He discovered the beauty of his physical existence, and his own humanity.[139]

But it is the notion that the individualism of the Renaissance was anti-Christian (or pagan) in character that is most under fire today. The anti-Christian

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[135]The complicated subject of individualism and its various meanings is discussed by Professor Norman Nelson in "Individualism as a Criterion of the Renaissance," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XXXII (July, 1933), pp. 316-34. Professor Nelson considers the individualism of the Middle Ages—which Symonds and Burckhardt would have said did not exist.

[136]Renaissance in Italy, I, pp. 16, 344-5; II, p. 444.

[137]Ibid., I, p. 603.

[138]Ibid., I, p. 12.

[139]Ibid., I, p. 11.

individualism which Burckhardt and Symonds stress is, of course, consistent with the idea that the Renaissance was secular in nature. But such writers as Pater, Sabatier, and Thode see in men like Joachim of Flora and St. Francis of Assisi (and especially in the latter) evidence of a Christian individualism. Even Michelet seems to have recognized the existence of individualism as early as the time of the Middle Ages, for if the Sibyl of the Renaissance kept offering her books in vain to feudal Europe, at least she was offering them, and if there were no evidences in the Middle Ages of what appeared in a highly developed form in the Renaissance, it could hardly be said that the Middle Ages refused what the Renaissance accepted. At any rate, one may assume that whatever individualism there was in the Middle Ages was a Christian individualism. Geiger (1882) makes much of the striving of the Renaissance individual and maintains that this striving was added to the universal striving inherited from the Middle Ages.[140] Konrad Burdach sees in Renaissance individualism a regenerative quality.[141] Toffanin thinks that individualism is a late medieval phenomenon and short-lived.[142] Bush comments on the notion of Renaissance

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[140] Ludwig Geiger, Renaissance und Humanismus in Italien und Deutschland (Berlin, n. d.), p. 3.

[141] Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism, p. 23.

[142] Ibid., p. 24.

individualism thus: "The age of individualism gave the doctrine of imitation an endorsement such as it never had before and has not had since . . . ."[143]

The aspect of Symonds' theory of the Renaissance which has been most subject to attack is that of the similar origins and purposes of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Preserved Smith says that, like most historians of the nineteenth century, "Symonds regarded [the two movements] . . . . as liberal movements, emancipations of reason, so nearly alike that the Reformation might be called the 'Teutonic Renaissance.'"[144] This position seems to stem from Hegel, who, in his Philosophy of History, says that "Universal history . . . . shows the development of the consciousness of Freedom";[145] and that "History in general is therefore the development of Spirit in Time";[146] and that "the History of the World is nothing but the development of the Idea of Freedom."[147] Hegel too thinks that Renaissance day followed Medieval

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[143] Ibid., p. 36. Incidentally, Kuno Francke (op. cit., p. 6) finds that individualism was not an invention of the Italian Renaissance, but belonged to Medieval life itself.

[144] Encyclopedia Britannica, Fourteenth Edition, XIX, p. 134.

[145] George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, The Philosophy of History, tr. J. Sibree, M. A., Revised Edition (New York, 1900), p. 63.

[146] Ibid., p. 72.

[147] Ibid., p. 456.

night,[148] and he says that the "essence of the Reformation" is that "Man is in his very nature destined to be free."[149] It is evident that Symonds' phraseology is in many respects Hegelian.[150]

Matthew Arnold sees a relationship between the Renaissance and the Reformation, a relationship similar, in some ways, to the one Symonds observes. He calls the Reformation the "subordinate and secondary side" of the Renaissance;[151] he also calls it the "Hebraising child of the Renascence and offspring of its fervour, rather than its intelligence,"[152] but he adds that "it never consciously grasped or applied the central idea of the Renascence . . . ."[153] Arnold maintains that the Reformation is not, like the Renascence, "a return to the life of the senses and the understanding." He sees the

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[148] Ibid., p. 411. Symonds regrets that "Hegel . . . . skips [the Renaissance] almost dryshod in his 'Philosophy of History'—passing with no transition from the Middle Ages to the German Reformation . . . ." (Letters and Papers, p. 175). But Hegel's explaining the Reformation in terms of man's striving for freedom is important.

[149] Hegel, Philosophy of History, p. 147.

[150] A study of Symonds' essay on Winckelmann (Westminster Review, XXXI, n. s. [Jan., 1867], pp. 80-110) serves to show Symonds' indebtedness to Hegel in the field of aesthetics and to Winckelmann in the study of Greek art.

[151] Culture and Anarchy and Friendship's Garland, p. 122.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid., p. 123.

real Reformation as "a reaction of the moral and spiritual sense against the carnal and pagan sense."[154] In a letter to Arthur Hugh Clough, he says that he does not believe "that the Reformation caused the Elizabethan literature—but both sprang out of the active animated condition of the human spirit in Europe at that time."[155] Arnold seems, at least, to be in agreement with Symonds about the Renaissance and Reformation as two sides of the same picture; but it is apparent that Arnold thinks that the Reformation was more in evidence in England than was the Renaissance, for he says, "We in England, the devoted children of Protestantism, chiefly know the Renascence by its subordinate and secondary side of the Reformation."[156] To Symonds, however, the Renaissance overshadows the Reformation in importance and is responsible for a greater share of the glory of Elizabethan literature.

The alternative to Symonds' notion that the Reformation was a liberal movement is that it was not liberal, but retrogressive, and that it really substituted one authority—the Church—for another—the Bible.[157] As a matter of

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[154] Arnold, Literary and Critical Essays, pp. 140-1.

[155] The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. with an introductory essay by Howard Foster Lowry (London and New York, 1932), p. 142.

[156] Culture and Anarchy and Friendship's Garland, p. 122.

[157] This is mentioned by Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism, p. 35.

fact, at the same time as Symonds was writing, Nietzsche (in 1878) declared that "the Reformation was a reaction of backward minds against the Italian Renaissance."[158] Troeltsch (1906), somewhat later, sees the Reformation as "an intensification of religion, of a convinced other-worldliness." It contributed to the modern world, he thinks, "by the development of nationalism, individualism, moral health, and, indirectly by the introduction of ideas of tolerance, criticism, and religious purpose."[159] But Troeltsch is convinced that the great change in religious as in other matters came in the eighteenth century. Janssen, even before Nietzsche, had declared the Reformation to be "a blight on German Catholic civilization."[160] And Santayana (1913) shows that the Reformation was a movement away from the spirit of the gospels and in the direction of a "consecrated worldliness."[161]

The two remaining aspects of Symonds' theory of the Renaissance—that it began in Italy and that it extended from 1453 to 1527—are unimportant to this study. But I shall mention such dissenting opinions as I have observed.

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[158] In the words of Preserved Smith (The Age of the Reformation [New York, 1936], p. 730).

[159] In the words of Smith, The Age of the Reformation, p. 733.

[160] The words are Smith's (Encyclopedia Britannica, Fourteenth Edition XIX, p. 134). Janssen's work is called Geschichte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters (1878-94).

[161] Smith, The Age of the Reformation, pp. 734-5.

Symonds, of course, recognizes the fact that France had claims of its own to having known the Renaissance before Italy did.[162] But it was these claims which prompt him to adopt Michelet's figure of speech concerning the offering of her books to Medieval Europe by the Sibyl of the Renaissance. Pater in his Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873) adopts the view that the Renaissance began in France.[163] In a review of Pater's volume in The Academy, Symonds attempts to answer Pater on this point: "The truth of this theory of the origin of the Renaissance in France," he says,

> which may easily be exaggerated, is that the renaissance was not a sudden and violent explosion of the fifteenth century, but that in all the countries of Europe which possessed the elements of culture . . . . the qualities of the renaissance striving after liberty were discernible within the middle age itself.[164]

Some fifty years after Pater, Arthur Tilley made a major study of the French Renaissance. He finds that it was blighted because of its lack of root, since, before Charles VIII, it was confined chiefly to the house of Valois. Tilley says that about the year 1470, French

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[162] Renaissance in Italy, I, p. 7.

[163] "This outbreak of the human spirit may be traced far into the middle age itself . . . . I have taken as an example of this movement, this earlier Renaissance within the middle age itself . . . . The Renaissance ends also in France" (Pater, The Renaissance, Preface, pp. xxviii and xxix). See also p. 1.

[164] "Pater's Studies in the History of the Renaissance," The Academy, IV, (March 15, 1873), p. 104.

printing presses were set up and that France experienced some intellectual intercourse with Italy. He discovers fundamental differences between the French Renaissance and the Italian, however. The Humanism of the former, like the Humanism of Flemish and Dutch thinkers, Tilley holds, is "theological, religious, moral, educational."[165] He finds no anti-Christian thought among its leaders, not even such superficially anti-Christian thought as is found in the Italian Renaissance.[166] "The French Renaissance," he says, "is the adaptation of the Renaissance to the French spirit."[167] Other writers, such as Hyma,[168] stress the Renaissance north of the Alps and see the movement as a Christian one with Erasmus as its leader. But Symonds sees the French Renaissance as a movement thwarted by the Church,[169] and the northern Renaissance as an offshoot of the Italian.[170]

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[165] Tilley, op. cit., pp. 592-3.

[166] Ibid., p. 293. What Tilley calls the superficially anti-Christian thought of the Italian Renaissance Symonds sees as something truly liberal and secularizing.

[167] Ibid., p. 609.

[168] Albert Hyma, The Christian Renaissance--A History of the "Devotio Moderna" (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1924).

[169] "The premature civilization of that favored region [France], so cruelly extinguished by the Church . . . ." (Renaissance in Italy, I, p. 7.

[170] "Erasmus . . . had . . . initiated a second stage of scholarship. The more exact methods of criticism and comparison were already about to be instituted by the French, the Germans, and the Dutch . . . . [The] Italians . . . . had expended their vigour in recovering the classics . . . ." (ibid., I, p. 58).

Most scholars of the present day differ with Symonds about the dates of the Renaissance. Symonds, of course, accepts 1453 as the date of the beginning of the movement because with the Fall of Constantinople, as he thinks, began the migration of Byzantine Greek scholars to Italy. The notion, accepted for many years, comes from Bayle and Voltaire.[171] But later scholars give various dates for the beginning of the Renaissance, depending upon which "Renaissance" is selected as a favorite. For what Symonds calls the beginning of "true" Renaissance--which is the Italian--the date of the invention of printing (1440) is now commonly used, but there are scholars who think that for critical reasons no exact date can be selected for its beginning. The extreme position is taken by H. O. Taylor, who does not believe that such a movement as the Renaissance occurred, and he therefore gives it no dates.[172] The preference at the present time is to

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[171]Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism, p. 14.

[172]Henry Osborn Taylor, The Medieval Mind, 2 Vols. (London, 1930), I, p. 211, note 2:

"A part of the serious historian's task is to get rid of 'epochs' and 'renaissances'--Carolingian, Twelfth Century, or Italian. For such there should be substituted a conception of historical continuity, with result properly arising from conditions. Of course, one must have convenient terms like 'periods,' etc., and they are legitimate; for the Carolingian period did differ in degree from the Merovingian, and the twelfth century from the eleventh. But it would be well to eliminate "renaissance." It seems to have been applied to the culture of the quattrocento, etc., in Italy sixty or seventy years ago (1845 is the earliest instance in Murray's Dictionary of this use of the word), and it carries more false notions than can be contradicted in a summer's day."

use the word "Renaissance" for a series of historical periods—the Carolingian, Ottonian, Twelfth Century, French, Italian, Northern.[173] Most historians favor a view, historically more accurate than Symonds', that what changes there were came gradually. That is the view of Geiger (1882).[174] Haskins (1933) entertains the theory, which he develops in a book, that the Renaissance was a twelfth century phenomenon.[175] And Lynn Thorndike (1929) agrees that the Renaissance is a movement of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries rather than of the fifteenth.[176]

It is evident that almost all of Symonds' assumptions concerning the Renaissance are no longer acceptable. But his favorite ideas and attitudes are explicable in terms of his nineteenth century milieu.

Symonds' attitude towards the Middle Ages is a typically Protestant one. Although he is a mystic without any ties to formal dogmatic religion, he entertains the strong anti-Roman Catholic prejudice of his day. His is surely not the spirit of Sir Thomas Browne. He expresses

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[173] Encyclopedia Britannica, Fourteenth Edition, XIX, p. 134.

[174] Op. cit., p. 3.

[175] Charles Homer Haskins, The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (Cambridge, 1933), Preface, p. viii.

[176] Lynn Thorndike, Science and Thought in the Fifteenth Century (New York, 1929), p. 10. Thorndike mentions Haskins' ideas, but of course, not his book.

special antipathy to the clergy and is severe to the point of being unjust to the Jesuits.[177] He grossly under-rates such a mind as that of Thomas Aquinas, and in stressing the oppressive activities of the Church, he forgets that there lived during the Middle Ages such men as Chaucer and Jean de Meung, whose minds do not have the sombre cast which Symonds finds in the intellectual atmosphere of the Middle Ages.

If Symonds, not a practicing Protestant, accepts one at least of the prejudices of the Protestants, he does so partly on intellectual grounds, for he shared with his fellow Oxonians a contempt for scholasticism, which to the thinkers of Oxford in his day seemed to decide the intellectual temper of the Middle Ages. Aristotle and rationalism were the chief objects of interest to Symonds' Oxford, and to young men trained in rationalism the Middle Ages seemed a strongly unscientific period.[178] The Greeks, they thought, entertained in many respects the spirit of a scientific age,[179] but the men of the

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[177] Renaissance in Italy, Parts VI and VII, "The Catholic Reaction." His anti-Catholic, and especially anti-clerical bias seems to have caused him to give inaccurate accounts of serious matters. See F. W. Rolfe, "The Credibility of Certain Historians," Westminster Review, CLX (October, 1903), pp. 402-14.

[178] William S. Knickerbocker, Creative Oxford, (Syracuse, New York, 1925), pp. 185-9, passim.

[179] See Symonds' Studies of the Greek Poets, 2 Vols. (New York, n. d.), II, pp. 408-19, passim.

Middle Ages did not. Consequently, Symonds likes to think of the Renaissance movement, and with it the "Revival of Learning," which he relates to Positivism,[180] as a stage in the progress of science and rationalism.[181] Since he supposes that the Middle Ages interrupted the progress of rationalism, he, like Voltaire and Voigt, supposes Renaissance thought (and especially Humanism) to be a continuation of pagan thought.

Now, according to Eppelsheimer (1933), the Renaissance-picture found in Michelet and Burckhardt [and so, too, in Symonds] was received from the eighteenth century, and became in the nineteenth century a reaction against Romanticism.[182] Michelet, for instance, followed the Realism and Positivism of his time, and combined the optimism of the eighteenth century with a faith in reason, understanding, science, and progress. The Renaissance seemed like his own time; his Renaissance was not Italian, however, but European. And in his mind "the Humanists of the sixteenth century with the Rationalists of the eighteenth century and the Positivists of the nineteenth

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[180] Renaissance in Italy, II, p. 441.

[181] Examples are numerous. See Renaissance in Italy, I, pp. 10, 11; II, pp. 440, 444. Rationalism, says Symonds, is the real offspring of ~~the~~ Humanism (ibid., II, p. 914). Also: "The revelation of what men were . . . . under the influence of other faiths and other impulses . . . . restored self-confidence to the reason of humanity" (ibid., I, p. 353). Italics are mine.

[182] Op. cit., p. 482.

century seemed to hold a great rational, anti-metaphysical front."[183] This state of mind, according to Eppelsheimer, who without mentioning Symonds is nevertheless describing the view he espoused, is a "classical" one and differs from that of the "romantic" writers who find in the Renaissance predominant mystical and religious elements.[184] In emphasizing the secular character of the Renaissance, then, Symonds allies himself with the Rationalism and Positivism of his time.[185]

One cannot defend Symonds' insistence upon the secular character of the Renaissance with a plea that knowledge about the period was in his day not so extensive as it is today. His secular bias is pure prejudice and leads him into making absurd statements about art. He maintains, for instance, that Michelangelo's prophets in the Sistine Chapel are not treated from the religious, but from the

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[183] Ibid., p. 482.

[184] Ibid., p. 485.

[185] In one of his last important essays, "The New Spirit" (Fortnightly Review, LIII, n. s. [March, 1893], pp. 427-41) Symonds again stresses the relationship between the Renaissance and Rationalism: "It was my business in the present essay to analyze the main characteristics of the New Spirit in the Italian Renaissance. The history of Rationalism, or Naturalism, or Positive Philosophy during the last three centuries, and the sustained conflict of the New Spirit with dogmatic theology, is a subject too vast to be taken here" (Last and First, [reprint of the essay], [New York, 1919], p. 61). "At present it is enough to remark that the curiosity of the New Spirit early generated Rationalism" (ibid., p. 35. Italics by Symonds).

"broadly human" viewpoint, and that Titian's "Virgin Received into Heaven" is the apotheosis of humanity conceived as a radiant mother.[186] Certainly, this is "interpretation" of doubtful value or validity. There is no reason, so far as I can see, for going to this extent to show that what has begun as inherently religious art is not really religious at all.[187] One does not deny, of course, that in the Renaissance, as in every age, there were secular tendencies. But much of the art of the period was religious, too, and one cannot believe that secular art is any more typical of the Renaissance than is religious art; or, indeed, that secular Humanism is any more typical of the age than is Christian Humanism.

Symonds' treatment of Renaissance individualism has the same secular cast. He stresses the anti-Catholic qualities of such men as Cellini and Michelangelo. Of

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[186] Renaissance in Italy, I, p. 12.

[187] Pater does not attempt to fit Renaissance art into a secular frame. "The history of art," he says, "has suffered as much as any history by trenchant and absolute divisions. Pagan and Christian art are sometimes harshly opposed, and the Renaissance is represented as a fashion which set in at a definite period. That is the superficial view: the deeper view is that which preserves the identity of European culture. The two are really continuous; and there is a sense in which it may be said that the Renaissance was an uninterrupted effort of the middle age, and that it was ever taking place" (The Renaissance, p. 100). Pater felt that the "rupture between the middle age and the Renaissance . . . . [had] often been exaggerated" (ibid., p. 3).

the former he says that "his religion had little effect upon his life . . . . ";[188] of Michelangelo he says, "He went beyond the ecclesiastical standing ground . . . . "[189] Symonds' concept of the individualism of Renaissance men seems to be influenced by the Goethean theory of self-development, by the Carlylean idea of hero-worship, and by the Nietzchean theory of the superman.

One point of view which Symonds maintains but which can no longer be accepted is that of the identical purposes of the Renaissance and the Reformation. What gave Symonds support for this notion is a matter of conjecture, but one may speculate. Symonds' earliest studies, as I have shown,[190] were in the field of English Renaissance literature. I have no doubt that when Symonds attempted to fit the English Renaissance into the broader picture of the European Renaissance, and when he discovered that the Renaissance and the Reformation, ostensibly separate movements on the continent, appeared at the same time in England, he found what was congenial to his way of thinking: The idea of the similar source for the two movements was agreeable to the mind of a "liberal" who thought that the progress of man in Modern Europe was in

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[188] Renaissance in Italy, I, p. 802.

[189] Ibid., I, p. 745.

[190] See Introduction.

the direction of an ultimate utopian realization of the Democratic Ideal. Symonds sees that the two movements have divergent tendencies, of course; he says, without supporting his statement, that the two movements were "reciprocally repellent";[191] but in Shakspere's Predecessors he makes much of the fact that they appeared simultaneously in English life.

Symonds' contention that the Renaissance as a movement spread in a westerly direction and finally reached England seems valid enough. Certainly there is enough evidence of the influence of Italy, as well as of France and of northern Europe, in English life and literature, to give support to the idea. But Symonds sees the Renaissance as more than just a movement in which the culture of one country influenced that of another; he sees it as a great intellectual revolution operating throughout Europe, and throughout England as well.

