

the less harassing, glimpses. He reached Stresa on November 2; and his religious brethren noticed that in little more than a year his hair had turned white. Nothing more was heard of the cardinalate. Five and a half years later Rosmini died with his brethren around him and the blessing of Pius IX. Tommaseo was there, and Manzoni, who kissed his feet. It was the end of an epoch.

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## ART AND THE IMAGINATION

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THE pleasures of literature may be classified as arising either from form or from content or else—and it is a classification which cuts across the first scheme—from the intellectual or architectonic element on the one hand, or the sensuous or harmonious on the other. By the pleasures of form one means the qualities of structure in novel or play, the satisfaction of speech sound in poetry produced by all the devices of the art—examples, widely different, are Spenser or Fray Luis de Leon, Swinburne or José Asuncion Silva, and T. S. Eliot or Luis Cernuda. By the pleasures of content one means either the incident-interest, the captivation of the attention that makes it impossible to ignore the command: ‘Now read on’, or the philosophical content, by which is meant the extent—if any—to which an author’s content and form contain any understanding of experience, any interpretation: here the pleasure that is exclusively literary is derived from the skill with which the interpretative element is presented or conveyed. The pleasure of rightness of interpretation is, of course, of a non-literary order. But the architectonic pleasure may arise from the form and the content taken together: it is the pleasure that is given by a wide sweep of subject matched by form on a grand scale. The *Divina Commedia*, the *Faery Queen*, Shakespeare’s tragedies—all procure us an aesthetic pleasure drawn from a power within the artist’s mind which sees and conveys an apprehension of life on a grand scale, and is not dependent on either subject-matter or form taken by themselves. We may be out of sympathy with the subject, and the form, in cases like these,

can carry a large measure of imperfection without breaking down. It is the pleasure given us by, say, the Escorial, the great nineteenth-century symphonies or, in painting, the great compositions of Poussin: what one is admiring there (without detriment necessarily to form and content in the ordinary way) is grandeur, an intuition of vastness and harmony adequately expressed. By the sensuous or harmonious one means the revelation of life that an artist or writer gives us by his feeling for surface, for texture; it may be 'rich' or it may be 'austere'—Zurbarán, for example, gives us both; 'golden lamps in a green night' or the novels of Jane Austen are examples. Beautiful form and attractive content may be there or not, but from time to time, here and there, some touch gives us an insight into the delights of the visible or audible world. This second mode of classification is perhaps more purely aesthetic than the first. For the first leads sometimes to a misunderstanding.

The interpretation of life given by a work of art, and taken for itself and by itself, is a by-product of art as such. Considering art more profoundly, as an activity of human living, it is right to give it greater importance; if, that is, we are thinking now of content and of its truth and morality. Art has an implication of its own, independently of content, along a line of intuition distinct from the insights into truth and goodness that are the proper ends of other pursuits. It is not its primary purpose to give moral or metaphysical instruction; the presence of a growing body of existentialist literatures and even, in the Madrid school of philosophers, a theory of the necessary development of philosophy by means of the imaginative narrative, are symptoms of a disease or disablement somewhere. The feared resultant triviality of literature and art on this view of them is another misconception. Distantly implied and deeply embedded in the pleasure theory of art is the truth that art is a good properly to be pursued by man and that reality so enhanced is worthy of contemplation. Man is entitled to the pleasure of literature; the content of literature is entitled to the presentation of it given by art. This is a doctrine of faith, of hope and of charity.

It is in the imagination that the most important of the content pleasures of literature is to be found. In pictorial art we are bound by the painter's imagination. We are given the visual element, at least, prefabricated or pre-digested. It is possible that the principal pleasure of painting is formal, though one long ago felt reluctance

in going all the way with Clive Bell; but it is almost certain that the stimulus to the interior sense of sight is slight and it is likely that such stimulus as is given to it, as an appropriate reaction to painting, spurious. I would place the chief pleasure of painting in the fruition of the contemplation of the work as a whole, and it is not easy to analyse the object of the contemplation however intense the pleasure—in fact the more intense the harder it is to know what one is contemplating, but I am sure it is not form exclusively.<sup>1</sup>

In literature the situation is quite different. There, the ambiguity is in sound: is it the acoustic effect or the meaning of the words heard that gives us pleasure? If the meaning, which meaning? The metaphysical meaning or the imaginative stimulus? If either, surely the second.

The key rests in the nature of the imagination, a subject not, so far as I know, very well investigated. I am inclined to suggest that we should be helped by broadening our thought about the imagination and even seeing it as the 'power' that presents (or seeing as part of its function to present) even the objects of perception. For M. Jean-Paul Sartre, who has written acutely on the imagination and may be read with profit provided he is not believed in his main contention (which is that imagination is preferable to reality because reality is nauseating), perception is a consciousness and the image is a consciousness. The difference is in the manner of positing: perception posits its object as existing and as present, the image as absent: 'the image intends an object which is not there'; in both states of consciousness, we may conclude from this, the imagination is at work.<sup>2</sup> We necessarily live by the imagination, whether we consider perception, memory or fantasy. The distance between the imagination activated by objects which are present and objects which are absent is much less than we commonly stop to realize and it is the duty or at any rate the task of the writer (and every other sort of artist) to make the distance as short as he can.

1 I think it is the presentation of a portion of reality seen with love. If so, it is here that the root unity of painting with literature is to be found. The pleasure derived from the manipulation and from the texture of the paint and all that kind of technical quality must not be omitted, and, of course, I am not rejecting form and composition, only placing them second.