It is here that certain historians discover the real weakness of Symonds' theory of the Renaissance, whether Italian or English. Preserved Smith, for instance, finds that, like Burckhardt, Symonds sees the movement as a great mental change, but that he does not see this mental change as a result of economic or political

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[191] Renaissance in Italy, II, p. 906.

changes.[192] If Smith is right—and I can see no reason for denying that he is—then one may say that Symonds apparently puts the cart before the horse and attributes economic and political changes to changes in the intellectual "atmosphere." One may take as an example of this kind of thinking not only what Symonds says about the Renaissance but what he says about the Reformation as well. It may be true, for instance, that the Reformation was a "liberal" movement even though it substituted the authority of the Bible or of the Church Fathers for that of the Church itself. The Reformation surely had as one of its elements the desire for freedom, as Symonds maintains; but certainly it contained more elements than this, though Symonds never says so. The English Reformation, to be specific, resulted, as H. O. Taylor shows, from two strains of preparatory forces: 1. the self-assertion of the English realm against Catholic encroachments, and 2. the protest of an independent conscience against ecclesiastical authority.[193] Its background was English rather than European. It was caused not so much by mental change as by the indigenous Protestant tendencies of the English people.[194] Taylor finds that it was not

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[192] Preserved Smith in Encyclopedia Britannica, article quoted, XIX, p. 134.

[193] Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century, II, pp. 21-2.

[194] Ibid., II, p. 21.

predominantly religious, but an outgrowth of the political constitution of England.[195] And the immediate event which set off the separation of the English from the Roman Church was the "lust of Henry VIII and his desire for a son."[196] That immediate fact, of which Symonds must have been aware, he ignores. The great mental change, although apparently a European phenomenon, was, in the peculiar form it took in England, a local phenomenon supported by the inborn tendencies of the English people and inspired by local political (and temporal) conditions.

A second major weakness apparent in Symonds' treatment of the Renaissance is that he accepts a theory and then applies it to the facts in an _a priori_ fashion; or sometimes he sees only the facts which will fit the theory—a curiously "unscientific" procedure by a writer who declares that the critic must be scientific. One realizes, of course, that historiography cannot be scientific, but one expects something that more closely follows the scientific method than does much of Symonds' work.

English Renaissance drama, however, was a product not only of the Renaissance but of Elizabethan England as well. It was an art-form in which the people of

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[195] _Ibid._, II, p. 20.

[196] _Ibid._, II, p. 21.

England expressed themselves. For an understanding of Symonds' method in his practical criticism, therefore, it is necessary to examine his descriptions of the English *milieu* from which the English drama sprang.

D. The English *Milieu*

Symonds, as I have said, thinks of the *milieu* in terms of mind or spirit. A passage from the *Renaissance in Italy* will show what I mean:

> The intellectual and moral milieu created by multitudes of self-centred, cultivated personalities was necessary for the evolution of that spirit of intelligence . . . . that formed the motive force of the Renaissance.[197]

As the quotation illustrates, the *milieu* which Symonds tries to describe is an "intellectual and moral" one, and a "spirit" is its "motive force." This *milieu* has little, except perhaps an incidental, relation to politics, economics, or the matters now brought together under the "science" of sociology; it is, somehow, merely a state of mind; and in his frequent mention of the mind or spirit of peoples or of ages Symonds shows us how he differs fundamentally from Taine, and especially from Buckle, both of whom in discussing the *milieu* give first place to physical and geographical matters.

What was the nature of the English people, we may ask, which caused the drama to become so powerful a form

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[197] I, p. 332.

of entertainment? Symonds answers thus:

> The native genius of the English people . . . . was so vigorous, the race itself was so isolated and so full of a robust tempestuous vitality, the language was so copious and vivid in its spoken strength, the poetic impulse was so powerful, that all efforts to domesticate alien styles, all inducements to degrade or scurrilize the theatre, all factious opposition to the will and pleasure of the people, ended in the assimilation of congenial and the rejection of repugnant elements. The style of England, the expression of our race in a specific form of art, grew steadily, instinctively, spontaneously, by evolution from within.[198]

To use the concept of the milieu in criticism, Symonds finds it necessary to study the "individuality" of a series or company of persons.[199] When one studies a person, Symonds says, one must "find the man himself, what made him operative, what hampered him in action . . . . ";[200] but in considering the series or company of persons, one must discover, if he can, "how those many men contributed to what remains for survey as the single product of their several cooperative lives."[201] The study of Shakespeare's predecessors, then, is a "contribution toward a better understanding, and through that to a perception of the age and race which [Shakspere] expounded to the world."[202]

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[198] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 4.

[199] Ibid., p. 9.

[200] Ibid., p. 8.

[201] Ibid., p. 9.

[202] Ibid.

Shakspere's Predecessors is a study of Shakespeare's milieu, whose purpose is the better understanding of Shakespeare's work.

What forces contributed to the rise of drama in England? Symonds answers with his usual patriotic enthusiasm and with a re-expression of his usual ideas about the Renaissance: The drama in England, he says,

> embodied a whole European phase of thought and feeling. It was . . . . the mirror of the sixteenth century, the compendium of all that the Renaissance had brought to light. It meant for England the recovery of Greek and Latin culture, the emancipation of the mind from medieval bondage, the emergence of the human spirit in its freedom. It meant newly-discovered heavens, a larger earth, sail-swept seas, awakened continents beyond Atlantic Seas. It meant the pulse of now ascendant and puissant heart-blood through a people conscious of their unity and strength, the puberty and adolescence of a race which in its manhood was destined to give social freedom to the world.[203]

So much for the Renaissance spirit. But what was the English spirit itself? This question Symonds too answers:

> It was a spirit of civil and religious freedom, in the interval between discomfited Romanism and Puritan victory; a spirit of nationality mature and conscious, perplexed as yet by no deeply reaching political discords such as those which later on confused the hierarchy of classes and imperilled the monarchial principle. It was a spirit in which loyalty to the person of the sovereign was at one with the sense of national independence. A powerful grasp on the realities of life was then compatible with the romantic fancy

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[203] Ibid., p. 10.

> and imaginative fervour. The solid earth supported the poet; but while he never quitted this firm standing-ground, he held a wand which at a touch transmuted things of fact into the airy substance of vision. Contempt for studied purity of style and for the artificial delicacies of sentiment was combined with extraordinary vigour and vividness in the use of language, running riot often in extravagance, and verbose eccentricity, and also with the most sensitive perception of emotion gradations, the most hyperbolical enthusiasms. The moral sense was sound and homely; insight into character acute; aptitude for observing and portraying psychological peculiarities, unrivalled in its elasticity and ease. These are some of the distinctive qualities shared in common by our playwrights. It should also be added that their intolerance of rules, indifference to literary fame, and haste of composition exposed them all, with one or two illustrious exceptions, to artistic incompleteness.[204]

All artistic genius, Symonds maintains, must interpret human nature for itself and leave its interpretations for posterity; this is especially true of the dramatic genius, which deals in "manners, actions, destinies of men."[205] Now, Elizabethan drama was more local and more popular than any drama since the birth of drama in Greece, we are told; it was national in character, and no drama has been more universal in spirit or appeal.[206] The dramatists of the English Renaissance "surveyed the world unfolded to them" in the spirit of youth.[207]

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[204] Ibid., p. 16.

[205] Ibid., p. 19.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Ibid., p. 20.

The world stood between two dreams—that of the past and that of the future, the latter "bright with unlimited aspirations and indefinite hopes."[208] In this world the first three nations were the Italians, the Spaniards, and the English. But the English were in many respects superior to the others of these nations:

> What rendered the people superior to Italians and Spaniards was the firmness of their moral fibre, the sweetness of their humanity, a more masculine temper, less vitiated instincts and sophisticated intellects, a law-abiding and religious conscience, contempt for treachery and baseness, intolerance of political or ecclesiastical despotism combined with fervent love of home and country. They were coarse, but not vicious; pleasure-loving, but not licentious; violent, but not cruel; luxurious, but not effeminate.[209]

Symonds admits that the English of the Renaissance affected foreign vices, but these, he says, "were only a varnish on the surface of society. The core of the nation remained sound and wholesome."[210]

Symonds suggests that the English drama grew in part out of the audience to which it appealed. Therefore he says that English drama was an art patronized by a whole

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[208] Ibid., p. 21.

[209] Ibid., p. 26.

[210] Ibid.

people;[211] and unless drama has the sympathy of the people, he adds, it cannot flourish except as a merely literary product: during the Renaissance only in England was there complete sympathy between dramatists and people; such sympathy did not exist in Italy, France, or Spain.[212]

The nation made Elizabethan drama what it was; in other words, we may add, from its milieu it grew; it appealed to every class of person from Queen Elizabeth to "the lowest ragamuffin of the streets; in the same wooden theatres met lords and ladies, citizens and prentices, common porters and working men, soldiers, sailors, pick-pockets and country folk."[213]

Symonds shows that the English Renaissance drama, being a mirror of its age, was an expression of the new spirit of the Renaissance. This drama was, however, the outgrowth of the native drama of the Middle Ages, which was religious in nature. But Symonds maintains that

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[211] Frederick Schlegel, whom I suppose Symonds read, explained that "The products of the mind cannot really be said to have any other fertile soil, in which to take root, than those sentiments common to all noble-minded and God-seeking men, and, with these, the genuine patriotism and national reminiscence of a people whose accents they breathe and whose welfare they are intended to promote" (Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern, now first completely translated. Bohn Edition [London, 1880], p. 4). Schlegel also said that Shakespeare "considered the drama as entirely a thing for the people, and, indeed, at first treated it in this light" (ibid., p. 275).

[212] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 55.

[213] Ibid.

Renaissance drama differed from Medieval drama in part in having discarded religious preoccupations. The new spirit of the Renaissance, he thinks, and therefore the new spirit of drama, was one of spontaneity and freedom. The new spirit of freedom, which he sees as giving minds a chance to work in scientific fields, he also sees as allowing men to express themselves in some art-form without restraint.

This freedom reached England from Italy, or, to use Symonds' more vivid phraseology, the torch of freedom was passed by Italy on to Northern Europe and to England,[214] and the literature of Italy exerted its influence upon that of England. Italy in the matter of culture was "the guide and mistress of England."[215] Italy woke the countries of Northern Europe to intellectual life.[216] She handed the classics on to them.[217] Only after Milton was the cultural intercourse between Italy and England broken off, and then France took Italy's place. But, Symonds insists, English writers were not parasites of Italian writers. English literature, he says, was a literature of genius, and took

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[214] Renaissance in Italy, II, pp. 465-6, and in many other places.

[215] "The Debt of English to Italian Literature," Fortnightly Review, XVII, n. s. (March, 1875), p. 371. See also Sketches and Studies in Italy and Greece, Second Series, New Edition (London and New York, 1900), p. 258.

[216] Ibid., p. 259.

[217] Ibid., pp. 259-60.

from Italian literature only some literary forms and the plots for its greatest narrative poems and its dramas.[218] The native dramatic genius and ability, he finds, belonged to Elizabethan dramatists themselves. The freedom of the Renaissance, then, allowed English drama to develop in its own way, and Italy, which passed the Renaissance spirit and Humanism on to England, contributed to English drama only what affected its form.

The spirit of freedom is allied in Symonds' mind with a paganism which, as we have seen, he believes to have permeated the entire Renaissance movement. Like Michelet he holds that the Renaissance differed from the Middle Ages partly in that it renounced the religiosity of that earlier period, and this conviction leads him to take a peculiar attitude towards Medieval art. The Renaissance, he thinks, was a great period of art; and he cannot, like Ruskin, see any greatness in the art of the Middle Ages. He therefore seems to believe that just as Renaissance freedom encouraged the creation of a great art, so the restraints of the Middle Ages (because the Church discouraged artists) prevented art from growing in that period.[219] But relevant to our discussion of the <u>milieu</u> of English Renaissance drama is the fact that Symonds

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[218] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 269-72.

[219] On the error of this position see Percy Dearmer, "Christianity and Art," <u>The Necessity of Art</u> (London, 1924), pp. 33-4.

connects the supposed paganism of the period with its artistic activity, and he seems to ignore the religious writing which, outside the drama at least, assumed considerable proportions.[220]

E. Critical Evaluation of Symonds' Use of the Concept of the *Milieu*

Symonds' treatment of the concept of the *milieu* naturally calls for comparison with that of Taine. It should be remembered, however, that Symonds never made the claims for the "scientific" value of the idea which Taine did. Furthermore, Symonds is always writing about the drama as an art.

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[220]It is a serious oversight on the part of a literary historian, and especially of one who stressed the social origins of literature, to ignore the religious writings of the English Renaissance period. In Symonds' day, as even until recently, the large body of religious writings of that age was ignored. Louis B. Wright ("The Significance of Religious Writings in the English Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1 [January, 1940], pp. 59-68) estimates that this body of literature amounted "to more than forty per cent of the total output of the printing press" (. 59). What Wright has to say regarding the neglect of this aspect of English Renaissance literature applies to Symonds: "The neglect of religious writings is understandable, for literary historians usually emphasize types of writing pleasing to the age in which they live. Their criticisms and observations are more often a reflection of themselves and their contemporaries than an interpretation of the literature they write about in terms of the age that produced it"(p. 59). Wright also says: "The history of thought in the English Renaissance cannot be understood without first comprehending the importance of religion in the lives of the people" (p. 68). Symonds, accepting the idea of the secular character of the Renaissance, completely omits mention of the religious writings of the time. He barely mentions the Bible, and tacitly denies the existence of religious thought, unless it was that of the Puritans, whom he despised.

For what Taine in his History of English Literature really did, as Scherer points out, was to try to write a history of the race and of civilization in England.[221] He begins with the moral fact; then he traces the forming of a new nationality; then he describes great events like the Renaissance and Reformation; and he uses the works of the writers merely as illustrative material for the point he tries to make. Literary value seems unimportant; books and manuscripts are treated, not as works of art, but as historic documents. Taine does not, therefore, write a history of literature at all, though he lapses into a kind of literary history when he sketches some great personality.

Now Symonds does not make Taine's error. He realizes a truth which Scherer points out:

> A literature has a life proper to itself: it moves independently, it obeys special influences. It furnishes, I admit, important data to history: but that cannot prevent it from being literature first of all: that is to say, art, the expression of the sense of beauty. That is its essence: all the rest is, so to speak, but accidental and indirect.[222]

To Symonds literature is not a social document, nor does the milieu serve as the complete and entire explanation for the phenomenon of art. It is Taine's method to deduce an

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[221] Edmond Scherer, Essays on English Literature, tr. George Saintsbury (London, 1891), p. 65. I am indebted to Scherer's article on Taine's History throughout this discussion.

[222] Ibid., p. 71.

artist's work from its surrounding conditions; but Symonds tries to understand each artist or writer and his work rather than to account for them; he tries to place himself in the mind of the writer or the historical period he is describing; and environment is to him a secondary matter. We thus come to the conclusion that Symonds takes a saner stand than Taine does, and that his attitude towards the milieu in the study of art is more reasonable; allowing for the melodramatic power of description which both men have, Symonds takes the more valid position because, though Taine's chief concern is civilization, his is art.

As for Symonds' descriptions of the Elizabethan milieu from which the English drama sprang, the most violent objections to them, and perhaps still the most telling, were voiced by Churton Collins. "It would be impossible," he says, "to conceive a description more erroneous and distorted than the description which Mr. Symonds gives, in the second chapter [of Shakspere's Predecessors], of the world of Elizabeth. What he says of its intellectual characteristics will apply only to the dramatists, and will even then require to be greatly modified." He maintains, further, that what Symonds says about its social characteristics "is true only of one or two phases of its many-sided life."[223] Allowing for a certain

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[223] Essays and Studies (London and New York, 1895) p.95.

impatience with Symonds on the score of his style and on that of his discipleship under Swinburne, Collins is right. Symonds does not draw a clear picture of what the social conditions of Elizabeth's England were. The state of transition of Elizabethan England, the genius of youthfulness ("renascent, not new-born"),[224] the turbulence of the period, its eccentricity, the exercising of the passions, the vitality of its men, their savagery, their firm moral fibre, their desire for travel, their addiction to obscenity and irreverence: these Symonds mentions as characteristics of the age in which English drama reached its highest point of development, while he leaves untouched most of the vital points of concern to modern students.

In short, I do not quarrel with the theory that art grows out of its milieu; nor do I doubt the validity of the idea that in order to understand an individual work of art one should study the environment from which it arose. But at the hands of Symonds the intellectual situation which he calls "mind" or "spirit" is not sufficiently accounted for. He does not examine the milieu closely enough. It is unfair, perhaps, to cite such a recent work as Professor Craig's The Enchanted Glass as an example of what the modern student expects of a study of a milieu; and yet it should be said that for our purposes Symonds' handling of the milieu is inadequate.

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[224] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 22.

At our point in time most of the things which Symonds says about the English milieu either are no longer accepted or are under examination. In the last analysis, Symonds' descriptions of the English environment are similar to his impressionistic criticism; they are a kind of poetic construct and not, as one well might ask that they be, the result of investigation. Furthermore, certain questions which need to be considered in a thorough account of the English milieu are ignored. What, we might ask, for instance, was the philosophical background of the age? What did the Elizabethans believe? How did their cosmogony differ from ours? What were the dominant folk-beliefs and superstitions? What did Renaissance men expect of one another: what did the period expect of its kings and princes, its scribes, its business-men? Since the upper reaches of society exerted an influence upon the English Renaissance drama, what were the learning, education, or ideas which "condition" the drama? What was the political structure of English society? What was its economic structure? What were English Renaissance ethical codes? In what way was the English Renaissance an outgrowth of the Middle Ages? If the people of the English Renaissance were savage, turbulent, eccentric, what restraining force did they have? What were their conventions? These questions aside, it is not unlikely that Symonds'

description of the milieu of Elizabethan drama is unsatisfactory not only because of a picturesqueness which is patent in every part of that description, but also because as history it is out of date.

And it is unsatisfactory because his theory of the Renaissance as a cultural movement is in almost every respect believed to be false. Symonds supposes the English Renaissance to be, like the Italian Renaissance, a secular movement. He thus uses a part as a whole. He sees similarities between the two periods in that they are "youthful," "savage," "barbaric"; but he declares the superiority of the English Renaissance by attributing to it a "moral fibre" which Renaissance Italy did not have. His description of the English milieu suffers, then, because he accepted certain a priori theories about the period which are in most respects false and therefore no longer acceptable.

But I suppose that the fundamental reason for the disappointing character of Symonds' description of the milieu of English Renaissance drama is partly that, like Ranke [225] and Hegel,[226] he speaks in terms of the Zeitgeist, and he seems to promise more than he gives.

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[225] See Shotwell, op. cit., p. 326. Symonds used Ranke's History of the Popes as source material. See Renaissance in Italy, II, p. 515. But he says: "What a badly composed book Ranke's 'Popes' is!" (Letter to H. F. Brown, October 8, 1884, Letters and Papers, p. 168).

[226] Shotwell, op. cit., pp. 327-8.

The Zeitgeist is itself a pretty intangible thing, and until historians can be as "scientific" as many nineteenth century historians thought they could be, a good many descriptions of the Zeitgeist, especially for the purpose of presenting background, will necessarily be incomplete.

Up to this point I have been discussing how Symonds answers the question I quoted on the first page of this chapter: "[W]hy did the epoch produce such art, and why did it rejoice in it?" In closing I should like to discuss the implications of another aspect of Symonds' concept of the milieu. It will be remembered that he thinks that drama reflects the life about—"the stage [is] a mirror of the age and race in which it has arisen . . . . [I]t shows 'the very age and body of the time his form and pressure'; it is strictly local, national, true to the epoch of its origin."[227] This is a step beyond the position that art reveals the mind of a people, as Willis and Winckelmann tried to show and as Symonds assumed; rather, the passage implies, as Friedrich Schlegel suggested,[228] that art reflects actual

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[227] Shakspere's Predecessors, pp. 18–9.

[228] Op. cit., pp. 66–7: "It is, unquestionably, the business of poetry to make not only man, but also surrounding nature the object of her representation, or her enthusiasm. In this instance, as in that of man, a threefold distinction obtains. The poetic treatment of man as its element and subject may be, first, a bright mirror of actual life, and of the present: second, the recollection of a glorious, heroic, past . . . . the arousing of the deeper hidden feelings of humanity." The italics are mine, but the punctuation is the translator's.

life. In the Renaissance in Italy, however, Symonds notes that the position of the city of Perugia is a peculiar one because its art is so different from the type of life led there:

> Situated upon the borders of Tuscany and Umbria [he says], sharing something of the spirit of both districts, overshadowed by Papal Rome, yet harbouring such broods of bravi as the Baglioni, conferring a tyranny on Braccio and the honour of her name on Pietro Vannucci, this city offers a succession of picturesque and perplexing contradictions. Perugia was the centre of the most religious school of painting which flourished in the fifteenth century, and also the cradle of the religious drama. For the student of Italian psychology, very much of serious moment is contained in this statement.[229]

Symonds' idea that the drama mirrors life is inconsistent with his notion of the relation of realism to idealism. It will be remembered that he declares that there is no such thing as unrelieved realism, that any attempt to be "realistic" cannot be anything other than idealistic, since art is the creation of the individual mind. It is easy enough to believe, it is true, that art reflects life in general, but it is hard to believe that it can be used as a social document for studying the life of its times. Wilde, for one, makes the point that realism in art is a failure,[230] and that art is independent of life.[231]

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[229] Renaissance in Italy, II, p. 448.

[230] "The Decay of Lying," Intentions, Writings, Uniform Edition, 15 Vols. (London and New York, 1907), X, p. 30.

[231] Ibid., X, pp. 61-2.

There are other critics who do not allow that art closely imitates actual life. One of them is James Branch Cabell, who is not held in as high regard as a thinker as he might be, perhaps, but whose opinion is worth attending to. He starts from the position which Symonds assumes—that art is fundamentally ideal and that it is impossible for art ever to be "realistic." There is a universal tendency in man to romance, says Cabell, a desire to see himself as he "ought to be," a tendency which is itself a deterrent in his attempt to see things as they really are. Cabell resorts to the ideal concept of art to make his point:

> But the principle [that the shape-giving instinct is artistic] goes deeper, [he says], in that it [art] shapes too the minds of men, by this universal tendency to imagine—and to think of as in reality existent—all the tenants of earth and all the affairs of earth, not as they are, but "as they ought to be." And so it comes about that romance has invariably been the demiurgic and beneficent force, not merely in letters, but in every matter which concerns mankind; and that "realism," with its teaching that the mile-posts along the road are as worthy of consideration as the goal, has always figured as man's chief enemy.[232]

But the idea receives more specific treatment when Cabell discusses particular forms or examples of literature. Since it is the Elizabethan drama which Symonds finds to be the mirror of its age, let us see what Cabell has to say about it:

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[232] Beyond Life (New York, 1919), pp. 25-6.

> . . . . complaisant dramatists, out of a normal preference for butter with their daily bread, soon began to romance about contemporary life. It is not Shakespeare's least claim to applause that he sedulously avoided doing anything of the sort. To the other side, being human, Shakespeare was not untainted by the argumenting trend toward "realism," and in depicting his fellows was prone to limit himself to exaggeration of their powers of fancy and diction. This, as we now know, is a too sparing employment of untruthfulness: and there is ground for sharp arraignment of the imbecility attributed to Lear, and Othello, and Hamlet, and Macbeth, and Romeo—to cite only a few instances,—by any candid estimate of their actions, when deprived of the transfiguring glow wherewith Shakespeare invests what is being done, by evoking a haze of lovely words. For really, to go mad because a hostess resents your bringing a hundred servants on a visit, or to murder your wife because she has misplaced a handkerchief, is much the sort of conduct which is daily chronicled by the morning paper . . . .
>
> Few of the art-reverencing Elizabethans . . . . handled the surrounding English life: when they dealt with the contemporaneous it was with a reassuringly remote Italian background, against which anything might be supposed to happen, in the way of picturesque iniquity and poisoned wine: so that they were composed with much of the fine irresponsibility wherewith American journalists expose the court-life of Madrid.[233]

The notion that the Elizabethans seldom handled the surrounding English life reminds one of Lamb's dictum on the Restoration drama:

> . . . . I could never connect [he says] those sports of a witty fancy [in Wycherley's and Congreve's plays] in any shape with any result to be drawn from them to imitation in real life. They are a world of themselves almost as much as fairy-land . . . . [The characters] seem engaged in their proper element. They break through no laws, or conscientious restraints. They know of none. They have got out of Christendom into the land—what shall I call it?—of cuckoldry—the

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[233] Ibid., pp. 31-2.

> Utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is duty, and the manners perfect freedom. It is altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is."[234]

In Cabell's similar statements about Restoration drama the theory that art is a mirror of life is specifically referred to. Cabell takes a position not far from that of Lamb:

> A great deal of queer nonsense has been printed concerning the comedy of Gallantry, upon the startling assumption that its authors copied the life about them. It is true that Wycherley, in this the first of English authors to go astray, began the pernicious practise of depicting men as being not very much better than they actually are: of that I will speak later: but Wycherley had the saving grace to present his men and women as trammeled by the social restrictions of Cloud-Cuckoo-Land alone. And, were there nothing else, it seems improbable that Congreve, say, really believed that every young fellow spoke habitually in terms of philosophic wit and hated his father; and that every old hunks possessed, more or less vicariously, a beautiful second wife; and that people married without licenses, or, indeed, without noticing very particularly whom they were marrying . . . .[235]

If Cabell is right, then, art is not so much a mirror of life as a mirror or record of what people enjoy in art. And this is the position of Professor Stoll, who, in his discussion of the idea that art is a mirror of its time, refers to the work by Cabell from which I have been quoting.[236]

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[234]"On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century," Charles and Mary Lamb, Works, ed. E. V. Lucas, 7 Vols. (London, 1903-5), II, pp. 142-3.

[235]Op. cit., pp. 33-4.

[236]See Elmer Edgar Stoll, Shakespeare Studies (New York, 1927), pp. 68-9.

We are here told that "Literature reflects the taste of the time rather than the time itself, and often the two are widely different"; and we learn further that

> Literature is, of course, not life, neither history nor material for history, but a scroll whereon are traced and charactered the unfettered thoughts of writer and reader,—a life within a life, fancy somewhat at odds with fact.[237]

Stoll too refers to the spirit of romance, mentioned by Cabell, which he sees in the swooning of men in medieval literature and in the pursuing of men by women in Elizabethan literature.[238] Indeed, the truth is the reverse of what is supposed: "Instead of a mirror . . . . which reflects the age," we are told, "literature is as likely to be a picture which the age slowly (though only in slight measure) learns to resemble . . . . "[239] To the fallacy that art is a mirror of life, Professor Stoll adds the fallacies of the autobiographical and biographical methods in criticism; he finds that these methods are not valid because "Fact, as such, has nothing to do with the world of imagination—fact there is all coloured ~~and~~ and transformed."[140]

Whatever is the truth or falsity of Symonds' notion that art reflects the life of its <u>milieu</u>, we are more

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[237] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 39-40.

[238] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 41-3.

[239] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 65.

[240] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 78.

interested in his criticism as "science." It is, of course, a common practice to study a work of art with reference to the environment in which it grew; not that one expects all parts of the environment to be reflected in any work of art; but one does expect that certain aspects of its environment will in part account for certain aspects of a piece of art or literature. And it is just here that Symonds cannot help us; for though a "mind" or a "spirit" may serve for a kind of synthetic picture of a milieu, still the more inductive method of finding elements in the milieu which explain certain elements of the work of art makes Symonds' method appear too facile and somewhat superficial.

Even so, the concept of the milieu is accepted by modern scholars, as is also the second of Symonds' "scientific" ideas regarding the study of art and literature, the notion that art must be examined as a phenomenon which undergoes the process of evolution. It is this idea which I shall now discuss.

CHAPTER VI

SYMONDS AND THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION IN ART

A. The Theory and Its Probable Sources

Symonds' theory that evolutionary principles operate in the field of art, and his notion that art should be studied in the light of the concept of evolution are ideas which also indicate that he must in part be classed among "scientific" critics. The theory is most fully expressed in the Essays Speculative and Suggestive, but by 1890, the year of the publication of that work, Symonds had stated the principle many times. As early as 1865, for instance, when he was thinking about his studies of the Elizabethans, he wrote in his diary:

> I am going on with the 'Dramatists.' This study is something like picking pearls from a dunghill. I sift and sift heaps of refuse, and find some real jewel. The discovery gives me a thrill of pleasure when it comes. The poetry of that period stills my soul like the sound of music. But I doubt whether I can transfer my sensations to my writing, and make others interested in what delights myself. This doubt must attend purely literary work. The artist sees beauty and arrests his visions, feeling them to be a joy for ever. The historian of a period only tells what he has found, and cannot flatter himself that many people will welcome his discovery. What I should like to do would be to make my history of the English Drama a monograph on the development of the histrionic art. The literature of the English stage is the only complete one we possess . . . . It is a flower of Art, national, perfect in its growth, as fit a subject for the physiology of aesthetics as Italian painting . . . .[1]

In the Studies of the Greek Poets (1873-76) we find an elaborate account of how the history of Greek poetry illustrates Symonds' theory of evolutionary development in art, though in this early work he does not use the word "evolution," and he seems rather to follow the practice of Winckelmann, who treated ancient art as a biological phenomenon which gradually comes to maturity, passes through several phases and then decays.[2] First was the period of adolescence, Symonds tells us, the period of origins, the period of "artificers" whose work was more unconscious and more spontaneous than is the

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[1]Horatio F. Brown, John Addington Symonds, Second Edition (London, 1903), pp. 192-3.

[2]Gilbert and Kuhn, A History of Esthetics (New York, 1939), p. 302.

work of the artists of the historical periods;[3] the second period was transitional to the third, the period of maturity; the fourth period was transitional to the fifth, the period of old age.[4] The fifth period was the longest,

> one of decline and decay . . . . In these five periods—periods of superb adolescence, early manhood, magnificent maturity, robust old age, and senility—we can trace the genius of the Greeks putting forth its vigor in successive works of art and literature, concentrating its energy at first upon its own self-culture, then extending its influence in every direction, and controlling the education of humanity, finally contenting itself with pondering and poring on its past, with mystical metaphysics and pedantic criticism.[5]

In the Renaissance in Italy we find this:

> All things with which we are acquainted are in evolutionary process. Everything belonging to human nature is in a state of organic transition—passing through necessary phases of birth, growth, decline, and death. Art, in any one of its specific manifestations—Italian painting for example—avoids this law of organic evolution, arrests development at the fairest season of growth, averts the decadence which ends in death, no more than does an oak.[6]

Similarly, we find in Shakspere's Predecessors: "There is nothing good, beautiful, or strong upon our planet . . . . but in its actual historical manifestation is subject, like a human being, to birth, development,

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[3]Studies of the Greek Poets, 2 Vols. (New York, n. d.), I, p. 15.

[4]Ibid., I, p. 16.

[5]Ibid., I, p. 17.

[6]Renaissance in Italy, 2 Vols. (New York, n. d.), II, p. 898.

decay, and dissolution."[7] And again: ". . . . each particular polity, each specific form of art, has, like a plant or like a man, its destined evolution from a germ, its given stock of energy, its limited supply of vital force."[8] Shakspere's Predecessors itself is an account of the early stages of the evolution of the English Renaissance drama, from its beginnings, up to, but not including, its point of greatest maturity--Shakespeare.

But Symonds most fully and yet most succinctly describes the evolutionary process in art in two essays--"The Philosophy of Evolution" and "On the Application of Evolutionary Principles to Art in Literature"--both in Essays Speculative and Suggestive. The fundamental conception which underlies the principle of evolution, he says, is that all things in the universe "exist in process, ... [that] it is impossible to isolate phenomena from their antecendents and consequents."[9] Taine, he thinks, went in the right direction, "but there remained something stiff and formal, a something inconsistent with the subtlety of Nature, in his philosophy of culture."[10] The evolutionary theory gives charm, we

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[7]Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama (New York, 1913), p. 7.

[8]Ibid., p. 8.

[9]Essays Speculative and Suggestive, New [Second] Edition (New York, 1894), p. 5.

[10]Ibid., p. 7.

are told, to the history of art and letters by substituting "a sound method of analysis" for the "attractive but too often vaporous generalizations of the logician."[11] Ruskin, according to Symonds, left behind him a "magnificent criticism, in all parts instinct with genius,"[12] but he erred in not studying art according to evolutionary principles.

Having stated evolutionary principles, Symonds attempts to apply them to art and literature: He says that evolution implies a "belief in cosmic unity, [and] in the development of the universe on one consistent plan,"[13] and he then shows how evolutionary principles are evident in literature and art:

> "A certain type of literature or art manifests itself, apparently by casual occurrence, in a nation at a given epoch . . . ., it runs a well-defined course, in which every stage is connected with preceding and succeeding stages by no accidental link; and when all the resources of the type have been exhausted it comes to a natural end, and nothing but debris is left of it."[14]

Symonds says that it is difficult to see at what specific moment an art is born in any nation: "It often appears that the first impulse towards creativeness is some deep and serious emotion, some religious enthusiasm, or

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[11] Ibid., p. 7.

[12] Ibid., p. 8.

[13] Ibid., p. 27.

[14] Ibid., p. 29.

profound stirring of national consciousness."[15] The forms of art which serve as evidence of the operation of evolutionary principles in art are, we learn, English drama, Attic drama, Greek sculpture, Italian painting, and Gothic architecture. The evolution of each of these Symonds then discusses. What he has to say about Roman art is most interesting. Hybrid forms of art, he says, "do not obey the same laws of evolutionary progress as the specific outgrowths of a single race and continuous era";[16] "Roman art, whether literary or otherwise, was essentially hybrid";[17] ergo Roman art does not follow evolutionary stages of development.

Symonds believes that a type of art, "once started, must, according to my view, fulfill itself, and bring to light the structure which its germ contained potentially";[18] but for any individual to attempt to create a new type of art "while the old one is existent, baffles human ingenuity, because the type is the expression of the people's mind, and has its roots deep down in the stuff of national character."[19] Also, once an art is dead or dying, no individual can revive it; thus Davenant and his successors

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[15] Ibid., p. 31.
[16] Ibid., p. 42.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., p. 46.
[19] Ibid., p. 49.

could not produce significant Romantic dramas.[20] Symonds closes his discussion with a word about art in the nineteenth century: it is a product of culture, not of natural growth, he says; therefore nineteenth century arts "do not fulfill those conditions . . . . laid down as necessary to types obeying the laws of quasi-organic development."[21]

The word "evolution" inevitably calls up the name of Darwin and the date (1859) of the publication of the Origin of Species. It is a common fallacy to hold that the book was an exposition of a new and startling idea, and the acceptance of that fallacy is the result of the stir made by the controversy surrounding the application of the doctrine of evolution as it is found in the Origin of Species to biological organisms.

The theory, not always called that of evolution but sometimes termed "the principle of development," is old, and its relation to drama is suggested in Aristotle's Poetics. "Tragedy," says Aristotle, "after various changes, reposed at length in the completion of its proper form."[22] Symonds' application of the principle of development is similar to Aristotle's: The English drama, he says, found

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 50.

[22] Poetics and Demetrius On Style, Everyman Edition (New York, 1934), p. 11.

its complete development in Shakespeare;[23] after him it had to decline,[24] for it has reached the culminating point in its growth.

Similarly, we find a reference to the history or development of an art-form in Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humour (1599-1600). Cordatus, one of the characters in the play, sketches the history of ancient comedy in which the development of the genre of Greek and Latin comedy is shown as a series of innovations in dramatic method. Thus Jonson, paradoxically, goes back to tradition to justify his own departure from tradition.[25] In a like fashion, though for a different purpose, Puttenham attempted to write a sketch of the history of poetry--of the Greeks and the Latins, of Charlemagne and the Latin poets in rhyme,[26] and of English poets.[27] In these two examples from English literature, I may add, it is possible to find not only references to the principle of development but the incipient stage of historical criticism as well.

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[23] Shakspere's Predecessors, pp. 4-5.

[24] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[25] Ben Jonson, the Man and His Works, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, 5 Vols. (Oxford, 1925), I, p. 376; and III, pp. 436-8.

[26] The Arts of English Poesie (1589) in G. Gregory Smith (ed.), Elizabethan Critical Essays, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1904), II, pp. 12-24.

[27] Ibid., II, pp. 61-6.

The philosophical support to the principle of development is found in Hegel's famous dictum that there is no philosophy but the history of philosophy, meaning that philosophy—or all knowledge—is a development.[28] The basis of the much discussed theory of evolution is found, however, as is to be expected, in the field of science.[29]

In 1838 a scientist named Schleiden published a paper on photogenesis in which he said that "the cell [is] the essential unit of the living organism."[30] During the next year Schwann, another biologist, elaborated Schleiden's conclusions in his "Microscopical Researches on the Similarity in Structure and Growth of Animals and

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[28] Other statements from Hegel, The Philosophy of History (tr. J. Sibree, Rev. Ed. [New York, 1900]) are these: The conception of the principle of development involves the existence of "a latent germ of being—a capacity or potentiality striving to realize itself" (p. 54). "History in general is therefore the development of Spirit in Time, as Nature is the development of the Idea in Space" (p. 72. Italics are Hegel's).

[29] The reader will remember from Chapter I that Symonds had known about the theory of evolution before the advent of Darwin. But in his biography appear these words: "At this time [ca. 1867-8?] I began to study Darwin's theory of zoological development, and absorbed, so far as suited me, from him and Herbert Spencer, the philosophy of evolution. With the metaphysical side of that philosophy I was sufficiently acquainted through my readings in the works of the Greek sages, Bruno, Spinoza, Goethe, lastly Hegel" (Horatio F. Brown, John Addington Symonds, Second Edition [London, 1903], p. 324).

[30] C. J. Singer, A Short History of Biology (Oxford, 1931), p. 331.

plants."[31] But in 1844 appeared a work which made a rather notorious name for itself and its author: Robert Chambers' Vestiges of Creation. In this book Chambers set forth the doctrine of progressive development resulting from "'an impulse which was imparted to the forms of life, advancing them in definite lines, by generation, through grades of organization terminating in the highest plants and animals.'"[32]

Herbert Spencer accepted the principle of development long before Darwin's Origin of Species was published.[33] In 1850 he accepted Schleiden and Schwann's theory of the cellular origin of plant and animal life.[34] The next year he revealed his acceptance of the transmutation hypothesis as applied to man.[35] In 1852, in a paper called "The Development Hypothesis," published in The Leader, Spencer said:

> if a single cell may, when subjected to certain influences, become a man in the space of twenty years, there is nothing absurd in the hypothesis that under certain influences, a cell may, in the course of a million years, give origin to the human race.[36]

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[31] Ibid., p. 332.

[32] Quoted in Alfred Russell Wallace, The Wonderful Century (New York, 1898), p. 137.

[33] D. Duncan (ed.), The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer (London, [1908]), p. 534.

[34] Ibid., p. 540.

[35] Ibid., pp. 540-1.

[36] Herbert Spencer, Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative, 3 Vols. (London, 1868), I, p. 382.

One of the most famous instances of the use of the principle of development occurred eleven years before the publication of Darwin's work. In 1845 Cardinal Newman published The Development of Christian Doctrine, a work based on the principle which, applied, to biological study, pretty well split the people of England into two groups. Newman used the theory to illustrate the slow acceptance by the human intelligence of great ideas which had been taught by inspired teachers; evolution, however, had nothing to do with the ideas: these remained the same; evolution had to do with the changes in the acceptance of the ideas.[37] According to Paul Elmer More, Newman influenced Brunetière and other French modernists "who see, or think they see, in his 'theory of development of doctrine' a means of reconciling Christian dogma with the scientific spirit of the age."[38]

There is a possibility that Symonds found other instances of the use of the theory of evolution--and these were instances of its application of the theory to art--in the writings of Renan and Scherer.