2 It is when M. Sartre says that 'Alive, appealing and strong as an image is, it presents its object as not being' that we are compelled to disagree. Not being there is not the same thing as not being. *Vide* J.-P. Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, English translation, 1950.

So far as the activity of the imagination in perception is concerned, I am not sure that the scholastic tradition does not itself lend support to a view of this kind. Mercier, for example, defines the imagination as 'consciousness of a sensuous state without assurance of independent existence of the object of the sensation: representation not presentation; an image not a percept . . .', a statement entirely similar to that of Sartre. Mercier goes on to subdivide into retentive imagination, sensuous memory, reproductive imagination. But what is at work on the material offered by the external senses *with* the assurance of the independent existence of the object of sensation? Common sense and the internal sense. We are told:

The chief reason inclining us to profess with Aristotle the existence of a common sense is the fact that the sense-qualities that we perceive with the different senses we *unify* in one object whilst at the same time we distinguish them from one another. . . . Similarly, the internal sense—which perceives the act of the external senses . . . is not a separate organ . . . but simply the power of associating our sensations . . . internal sense is a function of common sense and 'co-ordinates' awareness of muscular activity and the particular sense-activity.<sup>3</sup>

So that the imagination, on this showing, presents us sense-constructs without objective presence, and common sense (acting also as internal sense) presents us sense-constructs with objective presence, since the individual senses, acting singly, cannot do so. It seems possible that the internal sense function of the common sense is identical with the imagination. When the eyes are closed, it is notorious that we construct the quarter from which sounds are heard with a very high degree of error. Which power of the soul makes this erroneous construct? It may be called the common sense, but in such a context it would seem that that is just the term not to be applied, since the error arises precisely because the second sense (sight) is sealed off. But in these cases, it is only an error that is made, it is not a complete absence of function that is to be observed. Some construct *is* made and, surely, by the imagination. Similar error arises the other way round: visual activity accompanied by temporary or artificial deafness causes us to construct, for example, words quite other than the real ones, to explain the

3 The passage incorporated into the text is taken from Vol. I of the *Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, p. 211; the passages inset are condensed from pp. 208–10.

seen movements of the lips. Where do these words come from? The imagination or the interior sense? Is there any difference? When we contemplate reality, the senses capture their impressions, the imagination constructs them into the coherent whole which, at whatever remove, represents reality in our interior experience. How otherwise could the imagination reconstruct them in the function of memory? Artistic imagination seems to be, then, the same power 'freely' exercised without objective presence and, indeed, without being necessarily bound to reality as recorded by memory.

The essence of art, that without which there is no art, is the production by the artist of a fabricated stimulus directed in part to the exterior senses and in part to the interior senses of the imagination. These fabricated stimuli differ from natural objects not only, of course, in their own proper form or shape, but in their relationship to natural objects: the most misguidedly realistic dialogue does not in fact reproduce human conversation as the tape recorder does. Artistic action changes reality for the purpose of its impact on the imagination. It uses reality for the purpose of its impact on the exterior senses, and this use of reality is what is studied in questions of form and composition. (The mystery of music with its minimal content of reality directed to the internal apprehension of the hearer throws light nevertheless on questions of external form, not only of the literary but of the plastic arts—and it is a minimal content, not an entire absence of content of reality.)

I said just now that it was the task of the artist to make as small as possible the distance between the imagination as activated by present objects and the imagination as activated by objects absent. The late Professor Edward Bullough, of Cambridge, contributed a theory to aesthetic thought which maintained that one element of artistic beauty was to render objects to the imagination as at a distance, not of course physical distance (though distance in that sense lent enchantment to the view), but the distance of a psychological barrier between the beholder and the representation, or, put in a better way, the interposition between them of a light (the light that never was on land or sea). I believe both these qualities to be requisite to the literary and artistic stimulus of the imagination: the object represented must be vividly offered to the imagination as an object sealed off from current experience by a glaze or

varnish or light, yet as close in its protected state as possible to the imaginative construct we use, or are passive to, in actual perception. In the dream this approximation reaches its extreme (short, I suppose, of actual hallucination): not even after the subject has become fully awake does the reality of dreams always fade and there are cases where a dream experience remembered is indistinguishable from a waking experience remembered. The dream aspect of the imagination is one which will repay investigation from the point of view of aesthetic theory, as the surrealists discovered, though they erred by selecting the automatic quality of the dream as the key to art. Certainly, extreme vividness of the stimulated imagination is the essence of certain sorts of poetry—if not of all poetry in the widest sense of the word, as well as of pictorial art.

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## THE EQUATORIUM OF THE PLANETS

ERIC COLLEDGE

**T**HE lost literature of medieval England, as Mr R. M. Wilson and R. W. Chambers before him have shown us, would probably occupy as much space in our libraries as what has survived. The earliest records tell of such losses as that of the Ingeld-lay which Alcuin reproaches the monks of Lindisfarne with being so fond of; and to the end of the Middle Ages we can compile for each century a formidable list of works which have vanished, some through the indiscriminate ravages of time, others, we need not doubt, victims to pious zeal (it was Furnivall who at a meeting of the Early English Text Society complained of a lack of Lives of the Sinners). But yet from time to time sunken treasure is washed up, to be chanced upon and dragged away in triumph by some more fortunate beachcomber, whilst the rest of us stare after him in envy. This present century is hardly likely to see another so sensational discovery as when in 1934 the lost 'Book of Margery Kempe' appeared in the Victoria and Albert Museum to have its contemporary binding repaired, and proved to be not