Renan was convinced of the relativity of everything human beings can know. He "was loath to grant that a work of art . . . . may be valuable by virtue of its universal

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[37]See Paul Elmer More, "Victorian Literature," American Critical Essays XIXth and XXth Centuries, pp. 350-1.

[38]Ibid.

human truth, and not simply as the mirror of a particular type of man or civilization."[39] Such a notion is fundamental, we may add, to seeing the very great as parts of their age and environment. Renan says in Averroès (1851) that the great modern achievement is to "have substituted the category of becoming for the category of things, the conception of the relative for the conception of the absolute, movement for immobility."[40] Again he says that "There is no science of the individual soul";[41] and yet again, "The only science of a being in a constant state of development is its history."[42] These ideas are fundamental if one is to see a writer like Shakespeare, as Symonds does, as part of his age, and his works as the culminating point of a progressive, upward development. The alternative is seeing Shakespeare as a phenomenon appearing suddenly, as does a comet, and flashing brilliantly across the sky before it is lost. But Renan's belief in development—in which a great figure is explained chiefly in terms of where he stands in a process of growth and decay—is more scientific and rational.

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[39] So says Irving Babbitt, The Masters of Modern French Criticism (New York, 1912), p. 266.

[40] Ibid., p. 265.

[41] Ibid., p. 263.

[42] Ibid.

Scherer had more to say about the principle of development itself than did Renan. The latter, as I have said, made much of the idea of the relativity of all things, and this idea underlies the acceptance of the theory of development. But Scherer was concerned with the theory itself, and in him we find evidence of a fact which has already been noted—that of the powerful effect on nineteenth century thought of the philosophy of Hegel.[43] Now Renan (in the preface to his first volume of literary essays) says that the "universe is only the eternal flux of things; and the same holds true of the true, the good and the beautiful as of the rest: they do not exist, they are made; they are less the purpose or goal towards which humanity tends than the mobile resultant of the efforts of all men and centuries."[44] He explains the position of Hegel on relativism:

> Hegel [he wrote in 1861] has taught us the respect and intelligence of facts . . . . It is therefore not enough to say everything is only relative; we must add: everything is only relation. The true is not true in itself; there is no definitive truth . . . . The only equitable and useful judgment you can pass upon systems, is the judgment they pronounce upon themselves by their transformations . . . .[45]

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[43] As well as of other Germans. See <u>ibid</u>., p. 193.

[44] <u>Ibid</u>.

[45] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 193-4.

Scherer and Renan accept the theory of development as a scientific fact; Brunetière applied it to art. Now, Brunetière's theory is similar to Symonds', but facts of chronology do not allow one to find Brunetière's influence in Symonds' writing. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt to show that Symonds' work can have exerted any influence upon Brunetière, but such a possibility exists. In 1889, five years after the publication of Shakspere's Predecessors and after the publication of several other works in which Symonds applied the evolutionary theory of art, Brunetière gave a lecture at the Ecole Normale in which he "announced his intention of becoming scientific as well as historical."[46] He was to follow Haeckel and Darwin as Taine had followed Cuvier and Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire.[47] He was going to show that literary genres evolve in much the same way as do animal species. Brunetière proposed to indicate

> Comment naissent les genres, à la faveur de quelles circonstances de temps ou le milieu; comment ils se distinguent et comment ils se differencient; comment ils se developpent--à la facon d'un être vivant,--et comment ils s'organisent, éleminant, écartant tout ce qui peut leur nuire, et, au contraire, s'adoptant on s'assimilant tout ce qui peut les servir, les nourrir, les aider à grandir; comment ils meurent, par quel appouvrissement au quelle désagrégation d'eux-mêmes, et de quelle

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[46] Ibid., p. 325.

[47] Ibid.

> transformation, ou de quelle genèse d'un genre noveau, leurs debris deviennent les éléments, telles sont, ... les questions que se propose de traiter la methode évolutive.[48]

Irving Babbitt's criticism of Brunetière's application of evolution to art is relevant here, because Babbitt touches on a point with regard to Brunetière which applies also to Symonds. Brunetière's theory, Babbitt says, is defensible when it is stated in general terms, but Brunetière "has been led astray by his love of logical symmetry."[49] Darwin accounted for the development of a new species by supposing that certain animals, even in the same environment tended to diverge and become different from the others of their kind;[50] Brunetière says that for the same reason individuals appear who modify the course of literature by starting a new genre. "He thus has used a doubtful analogy," says Babbitt, "with what is itself hypothetical in Darwin's doctrine to explain the one supremely important event in art, namely, the rise of the creator." The innovator in literature acts "in obedience to a blind cosmic impulse rather than by a deliberate act of his own will." The genres, then, evolve "in virtue of a life of their own,

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[48]Ferdinand Brunetière, L'Evolution de la Poésie Lyrique, 2 Vols., 6th Edition (Paris, 1913), I, p. 5.

[49]Babbitt, The Masters of Modern French Criticism, p. 325.

[50]Ibid., pp. 325-6.

and with little reference to the authors through whose brains they pass."[51]

I should like to mention, finally, one more writer who, later than Symonds, adopted a theory regarding the principle of evolution in the study of art or literature. That is Edmund Gosse, who follows, I believe, Brunetière rather than Symonds; at any rate, the first reference in the following passage seems to apply to some critic of Brunetière:

> A French professor of high repute [Gosse says] has attacked, as an instance of effrontery and charlatanism, the idea that we can borrow for the study of literature help from the methods of Darwin and Häckel. He scoffs at the notion of applying to poetry and prose the theory which supposes all plant and animal forms to be the result of slow and organic modification. With every respect for the authority of so severe a censor, I venture to dissent entirely from his views. I believe, on the contrary, that what delays the progress of criticism in England, where it is still so primitive and empirical, is a failure to employ the immense light thrown on the subject by the illustrations of evolution. I believe that a sensible observation of what Darwin and Mr. Herbert Spencer have demonstrated ought to aid us extremely in learning our trade as critics and inconducting it in a business-like manner.[52]

Gosse also says that

> Mr. Herbert Spencer has, with infinite courage, opened the entire world of phenomena to the principles of evolution, but we seem slow to admit them into the little province of aesthetics.[53]

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[51] Ibid., p. 326.

[52] Edmund Gosse, A Short History of Modern English Literature (London, 1898), p. 387.

[53] Ibid., p. 390.

One of the facts, Gosse further explains, which should be determined in the study of literature is that of the place of any writer "in the vast and ever-shifting scheme of literary evolution."[54] "Every producer of vital literature," Gosse concludes, "adds an offshoot to the unrolling and unfolding organism of literary history in its ceaseless processes of growth."[55]

B. The Practical Application of the Theory

How does Symonds apply the theory of evolution to art? By pointing out lines of development and by showing what each artist contributed to an artistic form or technique. As regards Symonds' treatment of evolution specifically with reference to English Renaissance literature, the following account seems to cover whatever he has to say on the subject:

1. The Problem of the Origin of English Drama

The sources of Symonds' discussion of the historical aspects of English drama are Markland,[56] Sharp,[57]

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[54] Ibid., p. 391.

[55] Ibid., p. 392.

[56] J. H. Markland, Chester Mysteries, de Diluvio Noe, de Occisione Innoentium, 1818. The introduction is reprinted also in Malone's edition of Shakespeare, 1821.

[57] Thomas Sharp, A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry by the Trading Companies of that City, etc., 1825.

Wright,[58] Collier,[59] and Ward.[60] With these writers Symonds agrees that the English drama emerged from the Miracle, Morality, and Interlude.[61] Such an opinion is in agreement with Symonds' idea (already considered) that English drama developed independently of foreign influences.[62] Symonds' most severe critic, Churton Collins, does not concur with him on this point, however. Collins says that it is "natural to suppose . . . . that the drama of Marlowe and Shakspeare was but a further development of the drama represented by the Mysteries, Miracles, Moralities and Interludes. Such, however, was

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[58] James Wright, Historia Histrionica: An Historical Account of the English Stage, etc. Published anonymously in 1699. Reprinted in J. P. Collier's edition of Dodsley's Old Plays, Vol. I.

[59] John Payne Collier, History of English Dramatic Poetry to the time of Shakspere, and Annals of the Stage to the Restoration, 3 Vols., 1831.

[60] A. W. Ward, History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne, 2 Vols., 1875.

[61] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 73.

[62] Ibid., p. 2. This notion appears in criticism before Symonds, as early, in fact, as A. W. von Schlegel's Vorlesungen. In the Black translation of that book we read: "The history of [English and Spanish] theatres has no connection with that of the Italians and French; for it developed itself wholly from the fulness of its own strength without any foreign influence . . . ." (A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. John Block [Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, 1833], p. 271; see also Sämmtliche Werke, ed. Eduard Boecking, 12 Bände [Leipzig, 1846-7], VI, p. 154). Symonds would, as will be seen, modify Schlegel's statement to allow for the influence upon English drama of Italian models.

not the case."[63] He goes on to conclude that the drama of Bale and Heywood could never have become, through any evolutionary process, the drama of Marlowe and Peele.[64] But Collins is not so greatly concerned about English national integrity as Symonds usually is. The latter treats the Miracle, Mystery, and Morality plays, then, as forerunners of English drama. But he treats each also as a species. The "Moral" play is a species by itself, and goes through its own evolution. Between it and the "emancipated drama" (emancipated, of course, from medieval influences) Symonds finds three hybrids: Bale's King Johan, the anonymous tragedy Appius and Virginia, and Preston's Cambyses.[65] From the comic scenes of the Miracle and Morality plays developed one part of English drama; this aspect of the drama developed before tragedy, it was uninfluenced by foreign models, it was indigenous as to origin.[66] From the serious scenes of the Miracle and Morality plays came a school of acting which made Tragedy possible; these scenes educated the English public "to tolerate a serious

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[63] Essays and Studies (London and New York, 1895), pp. 114-5.

[64] Ibid., pp. 115-6.

[65] Shakspere's Predecessors, pp. 146-7.

[66] Ibid., pp. 167-8.

style of art."[67] But foreign models were needed for the development of English Tragedy.[68]

These foreign models were brought to England from Italy. Englishmen went to Italy and when they returned, brought with them the New Learning.[69] And when humanistic culture in Italy was in its decadence, that of England was fresh and vigorous.[70] "The speculative freedom of the Reformation kept the minds of men alert to studies which taxed intellectual energy," says Symonds.[70] Sidney, he finds, was a living example of the new education based on Humanism.[71] But although England was independent and although her culture was free, the Italian influence upon her was great.[72] Symonds finds it not surprising, then, that attempts were made to apply classical strictures to English tragedy, and, he says, "our English scholars went to school with Seneca beneath the ferule of Italian ushers."[73] But the efforts of what Symonds calls this "pseudo-classic school" were doomed

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[67] Ibid., p. 169.

[68] Ibid., p. 168.

[69] Ibid., pp. 171-2.

[70] Ibid., pp. 172-3.

[71] Ibid., p. 173.

[72] Ibid., pp. 173-4.

[73] Ibid., p. 175.

to failure because popular inclination was not in the direction of the classical drama.[74] Symonds says that the "pseudo-classic school" forced "principles of careful composition, gravity of diction, and harmonious construction, on the attention of contemporary playwrights."[75] To the earlier dramatic writers, the dramatization of a tale was important; to playwrights of the "pseudo-classic school," on the other hand, thought and "grave sentences" were important. "To the triumph of the romantic style," we are told, "the classics added this element of studied thought."[76]

At this point the name of Churton Collins comes up again. It will be remembered that Collins branded as a fallacy the idea that English Romantic drama sprang from the early Miracle and Morality plays. Collins even goes so far as to say that had medieval dramatic forms not preceded it, English Romantic drama would have been much the same as it was.[77] To what source, then, does Collins attribute the rise of English drama? The answer is, to the Italian drama of the Renaissance;[78]

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[74] Ibid., p. 195.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., p. 196.

[77] Essays and Studies, p. 115.

[78] Ibid., pp. 116-24.

but Collins carefully states that the Italian influence only furnished "the artists of our stage with models, ... operated on form, ... operated on composition, but . . . . extended no further. Once formulated, our drama pursued an independent course,"[79] he says.

Symonds and Collins, then, disagree on two major points in the history of English drama; the former says that English drama finds its source in medieval English plays, and that Italian influences merely modified the form and added "studied thought" to existing English drama; the latter says that English drama did not find its source in medieval plays, that it would, indeed, be little different if medieval plays had never existed, but that Italian influences made the English drama what it was, though it became an independent thing and developed in its own way once it was formed.

In choosing between the opinion of Symonds and that of Collins, one is encouraged by two well-known authorities in the field of Medieval drama to adopt the view of the former. E. K. Chambers, for instance, in discussing the introduction of the vernacular in the early drama, says this:

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[79] Ibid., p. 124.

> In yet another way the coming of the vernacular affected the character of the religious drama. It had been cosmopolitan; it was to be national: and from the fourteenth century, in spite of a few lendings and borrowings, and of a certain uniformity in the general lines of development, it really requires separate treatment in each of the European countries.[80]

Professor Karl Young, who refers to Chambers, takes a similar stand:

> From the fourteenth century onward, although a few types of Latin play continued in general circulation, the chief dramatic developments assumed an unprecedented significance nationally. All had a background in the cycle of plays produced by the Church itself, and all drew upon common sources in Scripture, legend, and ecclesiastical exegesis; but the several countries of Northern Europe showed significant variations in literary form, in choice of themes, and in methods of performance.[81]

In stressing the idea that English national drama emerged from the Medieval play, then, Symonds seems to be in agreement with later scholars.

2. The Predecessors of Shakespeare

How does Symonds show that Shakespeare's predecessors contributed to his dramatic methods? Briefly, by indicating what each dramatist added to the traditions of the dramatic art.

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[80] E. K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1903), II, p. 91.

[81] Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1933), II, pp. 425-6.

He finds many contributions to Shakespeare's method in Lyly, and he assures us that we must always remember that Lyly preceded Shakespeare—a statement with which Lyly's editor, R. Warwick Bond, agrees.[82] Symonds calls Lyly's comedies "new creations." They combine, he says, "the qualities of the Masque and the Drama, [interweave] classical fable with allegory, and [make] the whole work of art subservient to compliment." They are Court Comedies, as Blount in 1632 entitled them;[83] they are a species which both Shakespeare and Fletcher followed.[84] Dramatic devices which Lyly discovered are "dialogue of repartees in witty prose," "the ambiguity of the sexes, as a motive of dramatic curiosity," "the effective use [which] might be made of the occasional lyric, as an adjunct to dramatic action," "the suggestion of dramatic dreaming," "the combination of the Masque and Drama, which gave rise to Courtly or Romantic Comedy."[85] Such, we learn, is Lyly's very real contribution to Elizabethan drama.

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[82]See Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 426. Bond credits Symonds with having given early recognition to Lyly's immense importance (See Lyly's Complete Works, ed. R. Warwick Bond, 3 Vols. [Oxford, 1902], I, p. 119). Bond gives the publication date of Shakspere's Predecessors incorrectly as 1883. A view different from Symonds' is expressed by Swinburne, who thought that Lyly was insignificant as a dramatist—an opinion which T. S. Eliot thinks must be reversed (The Sacred Wood [London, 1920], p. 17).

[83]Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 412.

[84]Ibid., p. 425.

[85]Ibid., p. 426.

Symonds discusses fully only two other contributors to drama before Marlowe. These are Greene and Heywood. Symonds dislikes Greene, probably, as I have suggested, because his life was not one of moral probity. He shows that Greene uses "cheap Latin Mythology," that, though his scenes are vivid, his drama is poor and crude—"intermediate between comedy, tragedy, and history, ... [but] a step in the development of the Romantic Drama." His blank verse, Symonds holds, "betrays the manner of the couplet"[86]—an assertion which roused the ire of Churton Collins.[87] When Greene tried to compete with Marlowe, we are told, his writing degenerated into bombast.[88] Despite Symonds' adverse criticisms of Greene, however, he has to admit that the romantic play was in great measure Greene's discovery.[89]

Heywood's contribution to English drama (Symonds does not suggest that Heywood affected Shakespeare's art) lay in the drawing of domestic scenes. "No dramatist," he says, "has painted more faithful home

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[86] Ibid., p. 446.

[87] Essays and Studies, pp. 95-6 and 171.

[88] Shakspere's Predecessors, pp. 449-50.

[89] Ibid., p. 463.

pictures."[90] But he admits that Heywood is best admired in fragments.[91]

Of "Greene's brood"[92] Symonds has little to say. They were antiquated in their lifetime, he maintains, for Marlowe outshone them and revolutionized the stage while they were writing for it.[93] Peele, he says, "discovered no new vein," though he might have been a correct poet.[94] In him Symonds once saw a "British Philistinism of the sturdier sort."[95] In Nash and Lodge he finds no contribution to the English dramatic tradition; they will be remembered, he points out, for their lyrics.[96]

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[90] Thomas Heywood, p. xiv.

[91] Ibid., p. xx. Though he is usually not concerned with such matters, Symonds discovers that the underplot of A Woman Killed with Kindness is borrowed from an Italian Novella by Illicini, "the incidents of which Heywood carefully transferred to English scenes. In like manner, the Captive [sic] consists of a main-plot borrowed from the Mostellaria of Plautus and an under-plot adapted from a novella of the Neopolitan, Masuccio." Symonds' discovery about the underplot of A Woman Killed with Kindness is recognized by Katharine Lee Bates (ed.) in A Woman Killed with Kindness and The Fair Maid of the West by Thomas Heywood (New York, 1917), p. cxv; and by Otella Cromwell, Thomas Heywood, Ph.D. thesis (New Haven and London, 1928), p. 56. About the sources of the Captive there is not much agreement. See Alexander Corbin Judson (ed.), The Captives by Thomas Heywood (New Haven and London, 1921), pp. 14-25.

[92] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 463.

[93] Ibid., p. 429

[94] Ibid., p. 451.

[95] "Dramatic and Poetical Works of George Peele," Pall Mall Gazette, vi, (September 14, 1867), p. 12.

[96] Shakspere's Predecessors, pp. 462-3.

On the other hand, in his enthusiasm for Dekker Symonds follows Lamb and Hazlitt, though he adds that it is difficult to judge the work of a man who has written so much in collaboration.[97]

In Marlowe Symonds sees the man who contributed most to English drama. This writer, he says, saw the inherent possibilities of Romantic Drama, its capacity for noble art. He brought order to English drama and adopted it instead of the classic, "the popular instead of the literary type." He first used blank verse in the Romantic drama;[98] he transfigured its form: he may almost be called the creator of blank verse, for he found it monotonous and left it various: he "grouped his lines according to sense,"[99] says Symonds, echoing his own idea of how blank verse should be read. Into Romantic drama Marlowe "breathed the breath of life: heroic, poetic, artistic, vivid with the spirit of his age."[100] He first taught the art of writing tragedies on a grand scale, and made a thing of form out of something that was incoherent and formless.[101]

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[97] Ibid., p. 135.

[98] Ibid., p. 469.

[99] Ibid., p. 481. (See also above, p. 196.)

[100] Ibid., p. 471.

[101] Ibid., p. 484.

From our point of view, Symonds' uncritical idolization of Marlowe is indefensible. He admired Marlowe as an elemental, as a pagan, as a "romantic" writer, and, like Swinburne, saw his work out of all proportion to its actual worth. As regards Marlowe's blank verse, Symonds is in several respects wrong. He maintains, for instance, that it is various, and not monotonous, as earlier blank verse had been. Now, we may assume that there are at least three principles to which good blank verse must conform: 1. as the works of Shakespeare and Milton illustrate, the sound should be adapted to the sense, 2. the blank verse line should not be regularly iambic, and 3. the end of every blank verse line should not coincide with the end of a sentence or rhetorical period. Marlowe's line, however, despite its rhythmic vigor, is almost monotonously iambic; consequently, one does not have a feeling in reading Marlowe's blank verse that the sound is adapted to the sense; this impression is further intensified by the fact that the sense of his line hardly ever runs on: that is, the end of almost every line coincides with the end of a rhetorical period or sentence. As a matter of fact, Marlowe's blank verse to a great extent has (to quote Symonds' dictum on Greene) "the manner of the couplet." Such being the case, Symonds exaggerates when he says that "blank verse was not only brought into

existence, but also perfected by Marlowe."[102] Indeed, Symonds has so exalted his hero, that the verse of Marlowe might well seem to be greater than that of Shakespeare. But Shakespeare is still the star of the poetic heavens, no matter what his predecessors may have accomplished for him, and enthusiasm for Marlowe's vigor and verve should not obscure the facts that Marlowe is Shakespeare's poetic as well as dramatic inferior, and that he cannot be given credit for perfecting blank verse.

T. S. Eliot, whose words on Elizabethan drama may well be attended to, finds that the credit for creating blank verse may better go to Surrey than to Marlowe. Furthermore, Eliot does not believe that Marlowe is the father of English tragedy; Kyd, he maintains, has quite as good a claim to that title. He says, moreover, that Marlowe "introduced several new tones into blank verse, and commenced the dissociative process which drew it farther and farther away from the rhythms of rhymed verse."[103] Eliot's strictures on Swinburne's statement that Marlowe was

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[102] Blank Verse (London, 1895), p. 27. I have reached these conclusions independently. Similar statements from a more authoritative source are found, however, in J. M. Robertson, Marlowe. A Conspectus (London, 1931), pp. 159-73.

[103] The Sacred Wood, p. 78. Eliot is speaking about Swinburne on Marlowe, but what he says applies here also to Symonds.

the teacher and guide of Shakespeare do not apply to Symonds, for, as we have seen, the latter credits Lyly and Greene as well as Marlowe with that honor.

3. Shakespeare and the Decay of Romantic Drama

One curious fact about Symonds' criticism of English Renaissance drama is that he says little about Shakespeare. Symonds shows only that from the historical point of view Shakespeare is the culmination of English drama, and that his art is the climax in the metamorphosis of the native English play into the species called romantic drama.

Since Symonds wrote a book on Shakespeare's predecessors and none on his successors, the later writers in the Romantic drama are necessarily only briefly considered. But Symonds always makes the student aware of the fact that they spell the decay of the Romantic drama. Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster and Tourneur, John Ford, he shows, whatever their excellences, illustrate the decline of an organic growth.

Beaumont and Fletcher do so by "Beaumont's verbal music," by the passion displayed in their plays, by the use of "casuistical questions and scruples of honor," "by sentiment and romance." Their work is essentially inferior,[104] as it is essentially insincere.[105]

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[104] In the Key of Blue (London and New York, 1893), pp. 223-4.
[105] Ibid., p. 218.

Webster and Tourneur, Symonds observes, created a single type of drama. This, the Tragedy of Blood, they knew in Hamlet, but they reverted in some particulars to the type of play constructed by Kyd.[106] Tourneur's Revenger's Tragedy, is, however, a "crooked play."[107] Symonds' admiration is reserved for Webster's The White Devil, especially as regards Webster's use of his Italian sources,[108] and he declares that Webster was great not only as a dramatist, but also as a moralist.[109]

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[106]Webster and Tourneur (London, 1886) pp. ix-x.

[107]Ibid., p. xv.

[108]See "Vittoria Accoramboni," Cornhill Magazine, XIX (February, 1869), pp. 244-8. This article is expanded in Italian Byways (London, 1883), pp. 156-193.

[109]Webster and Tourneur, p. xxiii. On this point Swinburne and Symonds agree (See Swinburne, Complete Works, Bonchurch Edition, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise, 20 Vols. [London and New York, 1925-27], XI, pp. 304 ff). Swinburne also compares Webster and Shakespeare and in his enthusiasm places Webster near Shakespeare in greatness. It is interesting to note that Swinburne echoes Dryden when he calls Webster a limb of Shakespeare (ibid., XI, p. 231), though Dryden was talking about Fletcher.

There seems to be more disagreement among critics about Webster's merits than about the merits of any other Elizabethan dramatist. Lamb and Swinburne both saw him almost as Shakespeare's equal (See Complete Works of John Webster, ed. F. L. Lucas, 4 Vols. [New York, 1937], I, p. 16). Charles Kingsley, however, said that "his mastership lies simply with his acquaintance with vicious nature in general." Bernard Shaw calls him "Russand laureate," and William Archer treats him with burning contempt: "Ramshackle looseness of structure and barbarous violence of effect . . . . hideous cacophonies, neither verse nor prose . . . . Bedlam-broke-loose-. . . . poor Webster." Lucas takes a middle road between those who condemn him. (References are all found in ibid., I, pp. 15-16).

But in Ford the great decline of English Romantic drama is apparent. Ford, Symonds finds, is a self-conscious craftsman; in his works one finds a certain "novelty of situation and perfect execution," but moral questions are carried to a "cynical audacity." In Ford there is a propensity for dramatizing love stories—a practice, Symonds adds, popular on the English stage during its decline, when serious and masculine interests were no longer popular.[110]

4. Ben Jonson and His successors

Symonds' idea of Jonson's position in the history of the English drama is not clear; there is no doubt but that he admired the man greatly; no other reason would explain why he tried so desperately to show that Jonson's plays were basically Romantic and that Jonson himself was by nature a Romanticist. But since Jonson does not easily fit into the Romantic category, one must assume, if he accepts Symonds' ideas on evolution in art, that Jonson is a hybrid. And, indeed, in the Essays[111] Symonds expresses that view. But it is easier

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[110] "John Ford," Pall Mall Gazette, vi, no. 849 (October 30, 1867), p. 10. S. P. Sherman has described Ford's plays in much the same way as does Symonds, and he offers an interesting explanation for the decay of the drama. See "Forde's Contribution to the Decadence of the Drama," Materialen zur Kunde des Älteren Englischen Dramas, begruendet und herausgegeben von W. Bang, Band xxiii (Leipzig, 1906).

[111] P. 38.

to think of Jonson as belonging to another tradition—that which culminates in the Restoration drama.

Usually Symonds does not think of Jonson as having English predecessors; he prefers, rather, to think of him as a Romantic dramatist not in the Romantic tradition because of his classical training. In his early days as a critic, however, Symonds suggested that Chapman was a sort of link between Marlowe and Jonson, having the "ruffling Extravagance" of the one and the "preponderousness of the other, Marlowe's fire with Jonson's learning."[112] Whatever the explanation for Jonson's characteristics as a dramatist, Symonds finds that he "broke a path for himself, and ranged only lesser than the greatest, because he separated his spirit from the dominant spirit of the age."[113] He alone, we are told, of all the poets of the English Renaissance formed a school which carried on the traditions of his art.[114]

Always judging art and literature from the point of view of development, Symonds makes an interesting observation about the relation of Jonsonian Comedy (he is speaking about Brome) and that of the Restoration:

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[112] "Chapman's Dramatic Works," Academy, iv (September 1, 1873), p. 322.

[113] Christopher Marlowe, ed. Havelock Ellis (London and New York, 1893), p. xxiv.

[114] Ben Jonson, English Worthies Series (London, 1868), p. 197.

> The affinity between the comedies which were produced immediately before the closing of the theatres under the Commonwealth and the subsequent taste of the nation, involves a question of some interest which can here be only indicated. Are there not signs in the work of our last playwrights of the Elizabethan succession to make it probable that the drama of the Restoration would, in the natural course of evolution, have been produced out of the elements already developed on the stage, even without the intervention of French models, and supposing that the Puritans had never got the upper hand?[115]

This view is interesting since it is generally believed now that the Restoration comedy of manners owed something to the natural development of the native comic tradition—[116] an opinion that corresponds with Symonds' idea that Romantic drama was an outgrowth of the native English play.

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[115]"The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome," Academy, v. (March 21, 1874), p. 305.

[116]This was suggested not only by Symonds, but by Swinburne (Works, xii, p. 334), Saintsbury (review of Andrews' Richard Brome, EST, xlvii [1913–14], pp. 265–6), G. H. Nettleton, English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century, Rev. Ed. [New York, 1914], p. 48) and Gregory Smith (Ben Jonson, English Men of Letters series [London, 1919], pp. 290–1). It received general scholarly acceptance at the hands of Allardyce Nicoll (A History of Restoration Drama, 1660–1700, 2nd Rev. Ed. [Cambridge University Press, 1923], p. 170) and Bonamy Dobrée (Restoration Comedy 1660–1720 [Oxford, 1924], pp. 31–35 and 39–47). A University of Michigan thesis by Paul Mueschke (1929) and a University of Michigan thesis by Joe Lee Davis (1934) show Jonson's relation to Restoration comedy. Another study showing earlier English influence on Restoration drama is John Harold Wilson's The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Restoration Drama (Columbus, Ohio, 1928).

5. English Renaissance Non-Dramatic Literature

There is no scientific paraphernalia in Symonds' discussions of the historical aspects of English Renaissance non-dramatic literature. He makes an acute observation about euphuism, however; and he traces the history of blank verse, which is, of course, connected with non-dramatic literature only in Milton. In one instance, the student looks for historical discussion which does not appear. I refer to his failure adequately to show Sidney's relation to his contemporaries.

Though he is frequently concerned about matters of form, Symonds does not discuss either English prose style or its historical background. The truth of the matter is that Symonds is interested only in great pieces of literature which show well-defined evidences of the growth and decay of a species, or in examples of literature which are great--I think of Paradise Lost and the Divine Comedy--although they do not follow evolutionary "laws." But Symonds makes one contribution to the understanding of one aspect of English prose that should not be overlooked.

Symonds sees Lyly's euphuism against a European background. Churton Collins does Symonds the injustice of charging him with being unhistorical when he says that "Lyly discovered euphuism," and Collins mentions Seneca, Plutarch, North's Guevara, Pettie, and Castiglione as

euphuistic predecessors of Lyly.[117] But if Symonds says that Lyly invented euphuism, he also says that its kind of affected writing was a universal disease, and that without Lyly it would have appeared anyway.[118] In fact, Symonds finds more predecessors for the euphuistic Lyly than Collins does.[119] R. Warwick Bond, in his edition of Lyly's Euphues agrees with Symonds that euphuism is an outcome of the Renaissance, a result of the revived study of the classics, "and of the balanced rhetorical prose, of Cicero and Seneca, in particular."[120] But so recent a writer as John Bakeless says that Lyly wrote "in a new and highly artificial English prose of his own devising . . . . His books were written in a new style—one might almost say a new jargon."[121]

One of the many weaknesses of Symonds' book on Sidney is that he does not see the works of the man, as he did the style he used (that is, euphuism), against a European background; nor does he relate Sidney to his contemporaries. He seems to place Sidney in a sort of

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[117] Essays and Studies, p. 96.

[118] Shakspere's Predecessors, pp. 403-4.

[119] Ibid., pp. 408-9. See also "Euphuism," Pall Mall Gazette, viii, no. 1164 (November 3, 1868), p. 12. Here Symonds makes an interesting observation about the likeness of some of Lyly's ideas about maternal duty to those of Rousseau.

[120] Lyly's Complete Works, I, p. 135.

[121] Christopher Marlowe (London, 1938), p. 102.

vacuum, though, to be sure, the vacuum is an English one, and pleasant. But the student expects an historian of the European Renaissance to discuss a writer of that period against the background of his time. And though Symonds usually does just this, in his book on Sidney the necessity for such procedure seems to have completely escaped him. Even when he says that he will indicate Sidney's relationship to Giordano Bruno, he does no more than quote Bruno on Sidney; of Bruno's influence on Sidney there is not a word.[122]

Symonds' discussion of the history of blank verse need not detain us. His purpose is to trace blank verse through the years, touching upon its high points in Marlowe, in Shakespeare, and in Milton. So far as concerns Milton's blank verse—Symonds does not discuss Milton's ideas—he tries to show that Milton was the last of the Elizabethans because "with him the spirit of our literary renaissance became for the time extinct."[123] Symonds' description of Miltonic blank verse belongs to his impressionistic criticism. Like Hazlitt, Symonds thought that Shakespeare and Milton were the greatest

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[122]Except for the mention of Bruno's giving Sidney two of his printed works. See Sir Philip Sidney, English Men of Letters Series (London, 1909), p. 170. Goldman (p. 38) too mentions the lack of historical information in Symonds' Sidney.

[123]Blank Verse, p. 59.

writers of English blank verse,[124] and he saw Milton not as a Puritan of the Commonwealth but as the last representative of England's greatest poetic tradition.

6. Shakspere's Predecessors as an Illustration of the Operation of Evolutionary Principles

If Symonds does not treat all of Elizabethan literature as illustrative of the evolutionary process in art, it must in all seriousness be maintained that even his application of the evolutionary principle to English drama is unsatisfactory. Just as Taine often leaves his chief argument to expatiate on great personalities, so Symonds often leaves his chief argument to consider matters which seem to be interesting to him but which hardly further his critical purpose. Melville B. Anderson, in 1885, made the observation which everyone else seems to have missed; that Symonds did not really carry out his aim in Shakspere's Predecessors. It is impossible not to agree with what Anderson says:

> This [the principle of evolution as applied to art] is sound doctrine, but one must look elsewhere for its realization. Take, for instance, the chapter entitled "Masques at Court." Roughly speaking, about half of this chapter is devoted to descriptions of certain Italian masques, and the other half of those of Ben Jonson and Milton, who were about as truly "predecessors" of Shakespeare as Keats and Tennyson were predecessors of Wordsworth . . . . But let us not be misled by any such solemn delusion as that all these things

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[124]See Hazlitt, "The English Poets," Works, v, p. 61.

> form an essential part of a "demonstration of a process." Mr. Symonds records . . . . the fact that the masque "received no adequate treatment in England during the reigns of the Tudor sovereigns." If, then, it was not till Shakespeare's work was nearly done that the masque was developed, why give it such prominence in a work devoted to men and things which made straight the way for Shakespeare? In general, the same criticism must be passed upon the work as a whole. Mr. Symonds has said it: his book is merely "a bundle of literary essays . . . . "[125]

There is much point in what Anderson says here. But he refers, as the reader is aware, to Shakspere's Predecessors only as an example of the application of evolutionary principles to art; about Symonds' theory that evolutionary processes operate in the field of art and literature, other critics have relevant observations to make.

C. Critical Evaluation of Symonds' Theory of Evolution and Art

William Watson, for instance, objects to Symonds' particular use of the word "evolution"; he finds that the word has a "Protean character" and seems to have seven distinct meanings. This word "evolution," he points out, 1. means a "development in artistic and intellectual products indentical with that which physical science recognizes as operative in the world of material phenomena"; 2. means "growth," the "passage of an individual organism through successive stages of maturity, decay, dissolution";

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[125] Melville B. Anderson, "Shakspere's Predecessors," The Dial (Chicago), V (February, 1885), p. 263.

3. denotes a "legitimate tendency in art and literature from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous—an inevitable subdivision involving the exchange of a normal simplicity for a no less normal complexity"; 4. means a "degeneration from primitive largeness of structure towards a loose mass of dismembered atoms"; 5. looks "like a mere synonym for a process of disintegration and dispersion, ending in exhaustion and extinction"; 6. signifies, apparently, "the dissipation of an original fund of motive force by means of innumerable radiations of the initial energy"; 7. is "a compendious phrase for a cycle of crescency, culmination and decadence."[126]

Not only does Watson mention that Symonds' use of the word "evolution" is not consistent,[127] but he says also that Symonds' application of evolutionary principles to art and literature is incorrect. We do not speak, he says, of one person's—say, George Eliot's—life as an "evolution," but we may speak of the progress of English fiction from Smollett to Stevenson as an "evolution." We should not speak, we are told, as Symonds does, of Elizabethan drama from Marlowe to Shirley as an "evolution," for "in form and spirit it is really a single organic

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[126] William Watson, "Symonds' Essays Speculative, etc.", Academy, xxxviii (August 30, 1890), pp. 166-7.

[127] But 2, 6, and 7 of Watson's meanings are practically identical; 3 and 4 are very similar. It would seem that Watson over-states the case.

growth,"[128] and there is no reason for one's speaking of the "evolution" of a drama within that period. Taking poetry from Chaucer to Tennyson, Watson holds, "it is permissible to doubt whether any law of succession even remotely allied to the Darwinian development-principle can be discerned." Watson seems to disagree with Symonds about an idea which he (Watson) never mentions—namely, the idea of progress. It is patent that Watson, like Hazlitt, does not think that progress operates in the field of the arts, for he says that each period seems always to be a reversal and a renunciation of the preceding age. It is hard, he concludes, to identify history with "ascent moral and spiritual."[129]

Two other critics, one English and one American, were equally severe with Symonds. The first, W. S. Lilly, objects to Symonds' suggestion that evolution has made an end to Christianity, "except as to 'noble humanities' and 'the conception of the Deity,'"[130] and he says that Symonds' conceptions of Christianity and of evolution are equally superficial.

G. E. Woodberry, the American critic, says that in Symonds' Essays the "note of the Evolutionist . . . . is

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[128] Which, of course, is Symonds' point!

[129] Ibid., pp. 166-7.

[130] W. S. Lilly, "On Symonds' Essays Speculative, etc.," Nineteenth Century, xxviii (August, 1890), pp. 173-4.

struck more often than need be." He thinks that there is nothing novel in Symonds' application of the evolutionary concept to literature. "It does not seem to us," Woodberry continues,

> that he sufficiently meets the objection that this evolution of the type is merely derivative, and only reflects the evolution of the social group in which the disintegrating energy is really inherent; and therefore his position, that men of equal genius live in successive epochs, but are so conditioned to the type contemporaneous with them that they cannot do otherwise than they do, does not appeal to us, especially as it carries levelling consequences in morals and leads to a phase of indifferentism in that region.

Symonds' weakness, we are told, is that he yields "everything on the scientific side with a certain intemperance and unguardedness of mind."[131]

Van Wyck Brooks is more kind to Symonds and his theory of evolution and art:

> Symonds' use of the word evolution [he says] has been severely criticized on the ground that he too laxly identifies it with growth. Whatever truth may be in the charge I think is due to two causes—first, that he approaches the problem rather imaginatively than in the spirit of exact science, and, secondly, that his data are historical and aesthetic rather than biological or geological. In short, the aspect of evolution he has always in mind is the evolution of the human spirit, which is not yet so accurately determinable as the primary physical aspects of life.[132]

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[131] G. E. Woodberry, "On Symonds' Essays, etc.," The Nation (New York), LI (August 28, 1890), pp. 173-4.

[132] John Addington Symonds: A Biographical Study (London, 1914), p. 218.

Now, the human spirit which Brooks says—and rightly—is the concern of Symonds is what, according to Symonds himself, caused the English genius to form the drama. This drama went through three stages, we are told: the first, one of "preparation and tentative endeavour"; the second, one of maturity; the third, one of decadence and dissipation; in the third stage the type, brought previously to perfection, suffered from attempts to vary or refine upon it.[133]

This approach to the history of an art-form Symonds calls "critical history," which "seeks the potency of an epoch, of a nation, of an empire, of a faith; . . . . traces the germ, the growth, the efflorescence, and the dwindling of a complex organism . . . . "[134] He compares critical history with critical biography. The latter, he indicates, deals with the individuality of the person, the former with the individuality "in a series and companies of persons"; the latter shows the unity of the work of many men who work under many and various influences; critical history must show how "many men contributed to what remains for survey as the single product of their several co-operative lives." The individuality of the English drama can be seen in Shakespeare; and in order to understand how Shakespeare became possible, Symonds holds,

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[133] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 3.

[134] Ibid., p. 9.

we must study the work of his predecessors. But it is also necessary to see that Shakespeare made imperative a decline in English drama.[135]

Symonds' attempt to show the operation of evolution in English Renaissance drama is in keeping with what he calls "the ruling instinct of the present [nineteenth] century . . . ."[136] It is the conscious effort of a man to understand the past in terms of the intellectual outlook of his own age. It makes for a comprehensive but unified picture of a great period. It forces the reader to see literary and artistic phenomena in relationships rather than in isolation. The attempt is rationalistic; its virtue is clarity of outline; its weakness is the weakness of a formula—facts must be easily interpreted or, possibly, ignored, to fit it. Symonds' application of the principles of development (or call it the theory of evolution) to English drama seems logical enough since the type of English drama he stresses is the romantic play.

He does not quite, however, fit Ben Jonson into the picture. Shakespeare, he says, represents one type of English drama produced during the reigns of Elizabeth and the first two Stuarts, and Ben Jonson represents the other: this second type was "destined to assert itself

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid., p. 2, as well as in many other places.

after the Civil Wars";[137] the classical principles for which Jonson worked eventually triumphed. Although Jonson began a new method of dramatic writing, as we have seen, his genius, was "originally of the romantic order,"[138] and in trying to fit Ben Jonson into the picture of the romantic drama, Symonds meets with the problem which was later to confront Brunetière, the problem of the creator. As a matter of fact, with regard to Ben Jonson and Shakespeare, one may say that they represent two "evolutions" instead of one: Shakespeare, the "individuality" of the romantic drama; Jonson, the "individuality" of the classical drama, and especially of comedy.

Furthermore, Symonds in other works than Shakspere's Predecessors writes about aspects of art and literature which, superficially at least, fit a formula based on the theory of evolution: Attic drama, Italian painting, Gothic architecture; not, however, German music. He does not treat in like fashion any other aspect of English literature than the drama. Symonds himself thus tacitly declares the doubtful validity of his application of evolutionary principles to art, because even in passing he has no word to say about evolution in English poetry or prose, except that he classes the Victorian novel under

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[137] Ibid., p. 4.

[138] Ben Jonson, p. 7.

the same heading as all Latin literature, that of the hybrid. And the hybrid is really only a phenomenon which does not fit the formula. The hybrid is a work of art excellent enough to be worthy of note, but having little apparent relationship with a body of work which is a free growth and which obeys the principle or law of development. Supposing, however, that an art-form is in its decadent stage, and admitting that the art-form cannot be revived and given its old vigor, how then are isolated powerful works of art possible?

The problem no doubt resolves itself into the question of the individual in this evolutionary process. Symonds makes much of the superior merits of Shakespeare, but he says--and he is perhaps right--that Shakespeare would not have been without his forerunners what he was with them. But the existence of forerunners would not guarantee the rise of a Shakespeare. In other words, Shakespeare can be explained only partly in terms of his predecessors. We are thus confronted with the problem of applying the scientific, the objective, the statistical--what you will--to unpredictable human phenomena which we find it impossible to measure in scientific terms. The hybrid, therefore, may be found among the "predecessors" who are not followed by a Shakespeare; but if the principle of development operates in art and literature, it must operate at all times. If it does not operate at all times, it cannot operate at all.

And if that is true, the hybrid can be only a part of an evolutionary process which is incomplete. In other words, like his interpretation of the Renaissance, Symonds' application of the theory of evolution to art, which seems logical enough to be accepted by the "popular" reader, is an over-simplification, and while its ingeniousness may be admired, its validity may be suspected.

What Symonds achieves by his rather loose and unscientific handling of the term "evolution" is an imaginative construct in which we see whatever art-form he has under consideration as a play with a rising action, a climax, and a descending action. And thus, looking at English Renaissance plays from our armchairs, we see Shakespeare as the climax of a drama which is the Elizabethan drama itself.

The evolution of the English drama is, of course, most clearly described in accounts of the progress and change of the art-form through the years. Symonds, therefore, in planning a history of English drama, began with Shakespeare's predecessors because in them is found the explicable things in Shakespeare—the matters outside the factor of his individual genius.

It is now necessary to consider what these last three chapters illustrate: that is, the trend of Symonds towards the modern type of historical critic.

CHAPTER VII

TOWARDS MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

In Symonds' use of the concept of the *milieu*, as I have shown, there is nothing distinctive, nothing new. About his application of the idea of evolution to art something more can be said, however: it enables him at least to try to bring all aspects of an artistic growth into a unified whole, and it anticipates Brunetière's similar effort by some years. But the idea in itself is not so different from what can be found in so early a writer as Winckelmann as to deserve marked attention.

A. The Idea of Art and Tradition

To my way of thinking, the distinctive feature of Symonds' "scientific" criticism lies in a certain coalescence of the ideas of the *milieu* and of evolution and art (or, possibly, of the principle of development) to form a new concept, that of art and tradition.

As for the word "tradition," Symonds uses it in two senses. He uses it first to indicate the oral transmission of ideas, of customs, or of beliefs without written testimonials. He thinks that oral tradition must be accepted in lieu of something more accurate, in the absence of good records. In discussing the proper treatment by the historian of Italian sculpture, he admits the lack of positive information about early art and literature. Should one, then, he asks, in the absence of documentary evidence substitute theories which will fill the gaps left by available material? The answer is, no:

> Tradition, when not positively disproved [he says], should be allowed to have its full value; and a sounder historic sense is exercised in adopting its testimony with due caution, than in recklessly rejecting it and substituting guesses which the lack of knowledge renders unsubstantial. Tradition may err about dates, details, and names. It is just here that antiquarian research can render valuable help. But there are occasions when the perusal of documents and the exercise of what is called the higher criticism afford no surer basis of opinion. If in such cases a legend has been formed and recorded, the student will advance further toward comprehending the spirit of his subject by patiently considering what he knows to be in part a mythus, than by starting with the foregone conclusion that the legend must of necessity be worthless, and that his cunning will suffice to supply the missing clue.[1]

In a note to this passage, Symonds adds: ". . . . I regard

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[1] Renaissance in Italy, 2 Vols. (New York, n. d.), I, p. 635.

the present tendency to mistrust tradition, only because it is tradition, as in the highest sense uncritical."[2]

The second sense in which Symonds uses the term "tradition" carries with it the idea of the transmission of some cultural phenomenon, and that phenomenon may well be, and usually is, written. In works of art he sees the effect on the artist of his milieu and he sees the manner in which an art-form develops; he sees the artist, too, as one of a group of men working within a technical tradition. One may think of the artist's milieu as his social environment, and of his profession as a technical or intellectual environment. But if art itself is a growth, then each artist contributing his work to it belongs to an artistic tradition. This is true especially of artists in the tradition of a great art-form:

> Great monuments of art [Symonds says] must be judged by their own ideal, not by that of diverse, if no less commanding, excellence. The men who supplied the London theatres in that [Elizabethan] age understood their trade. The art of writing plays was not acquired in the study, but fostered by the intellectual conditions of the time. It grew gradually from small beginnings to great results. Successive masters developed this art, each taking from his predecessors what they had to teach. The playwrights formed a tradition.[3]

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[2] Ibid., loc. cit., note 2.

[3] Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama (New York, 1913), pp. 60-1.

There must be a certain freedom so that this tradition may exist,[4] we are told, but once this freedom is a fact, each artist may take from those who were before him the methods that he wants so that he may then make his own contribution to the growth (or to the decay) of his art-form.

Thus Symonds in one respect goes beyond his Romantic predecessors: though he writes little about Shakespeare, he does think of Shakespeare as an artist within a tradition, which tradition, in this case, was technical. From it, Symonds maintains, Shakespeare derived training and craftsmanship:[5] "Thus [he says] dramatic composition in the sixteenth century was a trade which . . . . allowed men of creative genius to detach themselves from the ranks of creditable handicraftsmen."[6] Like Michelangelo and Pheidias, Shakespeare stood "above all rivals; but he owed his dexterity to training"[7] --not alone, we observe, to native ability. Although Symonds says nothing specifically about

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[4]See ibid., pp. 60-2.

[5]I may say in passing that this notion, tenable as it is, seems somewhat inconsistent with another of Symonds' favorite theories--that the Elizabethan drama was an outgrowth of the consciousness of the English people. The idea that art is a craft implies something less spontaneous, something more deliberate than does the idea that art grows because of an indigenous native tendency.

[6]Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 61.

[7]Ibid.

Shakespeare's style, one may assume, I believe, that he adopts the view that, beyond what Shakespeare himself contributed to it, it was derived from his age. Symonds' position is therefore radically different from that of Coleridge, who said that "Shakespeare's blank verse is an absolutely new creation," and that "His is not the style of the age"[8]--assertions most unhistorical and untrue, and not in keeping with the spirit of "scientific" criticism. Symonds' preoccupation with art, therefore, has at least the virtue of being blended with the idea of tradition--a fact which his opponents seem universally to ignore.

Did Symonds anticipate the idea of art and tradition as it is found in T. S. Eliot? I should say that he did. Some twenty years ago in The Sacred Wood appeared this passage:

> No poet, no artist of any sort, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it.[9]

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[8] Table Talk, Complete Works, ed. William G. F. Shedd, 7 Vols. (New York, 1854-64), VI, pp. 505-6.

[9] (London, 1920), pp. 44-5.

"I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism"--Symonds might have said those words, as he did believe in the idea they express. The method which permits one to see an artist in his tradition, he thought, not only makes way for an evaluation of that artist's work, but it also simplifies problems of understanding which impede the act of appreciation; or, in the terms which Eliot uses, the method makes not only for historical, but for "aesthetic" criticism as well.

It seems highly probable that Symonds' interest in history acted upon his interest in art and literature to bring about the formulation of the idea of art and tradition, so long before T. S. Eliot used it--some forty or fifty years earlier, at least. Now, to my way of thinking, this idea that the artist belongs to a tradition, coupled with the method of study necessary to showing the artist's relationship to his predecessors, makes of criticism not history, not exposition, not description, not judgment, but scholarship. In short, the critic now finds it necessary to employ the techniques of the historian, though he is not primarily an historian. His work will be marked by accuracy of statement, by a truth to fact, by a concern for detail which the older impressionistic critic found irrelevant to his purpose. Criticism is, then, not a record of emotional reactions, not "creative" or imaginative description, but the searching for meanings, for ideas, for

texts, for historical fact--for all those things which make history itself "scientific." Criticism thus becomes "scientific" and transfers its interests from those of the general reader to those of the professional man or woman. The ideal critic--or at least the scientific critic--is the scholar, and if Symonds is right, that the critic must be "classical," "romantic," and "scientific," it is in the scholar that this synthesis will be found. In his own criticism, Symonds always appeals to the general reader (to the man of cultivated tastes) who enjoys studying literature and art. But in the ideal towards which he points, criticism appeals to the scholar.

B. Scientific Method and History

The change in method which is apparent as one views the criticism of the Romantics and that of the critics of the later nineteenth century is parallel to a similar revolution in the writing of history, which had been less "scientific" before the middle of the nineteenth century than it might have been. The popular historians of the first half of that century were Carlyle, Macaulay, and Froude, all of whom seemed to imitate Scott, not an historian, but a novelist. They believed in following historical records and in remaining true to the facts as they saw them. There was, perhaps, a preponderance of the _a priori_ method in their investigations; and beyond a doubt they desired something more than a mere

record of historical events, or something more than mere historical narrative.

Brightfield describes historical writing during the nineteenth century thus:

> [To Carlyle, Macaulay, and Froude, he says] The materials in the sources were to be the foundation for dramatic and narrative re-creations of the past, in which would naturally appear the suspense, the swift movement, the vivid descriptions, which are the glories of literature. It was the aim of these writers to transport the delighted reader bodily into the past by creating for him a complete milieu, in the midst of which, in their habits as they lived, move famous characters actuated by human motives and torn by human passions. That their endeavors met frequent success is attested by the graphic vigor of many of their scenes--the flight of Louis XVI and of James II, the battle of the Boyne, the execution of the Queen of Scots.
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> It was soon recognized that the issue between this kind of history and the new, "scientific" kind lay between two fundamentally opposed ideas, those of scientific history or of literary or romantic history. The objections raised by the literary historians and their followers fell into two general divisions. They contended, in the first place, that scientific history is scarcely history at all. For, since the days of Herodotus, there has been a glorious line of narrative historians. From it, history writing has acquired its aims and its character. Scientific history means the condemnation and extinction of this line . . . . And what has it to offer as a substitute? Scientific method causes the great figures of the past to appear as dull abstractions and musty documents, not as the living, breathing men which they actually are. It means the disappearance of great literary historians before a crowd of patient, uncomprehending grubs capable only of lifeless, technical monographs on minute subjects. It means, therefore, the extinction of history as a subject of popular interest with millions of delighted readers. They asserted, in the second place, that scientific history is, on its own terms, impossible of attainment. The historian himself is inextricably bound to numerous personal and group interests which cause all his judgments to become in some degree biased and prejudiced. More important still, the materials he works with are of such a nature that any

definite, dependable knowledge is out of the question. The records of the past are themselves prejudiced, incomplete, and conflicting. It is ridiculous to speak of science in connection with them--to pretend that the historian, like the chemist, is able to work impersonally with unvarying and readily observable data.

The scientific historian was not demolished by these attacks. The first one, he noted, has been echoed in all fields whenever more exact methods were being established; it is the cry of the alchemist against the chemist, of the astrologer against the astronomer, of the phrenologist against the psychologist. If history would hold up its head among other departments of present day knowledge, it must adopt the soundest possible methods for attaining verifiable and cumulative knowledge. Otherwise history is merely an inferior imitation of the historical novel--an old wives' tale worthy of little respect from serious men in their workaday hours. The second objection, he declared, is the familiar one of the sophist. It is, in effect, a denial of the possibility of all human or earthly knowledge. That the scientific historian faces great obstacles is undeniable; that he should therefore abandon his task does not at all follow. . . . . In comparison with the historian the chemist is . . . . fortunate. He creates his data in the laboratory; he re-creates them as often as he wishes; he is able to dissociate his labors from his personal or social prejudices; his results are usually of readily apparent application to life. But these advantages proceed entirely from the nature of his subject matter. The historian can never be a scientist as the chemist is one. But this does not mean that history cannot be a science: it means that history is not chemistry.

For his part, the scientific historian seized upon the deep and fundamental point at issue between his method and that of his opponents. The purpose of literature, of art, is to produce a complete and finished effect. Now the historical record is never full enough to justify this aim. What the literary historian is thus forced to do is to add something to the records to complete his picture. He begins to deal with conjectures, possibilities, probabilities; to clothe the bare and insufficient framework of fact with what could, or would, or should have happened; to arrange his materials in accordance with the literary demands for important protagonists, opposition of forces, suspense, dramatic action; to create a mood and an atmosphere which are to be accepted as the spirit of the time. In doing these things

> he not only neglects extremely important, though less picturesque circumstances, but he departs from truth to fact, which is the proper domain of history. His finished work is an entire whole to which nothing can be added. Thus literary historical study can make no progress with the centuries. The History of Herodotus is fully equal to that of Macaulay, for both are complete and entire. Literary history is perfected history. The literary historian is a metaphysician--the creator of closed, unchanging entities in which it is not possible to distinguish the elements drawn from fact from those created by poetic fiction. With the issue clarified in this way, the triumph of the new methods could no longer be doubtful.[10]

As an historian, it may be said, Symonds is like Carlyle, Macaulay, and Froude. In many respects, Symonds is a sort of survival, a paler replica of the Romantic age; but he is a Victorian, and if his methods in history remind one of the "dramatic" writing of Carlyle, his ideals are more like those of the modern, "scientific" historian. He never tires of pointing out the value of the scientific method in the humanistic studies. Therefore he says that

> We have still to choose between the alternatives of a literary or a scientific training. Still, the points of contact between humanism and science are so numerous that a thorough study compels us to approach literature scientifically and also to pursue science in the humane spirit. The humanist remembers that his department is capable of being treated with something like the exactitude which physical research demands. The man of science bears in mind that he cannot afford to despise imagination and philosophy. Both poetry and metaphysic, upon the one hand, contributed to the formation of the evolutionary hypothesis . . . .[11]

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[10] Myron F. Brightfield, The Issue in Literary Criticism (Berkeley, California, 1932), pp. 12-5.

[11] In the Key of Blue (London and New York, 1893), pp. 203-4.

Symonds explains that the high cultivation of the Germans is due to the fact that, more than any other European nation during the preceding century and a half, they had worked at both humanism and science and had applied both to literary studies "with most philosophical breadth of intelligence."[12]

C. Scientific Method and the Study of Art and Literature

The same revolution which occurred in the writing of history during the nineteenth century made itself felt in the writing of criticism. The efforts of Sainte-Beuve, of Taine, of Spencer, of Grant Allen, of Hennequin and Brunetière, as well as of Symonds himself, were efforts in the direction of scientific exactness, and were attempts to realize a method whereby the criticism of art and literature could be placed on a firm basis. What the critic and the historian lost in not being able any longer to indulge in creative flights of fancy when they discussed things or events they gained in being more exact as to what could be really known and consequently as to what could in truth be said about the men, the art, or the events they had under consideration.

But in one sense the historian and the critic have different problems, and that of the latter is the simpler

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[12] Ibid., p. 211.

of the two. For one thing, the historian is judged by the material which he presents and by his way of presenting it; the discovery of material is an end in itself. The critic, on the other hand, is judged partly by the criterion of relevancy, by the value of his material to the study of a particular piece of literature or art. The investigation of the critic takes its importance not from itself but from the relation in which it stands to the understanding, or the appreciation, or the judgment of art. As history, the investigations of the critic may be not invaluable; and as history, they may be evaluated in any case. As criticism, however, these investigations should be judged only as they relate to the art-object or to a piece of literature. The critic's field of operations is therefore narrower than is that of the historian; though the critic must select his material, his subject-matter is already delimited by the very nature of his task.

Theoretically, Symonds makes no restrictions as to the kinds of investigation and learning which must be followed in a scientific criticism. First in importance in <u>all</u> criticism is the understanding of the art-work itself and the establishing of permanent criteria--if such things there are--for judging it. It must be observed, however, that the scientific method is a method only--a device used for the purpose of setting the art-work in higher relief. The scientific method cannot make directly for judgment, but it clears the intellectual air so that judgment may be possible.

The "scientific" theories which Symonds followed made possible or pointed towards three purposes of modern scholarship; those of

(1) Showing how an art-form develops: the history of genres;

(2) Indicating lines of influence: these are necessary to the task of showing development or evolution; they are of first importance in the history of ideas and in the discovery of the sources of intellectual or technical phenomena of every kind;

(3) Describing accurately--in intent, at least--social backgrounds and the intellectual milieux of works of art.

Symonds could not in practice carry out the aims of his scientific theory or reach the ideal which he formulated--who, indeed, has ever said the final word on any subject which has undergone scholarly investigation?--but he did show the way to accurate, and, above all, to a relevant scholarship.

Not in theory alone, but in practice also does Symonds point towards a kind of criticism different from impressionism. It should be indicated that Shakspere's Predecessors contains scholarly devices and techniques which are consistent with a scientific criticism as they are not consistent with an impressionistic kind of criticism. There

is the practice, for instance, of indicating parallels in plot or structure between plays of different languages[13]--a beginning in the study of comparative literature, which Saintsbury recommended so highly. It is true that comparison is common in impressionistic criticism, especially the likening of a mood produced by one art-work to that produced by another. But the comparison of "scientific" criticism sticks close to the text, is more scholarly. There is, too, the practice of giving evidence for an assertion--evidence based on dates,[14] or on certain dependable sources of information.[15] Symonds points out, also, dubious evidence;[16] he even makes a few excursions into textual criticism and emendation;[17] he refers to scholarly publications.[18] He describes current theories of

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[13]Usually between English and Italian plays; see Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 384.

[14]Ibid., p. 394, note.

[15]Ibid., p. 149. Here Symonds makes the statement that John Heywood was a Londoner, and a choir boy of the Chapel Royal, gives the source for the statement, and expresses a difficulty as regards accepting it.

[16]Ibid., p. 466, note; p. 483, note.

[17]See ibid., p. 513, note.

[18]Especially to those of the Old Shakspere Society; see ibid., p. 415, note.

authorship,[19] such as the notion of Swinburne that Shakespeare wrote Arden of Feversham,[20] and passes on their acceptability; he declares that speculation about such matters as authorship is futile when there is no solid basis of support.[21]

The "scientific" criticism of Symonds is, as a matter of fact, anti-romantic, as Babbitt uses the term "Romantic." Like Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Goethe, and Arnold, Symonds wanted a firm basis for criticism, and that, he felt, could not be found in impressionism. As Arnold thought that he had discovered this firm basis in a group of passages from great poetry, as Goethe, Carlyle, Coleridge, and Wordsworth wished to find it in human psychology, so Symonds tried to find it by following a method. But whereas these other writers aimed directly at judgment, Symonds aimed at understanding, at a kind of Hazlittian or Goethean sympathy, perhaps, but not directly at judgment. Symonds' position seems to be somewhat similar to that of Pater, who believed that

> "To see the object as in itself it really is," has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly. . . . What is

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[19] See ibid., p. 413, note, in which he expresses a doubt of Lyly's authorship of Maid's Metamorphosis.

[20] Ibid., pp. 333-4, the note.

[21] Ibid., 335, note. A. H. Bullen had suggested to Symonds that A Yorkshire Tragedy was by Tourneur.

> this song or picture, this engraving personality presented in life or in a book, to me? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence?[22]

But before the critic can answer these questions, he may need more information; he cannot pass even this individual judgment of his unless he sees the art-object clearly, and to Symonds scientific or historical criticism aids in clarifying his vision.

Symonds aims, in his criticism, at the kind of writing done by Professors Schücking and Stoll. In its very narrowest sense, and with reference to the drama, Symonds' "scientific" criticism has for its purpose to reveal "the dramatist's intention": "The dramatist's intention--" says Stoll, "that, I must believe, together with his success or failure in fulfilling it, is the only matter of importance."[23] Elsewhere Stoll gives us a fuller description of historical criticism (which, in Symonds' terms, is the "scientific"):

> The function of criticism is not to make the poet in question the contemporary of the reader, but to make the reader for the time being a contemporary of the poet. To criticize is . . . . to ascertain, if possible, the author's intention, and to gauge and measure the forces and tendencies of his time. To do this one must know the author, know his time.[24]

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[22] The Renaissance (New York, n. d.), pp. xxvi-xxvii. The quoted phrases are from Arnold.

[23] Elmer Edgar Stoll, Shakespeare Studies (New York, 1927), p. 257.

[24] E. E. Stoll, "Anachronism in Shakespeare Criticism," Modern Philology, VII (April, 1910), pp. 557-8.

"To make the reader for the time being a contemporary of the poet"--this is Symonds' aim in criticism; and therefore, though most of his own "scientific" criticism is historical, he allows for every kind of learning which is necessary to criticism; he allows anything, in fact, which makes for a clearer picture, for a more intense awareness of the artist's purpose and for a more genuine appreciation of his work.

D. An Evaluation of Symonds' Criticism of English Renaissance Literature

Unfortunately, no general attitude of commendation, such as one can employ with regard to Symonds' aim in his "scientific" criticism, can be entertained with reference to his practical work in English Renaissance literature as a whole. One may offer the excuse that Symonds' work in that field is very incomplete, covering, as it does, only Shakespeare's predecessors, some of his successors, and only a few English Renaissance non-dramatic writers. In the field of non-dramatic literature, for instance, he writes only about Malory, Lyly, Sidney, and Milton; and then Malory's compilation is treated as a sort of textbook of chivalry,[25] Lyly is treated as a prose stylist, Sidney as an English gentleman, Browne (like Lyly) as a stylist, as a "man of

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[25]See "The Globe Edition of 'The Morte D'Arthur,'" Pall Mall Gazette, VII, no. 849 (October 30, 1867), p. 11.

letter's prosaist";[26] Milton is discussed as a writer of blank verse. What does Symonds omit? First of all, of course, discussion of the ideas and the thought-stuff of these men. Furthermore, he neglects entirely, or hardly mentions, English Renaissance scholars like Linacre, Colet, and Elyot. The religious writers do not interest him undoubtedly because they seem like remnants of medievalism and because, in his eyes, they acted contrary to the spirit of the Renaissance. Latimer, Tyndale, Coverdale, Hooker, Bunyan, to name only a few, are completely ignored. The Bible gets only a passing glance. Spencer, Burton, Donne do not figure in his work. In this respect alone Symonds' criticism of English Renaissance literature is wanting.

Though one may offer the further excuse that, after all, this work was not a favorite of his, yet one cannot be optimistic about the results had Symonds spent a lifetime in the field; for reference to the writings on the Greek poets and on the Italian Renaissance does not convince the student that completeness of the subject-matter concerning the English Renaissance period would necessarily have meant a greater consistency in critical method or a more substantial scholarship. One can safely assume that, had the history of English drama which Symonds had in mind ever been written, it would not have presented any different picture of its author as a practical critic from the one we have.

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[26]See Introduction to Symonds' edition of Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici, Urn Burial, Christian Morals, and other Essays (Camelot Classics, London, [1886]).

In the preceding sentence I used the word "history," but I cannot say that my use of the term was accurate. Symonds' work is not really history, so much as an attempt at historical criticism. Its purpose is not to give such a narrative of events as he found in Ward's History, but to increase the Victorian reading public for the Elizabethan dramatists. Symonds himself does not use the word "history"; unwittingly he discloses the fact that he does not aim at this kind of writing when he says that

> It is both unphilosophical and uninteresting to bind up notices, reviews, and criticisms of a score or two of dramatists; as though these writers had sprung, each unaided by the other, into the pale light of history. . . . We are bound to discover links of connection between man and man. . . .[27]

He tells us also that he does not write for scholars:

> Were I writing for professed students of English dramatic literature [he says], I should hardly venture to enter into the detailed exposition of plays so well known as these five [domestic comedies]; still they are not easily accessible to general readers.[28]

It seems to me that if any description fits Symonds' work it is this: that, on the basis of his work on English Renaissance literature, his practical criticism is a conscious effort to make for a greater appreciation among readers of Elizabethan writers, and that for the furtherance of this object two critical methods are used--the impressionistic and the scholarly-historical. Such a definition

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[27] Shakspere's Predecessors, p. 2.

[28] Ibid., p. 336.

indicates the purpose as well as the anomalous character of the criticism I have been discussing.

It is not necessary, then, to compare Symonds as an historian of English drama with his predecessors who are really historians. What advances he made in uncovering material on the history of the drama are almost nothing. His real contribution, perhaps, is a manner of looking at history: there is an attempt at unity in Shakspere's Predecessors, unachieved though it is, which purely narrative historians do not aim at; there is more feeling for the importance of the anti-literary (of the milieu) than one finds in early historians of literature. What of value remains in the mind of Symonds' readers may be listed in this fashion: the idea of the development and the decay of English Renaissance drama and of its poetic medium; the idea that Lyly and Marlowe, especially, and Greene, also, influenced Shakespeare; the idea that in English Renaissance drama there are evidences of the natural growth of an art-form apart from its foreign influences--especially of the Romantic drama, and by implication of Restoration comedy; the idea that Jonson, himself basically Romantic, began a new tradition; the idea that Euphuism was the English example of a European phenomenon. Except for these few ideas, there is in Symonds' work no contribution to the history of literature based on his own investigation.

Nor does Symonds' worth as a critic seem great when he is compared with other critics in the field. The work of Hazlitt, for instance, is, to begin with, much more inclusive. Hazlitt's essay on Shakespeare and Milton in Lectures on the English Poets (1818) and his Characters of Shakespear's Plays (1817) find no counterparts in the work of Symonds, who had few things to say about Shakespeare and Milton, and whose statement that "Shakspere's women have passed into a proverb" constitutes his contribution in the field of study covering Shakespeare's characters. Hazlitt's Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1820) are pertinent to our discussion, however.

But even in this last mentioned work Hazlitt discusses writers whom Symonds never touches upon--writers like Drayton, Daniel, Drummond of Hawthornden, Herrick, Marvell, William Browne, Crashaw, Bacon, and Jeremy Taylor. Symonds' failure to discuss Bacon is especially peculiar, since his prose sometimes sounds like a hymn to science. His failure to treat of writers like Herrick and Crashaw is due no doubt to his lack of sympathy for English neo-classical poetry at any stage in its growth. Jeremy Taylor is, of course, too religious to merit such attention as he gives to Sir Thomas Browne, whom he thinks of, not as a religious writer, but as a learned gentleman.

There is some justice in saying that Symonds as an impressionistic critic resembles a lesser and paler Hazlitt.

He asks that art interest him and move him agreeably; but he has fewer critical standards than Hazlitt and he makes fewer judgments. Both writers describe their feelings when they are in the presence of a work of art. The approach of both men is essentially an aesthetic one. Hazlitt, as well as Symonds, is interested in psychology; both men write imaginatively and produce a sort of creative work. Furthermore, both men write with a certain gusto and enthusiasm for their task, though Hazlitt's gusto has, I think, more iron in it.

There are, however, differences in the opinions of the two men. Although they both emphasize the spirit of freedom in the Renaissance, Hazlitt, as I have already pointed out, makes more of the religious (Protestant) spirit of the age.[29] Hazlitt, however, seems also to be feeling his way to an historical view of Shakespeare, his predecessors, and his successors: Shakespeare, we are told, "did not form a class or species by himself, but belonged to a class or species. His age was necessary to him . . . ."[30] But, of course, there is in Hazlitt no conscious expansion of this idea in the fashion of Symonds. Consequently, though Hazlitt knows that Lyly and Marlowe preceded Shakespeare, he does not show what they contributed to his drama; and Greene he omits

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[29] Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, and Characters of Shakespear's Plays, Bohn Edition (London, 1890), pp. 11-19.

[30] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

entirely. He makes no mention, either, of Lyly's euphuism as an offshoot of a European stylistic mannerism. He rates Marlowe lower than Symonds does, though he notes the lust for power which is a characteristic of Marlowe's plays;[31] on the other hand, he does not give Marlowe a major place in the history of the development of English blank verse. His criticisms of Dekker, Webster, and Tourneur, however, are similar to those of Symonds, and probably for the good reason that the latter seems to have drawn from him abundantly. He sees the same conscious departure from the Shakespearean manner of writing in Beaumont and Fletcher that Symonds does, and he says that these English dramatists lay the "foundation of the artificial diction and tinselled pomp of the next generation of poets . . . ."[32] Of Ben Jonson, Hazlitt seems to entertain a lower opinion than does Symonds; he seems not so much to be impressed by Jonson's learning, and of course he makes no attempt to connect Jonson with the Romantic tradition in drama. Hazlitt fails also to share Symonds' enthusiasm for Sidney; the best he can say for Symonds' "hero of our Renaissance" is that "he was a man of wit, of sense, and learning, though not a poet of true taste or unsophisticated genius."[33] If Symonds overrates Sidney, I am sure that Hazlitt underrates him.

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[31] Ibid., p. 43.
[32] Ibid., p. 110.
[33] Ibid., p. 212.

Thus it appears that, barring a lack of fervor for Marlowe, Sidney, and possibly Ben Jonson, Hazlitt's criticism, generally speaking, differs from Symonds' in the matter of historicity. And yet I feel that Hazlitt paves the way for the concept of history as applied to literature and art. In other of his writings than those on English Renaissance literature, Hazlitt resorts to a theory of the *milieu*, though, he never gives it--nor has he the equipment to give it--the place in his criticism which it occupies in the work of Symonds. He recognizes the fact that, whether we will it so or not, we belong spiritually to that age in which we find ourselves.[34] A single mind, he also says, cannot go "in direct opposition to the vast machine of the world around it; . . . . the poet can do no more than stamp the mind of his age upon his works."[35] The individual artist, Hazlitt says in another place, in order to produce a great work of art must "co-operate" with "the mind of the age or country."[36] Thus the germ of historical criticism as it is found in a theory of the *milieu* is in Hazlitt.

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[34]"The Periodical Press," *Collected Works*, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover, 12 Vols. (London, 1930), X, pp. 202-9.

[35]"On Thomson and Cowper," *Lectures on the English Poets*, *Works*, V, p. 96.

[36]*Conversations of Northcote*, *Works*, VI, pp. 413-4. Miss Elisabeth Schneider in her Ph.D. thesis (*The Aesthetics of William Hazlitt* [Philadelphia, 1933], p. 153) makes the observation that so far as she is aware, Hazlitt was the only writer of his day to recognize the importance of a certain *rapport* between the artist and his environment. Miss Schneider

To return to the comparison of Hazlitt and Symonds: If the style is the man, Hazlitt is the more robust, the more muscular of the two writers. Keats said that Hazlitt had a "demon"; and I rather suspect that one of the irritating qualities of Symonds' writing lies in his not having a demon to mitigate his intense enthusiasm: if the man had only disliked something! Someone once said that on the evidence of style, Symonds could be squeezed dry like a sponge. This cannot be said of Hazlitt. His style seems to be compact and masculine because his thought-stuff is often so substantial. Nothing in Symonds, for instance, quite approaches the solid effect of such a passage as this:

> The author's power is in the subject, not over it; or he is in possession of excellent materials which he husbands very ill. This character . . . . might be applied generally to the age. Shakspeare alone seemed to stand over his work, and to do what he pleased with it. He saw to the end of what he was about, and with the same faculty of lending himself to the impulses of Nature and the impression of the moment, never forgot that he himself had a task to perform, nor the place which each figure ought to occupy in his general design.[37]

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36 Footnote Continued

should have been aware of a passage from Coleridge to which I have already referred: "He [the critic] will, indeed, require, as the spirit and substance of a work, something true in human nature itself, and independent of all circumstances; but in the mode of applying it, he will estimate genius and judgment according to the felicity with which the imperishable soul of intellect, shall have adapted itself to the age, the place, and the existing manners" ("Shakspeare, A Poet Generally," Lectures upon Shakspeare, Works, IV, p. 53). Similar sentiments are expressed by Coleridge four pages farther on in the work from which I have quoted. Coleridge may not have made quite as much of the concept of the milieu as Hazlitt did, but Hazlitt was hardly the only Romantic writer to express the idea.

37 Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, etc., pp. 60-1.

And again, nothing in Symonds gives the impression of straightforwardness and simplicity as does a passage like this:

> He [Ben Jonson] may be said to mine his way into the subject, like a mole, and throws up a prodigious quantity of matter on the surface, so that the richer the soil in which he labours, the less dross and rubbish we have.[38]

It is ironical, indeed, that the very aspect of Symonds' practical writing which seems to be an advance over Hazlitt's--the historical criticism--is unacceptable now. His theories, it is true, are in general unopposed; but his application of them is unsatisfactory to more modern readers. What value there was thought to be in Symonds' description of the English Renaissance _milieu_ is now declared to be nonexistent. He who wrote the first article on the Renaissance in the _Encyclopedia Britannica_ and who in England was a sort of pioneer in the study of the period, falls in reputation because later researches have corrected his opinions. Here is a paradox: Symonds' impressionistic criticism, full of faults though it is, is more acceptable (though he himself indicated the doubtful value of this kind of work) than is his historical criticism, which he felt to be the more solid kind of critical effort. There is a further paradox: his very attitude towards the Renaissance--that it spelled the beginning of science and criticism--made for an unscientific account of the period in that

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[38] _Ibid._, p. 127.

he stressed the secular aspect of the period and did more than an injustice to its religious side. Thus one may find even a further paradox in this fact, that Hazlitt, less "scientific" than Symonds and certainly less of an historian, draws a truer picture--brief though it is--of the period because he does not obscure this religious character of the age.

E. Symonds as a Theoretical "Scientific" Critic in General

But if Symonds did not succeed in being the kind of critic he wanted to be, he at least described an ideal of scientific criticism which seems in all its parts and for its purposes well formulated and valid. In theory, as well as in practice, he is more "scientific" than Swinburne, whose fervent acceptance of doubtful theories Symonds frequently deplores. He seems to be a firmer, a clearer, a more solid writer than the "aesthetes," chiefly, I think, because of the historical nature of his subject-matter. If he differs from the Romantic writers, or from Arnold,[39] in being more like an historical critic, he differs from the art for art's sake men in the same way. If he is like Hazlitt, Lamb, Pater, and Swinburne in being in part an impressionistic critic, he is unlike them in that he sets up a method of scholarship.

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[39]Arnold looked a little askance at historical criticism. See "The Study of Poetry" in Essays in Criticism--Second Series (1888), or as it first appeared, as the general introduction to The English Poets, edited by T. H. Ward (1880).

As a "scientific" or historical critic, Symonds deserves comparison with Carlyle, who was his predecessor and who used the historical idea in criticism which Hazlitt and Coleridge had only mentioned.

It has been said that Carlyle is the most philosophical, the most "transcendental" of late Romantic and early Victorian critics. Criticism, to his way of thinking, should deal only with serious literature: that which embodies truth; and it should be constructive in its aims and methods. Criticism must be interpretive: it must indicate the poet's aim as the poet himself saw it; criticism must be philosophical: it must judge of a poet's work according to universal principles; it must be biographical, since the mind of the poet is composed of innate abilities played upon by forces in his environment; it must be historical: it must study the environment of nationality and of the age; it must be comparative, since no great poet or poetry is related to a single literature.[40]

Now, I cannot see but that Carlyle's concept of historical criticism is confined only to a sort of theory of the milieu, and that we have here the same kind of thing which is found in modified form in Mme. de Staël, in Sainte-Beuve, in Taine. The biographical and historical methods of Carlyle are, indeed, both different aspects of the concept of the milieu. Thus he makes little of the possibility of lines of development. A

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[40]Frederick William Roe, Thomas Carlyle as a Critic of Literature (New York, 1910), pp. 47-55.

temperamental leaning towards hero-worship, towards the exaltation of the representative man, may have caused Carlyle to stress the environmental aspect of historical criticism and to disregard the developmental. Carlyle, it is true, does recognize that lines of development exist. He therefore thinks that a study of Goethe involves a study of the "progress also of his nation";[41] but he is on the whole out of sympathy with the practice of exploring streams of influence, and he does not place the emphasis on it which Symonds does. Carlyle's ideal of historical criticism is, on the whole, similar to that of Symonds, but the latter, as I have already shown, does not maintain that literature must show truth, and, because he makes more than does Carlyle of the principle of development, he goes beyond him to formulate a concept of tradition and art which is almost foreign to Carlyle's thought.

What, according to Carlyle, is the purpose of criticism? It is to relate poetry to ultimate ideas;[42] it tries to show how poetry is a revelation of truth. What, according to Symonds, is the purpose of criticism? It is to distinguish "what is essentially good and true in art from what is only specious . . . ."[43] The fundamental difference between the

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[41]"Goethe," Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, 7 Vols. (New York, 1872), I, p. 176.

[42]"State of German Literature," Essays, I, pp. 44 and 53.

[43]Essays, Speculative and Suggestive, New [Second] Edition (New York, 1894), p. 59.

two historical critics, then, lies in their respective aims: Carlyle looks for truth; he looks for something beyond art. Symonds looks for the qualities of art itself, and in so doing he stands close to Pater, who, in describing Greek art (which he calls "ideal"), characterizes it as that "in which the thought does not outstrip or lie beyond the proper range of its sensible embodiment."[44] Carlyle is profoundly spiritual in motive. Symonds is more content to let criticism assist in intensifying the art-experience by clearing up any problems impeding the act of understanding.

But if Symonds is in a certain sense Carlyle's spiritual and intellectual inferior as regards depth of thought and emotion, he is in advance of Carlyle as regards the ideals of historical or "scientific" criticism. There is nothing in Carlyle like the idea of art and tradition, though the germ of the theory may be there. There is nothing, either, like the comprehensiveness of Symonds' ideal. Carlyle allowed criticism a good deal more than it had been accustomed to even in his own age, and though he recommended the interpretive, the comparative, the philosophical, the biographical, and the historical, as well as the psychological, methods, Symonds adds to these methods another kind--bibliographical, philological, what you will--which will unloose a flood of buried information that will in effect increase an appreciation for art.

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[44] The Renaissance, p. 172.

It must not be forgotten, however, that Symonds, like most theoretical critics who harbor lofty or widely inclusive ideals, could not live up to his own standards. As a practical critic he uses the a priori method to great extent; as a "scientific" critic he is almost exclusively historical; even as an historical critic he is deficient. It is on the whole regrettable that men like Michelet and Burckhardt should have influenced him; Gibbon would have been a more salutary historian for him to have followed; for the cool, calculating intelligence of Gibbon would have moderated what Michelet could only intensify--Symonds' inordinate emotionalism in the presence of ideas. But even so, it is not exactly a small thing under the impetus of advancement of science to have defined the aims of modern scholarship and to have pointed out how scholarship should assist in increasing the understanding and appreciation of great examples of art and literature and in establishing criteria for evaluating them.

CONCLUSION

This has been a study in the theoretical and practical criticism of a minor Victorian whose chief talents, to all appearances, were in the critical field, but whose chief energies were directed to the writing of history. There is no doubt, however, that John Addington Symonds was not one of the men who make history, especially in the field of thought; rather, he was one of the many men who record it and who repeat it, who go to the work of other men for the expression of their most intense convictions. The criticism of Symonds represents a body of material which grows out of the process of selection, out of the process of adopting from one's contemporaries and predecessors the opinions which are in keeping with one's own interests and with the dispositions of one's own personality.

It is natural to look for marked accomplishment in a body of writing which one has studied for a long time.

An expectation of great accomplishment cannot, however, be fulfilled in the study of Symonds' criticism: eclecticism does not spell greatness, and only men like Spenser, Milton, Coleridge, and Macaulay are able to carry off the palm of using the ideas of others and of absorbing them into a synthesis of their own philosophical opinion or of their own literary or artistic practice. Only a few men can, like Coleridge, adopt other men's ideas and, using these ideas in their own way, create a new body of thought out of them. And Symonds is neither a great man nor a great thinker; if anything characterizes him, if he leaves any dominant impression, it is that of an extreme dependence upon the thoughts of others for the expression of opinions which grow out of his own experiences. He does not carve out new blocks of thought; he rarely handles old ideas in new ways; rather, he frequently absorbs ideas and simplifies them or treats them in what may to some readers seem to be a superficial fashion because they best represent his thought in the guise in which he uses them.

But one cannot deny to Symonds a certain degree of accomplishment in criticism, though that accomplishment is almost entirely in the field of theory. It is true that the practical criticism on English Renaissance literature, which I have examined in this study, to say nothing of that on Greek poetry and on Renaissance art, testifies to a great energy and to much ambition; the

Renaissance in Italy, Symonds' undoubted magnum opus and the repository of his best-known criticism, shows conscientious application--chiefly, however, to secondary sources. Without a doubt, Symonds' talents lay in critical work on art and literature, though these talents are allowed only a subordinate position in most of his writings. But his best work is found in his theoretical discussions of art and criticism.

If I may venture a prediction, I should say that Symonds' theories of art and criticism will remain long after his practical criticism is recognized only as a curiosity. I have heard it said by people whose primary interest is not in "aesthetics" that Symonds' theory of art strikes them as very sane and very clearly expressed. I believe that it gives this impression for two reasons: 1. it emphasizes the role of the appreciator in the art-experience: one may remark that even the discovery of the personality of the artist in his work is accomplished by the appreciator; and 2. it stresses the element of subjectivity in the art-experience. In reading Symonds' theory of art, therefore, one is usually able to say to himself, "This applies to me." In other words, the psychological element of Symonds' theory of art (like that, I may add, in the work also of Véron) is neither so profoundly expressed nor so generalized in significance that the reader will ever need as a point of reference

anything other than his own experience. To the person who has read Coleridge and Hazlitt (to name two of the more profound critics), Symonds' theory of art seems in the main to be thin in expression; briefly put most of its ideas certainly are. But they seem well and clearly expressed for readers new to the field. Symonds' Essays Speculative and Suggestive, then, may serve as a sort of elementary textbook for one who wishes to begin a study of art criticism, whether he is content with a little knowledge of the study, or whether he prefers eventually to go far along in his reading in the critical field.

Symonds' theory of criticism describes, to my way of thinking, an ideal of criticism, and especially of scholarship: to the idea that the critic must make judgments it adds the scientific method in so far as that method assists the critic in carrying out his task and in so far as it points in the direction of establishing positive bases for criticism. The recognition of the judicial function of criticism is, however, as old as criticism itself. And the "scientific" method itself is found in the work of Aristotle. The emphasis on scholarship is new, perhaps. Not that historical scholarship itself was new; far from it. But never before, so far as I am aware, did any writer give scholarship such a generally high place in criticism.

One cannot dispense with Symonds' theoretical work without mentioning the theoretical aspect of his "scientific" criticism. Whether the concept of the *milieu* is valid it is not my duty to prove or disprove. I think, however, that Symonds' attitude towards the idea is fundamentally saner and more nearly right, if I may make such a suggestion, than is Taine's: not only does Symonds refuse to adopt the concept as the answer to all critical problems, but he also thinks of it as only one device for explaining why the art-work is what it is. Taine would see a *milieu* through its art-works, and though Symonds tries to do the same sort of thing occasionally in his practical criticism, yet it is not the *milieu* which interests him, but its art.

It is difficult to believe that Symonds' notion that evolution operates in the field of art is as valid as he would have liked it to appear. Such a theory clearly has some relations to a theory of history, it is true; but Symonds' own practice of referring to it only for types of art which fit its pattern suggests what its weakness may be. As it is commonly used, the term "evolution" refers to *biological organisms.* Now, literature and art are not biological organisms, and the concept of evolution as it applies to art serves best, therefore, as an analogy; and, so far as I can see, its entire worth lies in its value as an analogy.

In discussions of art and literature, however, there is much point in adopting a synthesis of two notions: that of the literary or artistic milieu, and that of the principle of development, the latter of which, though less sharply defined than the theory of evolution, perhaps, allows for lines of influence whether or not they follow the evolutionary pattern; this synthesis is in essence Symonds' concept of tradition and art. Here we see a real contribution to criticism. But Symonds does not develop the concept of tradition and art to the degree which he does that of evolution and art, and his failure to do so is unfortunate, for the idea represents a possibility for a real advance in critical method, "aesthetic" or historical.

One is less able to see Symonds' practical criticism of English Renaissance literature as having any kind of distinction, and in studying it, one must bear in mind that though Symonds gives to the critic the power of judging, yet he himself as a practical critic is less the judicial writer than the sympathetic observer, that he is not the judge, but the appreciator. It has been pointed out that Symonds and Pater follow A. W. von Schlegel's theory of artistic criticism.[1] And so, I suppose, they do; for Schlegel describes his theory thus:

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[1]See John Gerard O'Leary, English Literary History, with a Foreword by R. A. Peddie (London, 1928), p. 4.

> But no man can be a true critic or connoisseur who does not possess a universality of mind, who does not possess the flexibility, which, throwing aside all personal predilections and blind habits, enables him to transport himself into the peculiarities of other ages and nations, to feel them as it were from their proper central point; and, what ennobles human nature, to recognize and respect whatever is beautiful and grand under those external modifications which are necessary to their existence, and which sometimes even seem to disguise them.[2]

If Symonds does not consciously follow Schlegel's theory, he does attempt at all times to "transport himself into the peculiarities of other ages and nations, to feel them as it were from their proper central point," and his criticism is therefore, as I have shown, partly impressionistic and partly historical. It was not Symonds' happy privilege to effect a proper blending of impressionistic and historical criticism, however; furthermore, his very treatment of history is weak, as his descriptions of the English milieu and as his interpretation of the Renaissance will testify. Why is his treatment of history weak? Because his method is wrong, because his method is really not "scientific," because he too readily accepts in a priori fashion an idea of the "mind" or "spirit," as he sees it, of an age or of a nation. His method in the study of history, then, is not inductive,

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[2] A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. John Black (Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, 1833), p. 2; see also Sämmutliche Werke, tr. Eduard Boecking, 12 Bände (Leipzig, 184607), V, p. 5.

and for our purposes his historical work is invalid. His actual criticism is not judgment, but an expression of sympathetic appreciation and a description of impressions. And since the history and the impressions are not properly fused (one doubts, of course, that they ever could be), since neither history nor impressionism seems in the mind of Symonds to take first place so that the one is subordinate to the other, the final effect of his practical criticism is an anomalous one.

This is true, at least, of the critical works on English Renaissance literature. About the works on the Greek poets and on Italian Renaissance writers and artists, others will have to speak. It is tempting to make the generalization, however, that Symonds' critical discussions of the Greek and Italian poets and artists leave much the same impressions as do the works on English Renaissance literature.

The historical material in this last body of writing is so weak, since it is now believed to be false, the psychological aspects of the impressionistic criticism are so superficial, the summaries of material are so misleading, that, to be perfectly frank, I can see no reason ~~either~~ for retaining on library shelves the one book on English drama which Symonds wrote. One should also, I suppose, bear in mind that, from the point of view of criticism and scholarship, Shakspere's Predecessors might

be a bad influence on the unwary undergraduate. But there is consolation in the fact that for the one undergraduate who reads the book, there will be thousands who never see it; and that one undergraduate will probably be disposed to read other (and better) books on its subject. I suppose, then, that Shakspere's Predecessors does little harm, but I cannot readily see what good it can do. To me, Symonds' writings on English Renaissance literature, unlike his theories of art and criticism, represent no substantial accomplishment.

Does Symonds represent a kind of decadence in criticism? Whether he in any way reveals a kind of moral decadence, I leave to others to decide. It is possible, however, to see in the criticism of Symonds a kind of decadence of Romantic criticism, or at least an extreme modification of the greatest examples of Romantic theory as it is found in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Hazlitt. Symonds seems to intensify the emotional elements of Romantic criticism as well as those elements which deal with the reactions of the individual to art (or, to put it differently, which emphasize the effects of art). He makes more than did the greater Romantic critics of the soothing effects of art; he makes more, too, than did his greater Romantic predecessors, Hazlitt included, of the role of art in encouraging the individual to escape from life as he finds it. Furthermore, Symonds' work illustrates a change in attitude towards the problem of

morals. The Romantic critics, as I have pointed out, were consistent on this point; morals (the truth about life) and art were to them closely related. But Symonds does not think of the moral nature of man, or of morals, as the content of art: according to his theory, the spiritual nature of man is the concern of the artist. It should be remembered, however, that Symonds does ask that the critic know, as part of his critical equipment, the moral nature of man. But in his own works on English Renaissance literature, though Symonds does not entirely disregard the morals reflected in English drama, yet the morals to which he refers are not matters related to the truth about life: they are, rather, related to conventional modes of behavior. Indeed, Symonds' attitude towards morals in his writings on English Renaissance literature seems to be "Victorian" more than anything else, and seems to resemble a certain bourgeois Philistinism which his "aesthetic" contemporaries did not share with him and for which, as a matter of fact, they had the utmost contempt. Symonds' attitude towards morals in art, then, is neither so serious nor so consistent as that of his Romantic predecessors, and, looked at from a broad view, his criticism seems to represent (though I do not say that it does represent) a kind of decay of criticism as it is discovered in the greatest critics of the Romantic period.

Occasionally in the course of this study I have made the suggestion that in the work of Symonds one can see the effect of science on nineteenth century criticism. My reason for saying so is that in Symonds' thought, as in the thought of Renan, Scherer, and Pater, the scientific spirit is the relative spirit; and in terms of the relative spirit, man's capabilities are extremely limited. Now, in an early chapter of this study I pointed out that the psychological aspect of Symonds' theory of art is based on the notion that there are limits to possible knowledge. And, indeed, the reader is almost constantly aware in Symonds' work of the narrow sphere in which human beings have their being and in which they act. (As a matter of fact, one often has the feeling that Symonds conceives of man's capabilities as being more restricted even than they are.) I believe that the relative "spirit" explains in great part, then, the fact that in Symonds' theory of art one finds nothing which the appreciator, the individual who is Symonds and the individual whom he knows best, cannot derive from experience; that in this theory there is nothing conjectural, as the concept of the creative imagination might well be. I believe that the relative or scientific "spirit" may explain in part, too, why there is in Symonds' practical criticism little of what one may call the generalizing power of Coleridge and Hazlitt, who are able through their own experiences to understand the

psychological states of other men. It is not too far-fetched either to suppose that the impressionistic parts of Symonds' practical criticism may be explained by the fact that he believed that, after all, the only things he could know were himself and the impressions which experience left on his mind, and that he could know even these only imperfectly. Hence, perhaps, the unphilosophical character of his criticism; hence, perhaps, his sensationalism, his empiricism, his failure to make judgments. Hence, beyond a doubt, his preoccupation with scholarship, itself based on what Symonds calls the critic's "sense of relativity."

The examination of the criticism of a man like Symonds, whatever its deficiencies, is invaluable to the student of criticism. One will not always derive the greater benefit from men like Coleridge, who make the history of criticism; despite the fact that their work occasionally leaves the effect of a magnificent incompleteness; one often learns a good deal from the second- or third-rate men who repeat the ideas, yes, sometimes the very words, of their betters, because in order to study them properly, one must refer constantly to their great contemporaries and predecessors who have set the chief outlines of the history of criticism. That is why I have had constant reference to the men who precede Symonds and to the critics who write in his time; to repeat the names to which I have referred in this study

would be to repeat the names of all the great critics of the nineteenth century. I have found that there is hardly one idea in Symonds' criticism which cannot be matched in Romantic thought; many of his ideas originate much earlier, of course; but this has not been a study of ideas ab ovo, and I have been content to compare Symonds chiefly with his Romantic predecessors, to whom, I feel, he went in preference to earlier, and in preference especially to neoclassical, critics. And it has been observed that even Symonds' "scientific" theories are found in the thought of the early part of the nineteenth century. It is not so surprizing to discover that Symonds' theory of art has many parallels with the theories of Romantic critics; it is interesting, however, to find that even his concept of the milieu is found in Coleridge and Hazlitt, to say nothing of Winckelmann and Hegel, and that his theory of evolution in art is also found in Hegel, though, to be sure, it is there called the principle of development. His concept of art and tradition does not receive concrete definition at the hands of Romantic writers, it is true; but the concept has its roots in their criticism nevertheless, as the work of Coleridge and A. W. von Schlegel will testify. I must therefore repeat what I have said before, that Symonds' criticism does not so much represent a body of new ideas as a new or a different emphasis on, or possibly, as I have suggested, a decadence of, old ones.

This study has indicated, I think, problems in nineteenth century criticism which need to be solved, and work that needs to be done. Symonds' misinterpretation of Romantic criticism and similar misconceptions on the part of more recent writers indicate a need for a history of that criticism which will be properly "scientific" and unbiased. Such a history should be undertaken in the strict spirit of Aristotle, who recorded phenomena as he found them. Surely the Babbitt-Miss Powell interpretations of the Romantic period need correction, especially at the hands of one who can bring counter-evidence in as challenging a fashion as Babbitt himself. The need for studies in Romantic criticism which will stay close to the facts points also to the need for a history of psychological criticism. Similarly, there should be studies which stress the substantial aspects of the work of later nineteenth century critics: Such inquiries would lead to a better understanding of the thought of these critics as a whole. There is the problem, too, of the relation of later nineteenth century criticism to that of English Romantic writers. Heretofore the differences between the two bodies of writing, especially as these differences eventuate from the influence of the French art for art's sake men, have been emphasized; their similarities and the degree to which the one grows out of the other have never been given

sufficient attention. As a matter of fact, if current interpretations of Romantic criticism have to be corrected, the history of later nineteenth century criticism has yet to be written.

APPENDIX

A Chronological List of Symonds' Works on English Renaissance Literature

Articles and books are mentioned only under the dates on which they first appear. Reprints and later editions, of which there are many, are not mentioned, except occasionally in parentheses.

1863

"The History of King Arthur," Saturday Review, February 7
"Ascham's Schoolmaster," Saturday Review, April 18

1864

"The Novel and the Drama," Saturday Review, March 19
"Sir Thomas Browne," Saturday Review, June 25

1865

"The English Drama. During the Reigns of Elizabeth and James, Part I," Cornhill Magazine, May (This and the two succeeding articles later became part of Shakspere's Predecessors.)
"The English Drama. Part II," Cornhill Magazine, June
"The English Drama. Part III," Cornhill Magazine, July
"Miltonic Versification" (a letter to the Editor), Pall Mall Gazette, December 26

1867

"Blank Verse," Cornhill Magazine, May (This later was reprinted in Sketches and Studies in Italy [1879] and in Blank Verse [1895])
"The Elizabethan Dramatists," Pall Mall Gazette, August 26
"Marlowe," Pall Mall Gazette, September 3
"Greene," Pall Mall Gazette, September 4
"Lyly," Pall Mall Gazette, September 13
"George Peele," Pall Mall Gazette, September 14
"Marston," Pall Mall Gazette, September 25 (This and the preceding five articles became part of Shakspere's Predecessors.)
"Webster," Pall Mall Gazette, October 9
"John Ford," Pall Mall Gazette, October 30

1868

"The Globe Edition of 'The Morte D'Arthur,'"* Pall Mall Gazette, June 23
"Euphuism,"* Pall Mall Gazette, November 3
"'The Steel Glass,'"* Pall Mall Gazette, November 25
"The Defence of Poesy,"* Pall Mall Gazette, December 26

1869

"The Story of Vittoria Accoramboni,"* Cornhill Magazine, February (Reprinted as a much longer article in Italian Byways [1883].)

1870

"The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Edited by F. Cunningham,"* The Academy, September 10
"The Courtly Poets: from Raleigh to Montrose. Edited by J. Hannah,"* The Academy, November 15

1873

"Shakespeare's Southampton-Sonette. Deutsch von F. Krauss,"* The Academy, February 1
"Chapman's Dramatic Works,"* The Academy, September 1

1874

"Shakespeare's Pastoral Names" (a letter), The Academy, January 24
"The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker,"* The Academy, February 7
"When You See me, You Know me. By Samuel Rowley,"* The Academy, March 14
"The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome,"* The Academy, March 21
"The Complete Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, Edited by the Rev. A. Grosart,"* The Academy, June 20
"The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood (First Notice),"* The Academy, July 18
"The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood (Second Notice),"* The Academy, July 25
"The Blank Verse of Milton,"* Fortnightly Review, December (Later reprinted in Sketches and Studies in Italy and in Blank Verse.)

1875

"The Debt of English to Italian Literature," Fortnightly Review, March
"The Works of George Chapman" and "George Chapman: a Critical Essay, By A. C. Swinburne," The Academy, May 1
"The Works of Ben Jonson. By W. Gifford," The Academy, October 2

1879

Prefatory Note to Appendix, "Blank Verse," Sketches and Studies in Italy

1884

"Ben Jonson's Song, 'To Celia'" (a letter), The Academy, December 6
Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama

1885

"Thomas Heywood and the Italian Novelists," The Academy, December 12

1886

Sir Philip Sidney (English Men of Letters Series)
Ben Jonson (English Worthies Series)
"Sir Thomas Browne," Introduction to his edition of Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici, Urn Burial, Christian Morals, and other Essays
"Ben Johson," A biographical and critical essay for his edition of The Dramatic Works and Lyrics of Ben Jonson
"Some Notes on Fletcher's 'Valentinian,'" Fortnightly Review, September (Later reprinted in In the Key of Blue [1893].)

1887

"The English Drama during the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I," General introduction to the Mermaid Series, in Christopher Marlowe, ed. by Havelock Ellis

1888

"Thomas Heywood," introduction to Thomas Heywood, ed. A. Wilson Verity (Mermaid Series)

"Webster and Tourneur," introduction to his own edition of Webster and Tourneur (Mermaid Series)

1889

"A Comparison of Elizabethan with Victorian Poetry," Fortnightly Review, January (Later reprinted in Essays Speculative and Suggestive [1890].)

1890

"Lyrism in the English Romantic Drama," Fortnightly Review, March (Later reprinted in In the Key of Blue.)

1891

"On the Relation of Painter's 'Palace of Pleasure' to the English Romantic Drama," Fortnightly Review, August

1893

"Lyrics from Elizabethan Song-Books," In the Key of Blue

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