

R A C I N E A N D V A L É R Y

by

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SUMMARY

In spite of a general recognition of an affinity between Racine and Valéry, it seemed that the precise nature of his debt to Racine had never been thoroughly explored. This thesis attempts to establish Racine as the main source of the new poetic techniques of which one is conscious in La Jeune Parque and Charmes, and it explores the relevance of Racine to Valéry's own emotional life and intellectual development. A study of both published and unpublished work shows Valéry's obsession with Racine, and especially Phèdre, to be particularly strong during periods of intense personal stress such as World Wars I and II.

In this thesis a study of Racine's use of symbolism, imagery, linguistic style and vocabulary and its influence on the composition of La Jeune Parque and Charmes is made in chapters entitled:

Le vrai monde individuel,
Une femme à la Racine,
Le fonctionnement de l'être Humain,
Le serpent ... décoratif,
Une sorte de symbolisme,
Une forme de qualité,
Le vrai écrivain,
Les figures du style,
L'essence des vers.

The author concludes that a strong case ^{can be} made for the impact of Racine upon Valéry's mature poetic manner. However, Racine is not the only poet listed among Valéry's sources. Only after the work of these other poets has been compared in detail with Valéry's will it be possible to evaluate fully Valéry's debt to Racine at its true worth.

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ABBREVIATIONS

For references other than to Valéry or Racine, see under name of author in the Bibliography.

<u>A.</u>	<u>Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française, 1694</u> (see under Cayrou)
<u>Au P</u>	<u>Au Platane</u>
<u>B B</u>	<u>Précis de grammaire historique de la langue française</u> (see under Brunot et Bruneau)
<u>B U</u>	<u>Le Bon Usage</u> (see under Grévisse)
<u>C</u>	<u>Cahiers</u> (facsimile edition, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, 1957-1961)
<u>Cant.</u>	<u>Cantiques Spirituels</u>
<u>Cayrou</u>	<u>Le français classique</u> (see under Cayrou)
<u>C G V</u>	<u>Correspondance Gide/Valéry</u> (see under Mallet)
<u>C M</u>	<u>Le Cimetière Marin</u>
<u>C V F</u>	<u>Correspondance Valéry/Fourment</u> (see under Nadal)
<u>D L</u>	<u>Dictionnaire de la langue française classique</u> (see under Dubois et Lagane)
<u>Eb d'un S</u>	<u>Ebauche d'un Serpent</u>
<u>F</u>	Furetière, <u>Dictionnaire Universel, 1690</u> (see under Cayrou)
<u>F du N</u>	<u>Fragments d'un Narcisse</u>
<u>Guiraud</u>	<u>Langage et versification dans l'oeuvre de Paul Valéry</u> (see under Guiraud)
<u>H</u>	<u>Hymnes traduites du Bréviaire romain</u>
<u>H J L</u>	<u>Hymne, jeudi, laudes</u>
<u>H L L</u>	<u>Hymne, lundi, laudes</u>
<u>H L V</u>	<u>Hymne, lundi, vêpres</u>
<u>H M L</u>	<u>Hymne, mardi, laudes</u>
<u>H mer. V</u>	<u>Hymne, mercredi, vêpres</u>

Abbreviations (cont.)

<u>I B</u>	<u>Introduction biographique</u> (see under Rouart-Valéry, Agathe)
<u>I P</u>	<u>Idylle sur la Paix</u>
K	Catherine Piozzi
<u>L J P</u>	<u>La Jeune Parque</u>
<u>La P</u>	<u>La Pythie</u>
<u>Le R</u>	<u>Le Rameur</u>
<u>L Q</u>	<u>Lettres à Quelques-Uns</u>
<u>M P</u>	<u>Mémoires d'un poème</u>
<u>M S P</u>	<u>Mise-en-scène de Phèdre</u> (see under Barrault, J.-L.)
<u>Notes</u>	
<u>Diverses</u>	Unpublished notes on composition of <u>La Jeune Parque</u>
<u>N S</u>	<u>Ode de la Nymphe de la Seine à la Reine</u>
<u>N V</u>	<u>Ode sur la naissance d'un enfant de Nicolas Vitat</u>
<u>O C R</u>	<u>Oeuvres Complètes de Racine</u> , Bibliothèque de la Pleiade
<u>O C V</u>	<u>Oeuvres Complètes de Valéry</u> , Bibliothèque de la Pleiade
<u>P-R</u>	<u>Le Paysage ou les Promenades de Port-Royal-des-Champs</u> (Odes)
<u>R</u>	Richelet, <u>Dictionnaire française</u> , 1680 (see under Cayrou)
<u>Racine</u> <u>Notes</u>	Unpublished notes for Valéry's speech on Racine's tercentenary.
<u>R R</u>	<u>Racine's Rhetoric</u> (see under France, P.)

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Introduction

This thesis makes an attempt to establish Racine as the only source of the new poetic technique of which we are conscious in La Jeune Parque and Charmes. The later the poet in time, the more finely attuned his ear, the greater will be the number of resonances we can detect in his works. Indeed, Valéry himself has given us a list of his sources for La Jeune Parque, which includes an impressive number of poets, from Virgil and Euripides to Hugo, Baudelaire and Mallarmé. It seemed to us, however, that although Valéry's debt to Mallarmé and the symbolist poets had been sufficiently emphasised, the precise nature of his debt to Racine had never been thoroughly explored, in spite of a general recognition of an affinity between Racine and Valéry. Almost all of the critical studies rely on quotations from Valéry's published works, and later the Cahiers, for their convictions; all are emphatic that it is Racine's technique which is important, and that the impact of this technique is visible from La Jeune Parque onwards (although Walzer, in his Poésie de Paul Valéry, sees it as having only an intermittent effect in La Jeune Parque). Brémond, in his Racine et Valéry, and Guiraud, in his Langage et Poésie de Paul Valéry, emphasise the continuity Valéry achieves by the use of Racine's technique of apposition; Guiraud in addition has some valuable tables of comparison. Nadal, in his La Jeune Parque : étude critique, and Laurenti, in her Paul Valéry et le théâtre, both see the theatre as the link between Racine and Valéry, but whereas Nadal connects Racine's hidden monologue with the monologue of La Jeune Parque, Laurenti considers the recitatives of Wagner to be the chief factor;

moreover, she ignores the possibilities of La Jeune Parque as a play, devoting her attention to the works Valéry designed for the theatre (i.e. Stratonice, Amphion, etc.), and to the connection of Racine with Valéry's systeme.

There seems a place, therefore, for an attempt to assess more fully the debt Valéry owed to Racine. Can we, with any certainty, establish what the influence of Racine upon Valéry was, and how far it extended?

A close examination of Valéry's published work, of the Cahiers (both in the C.N.R.S. edition and in the Pléiade edition), and of some of the unpublished work provides several promising areas of investigation. It reveals an interest in Racine, continued up to the time of Valéry's death — an interest not only in the work of Racine, but also in his personality, together with a mounting admiration, and what can finally only be regarded as an identification with Racine.

We propose therefore to concentrate our enquiry upon the areas suggested by the frequency, dates, and content of Valéry's references to Racine (taken chiefly from the Cahiers). We begin with the relevance of Racine to Valéry's own emotional life, and hence to the whole of his intellectual development; for, as Valéry was to observe, in his unpublished notes for a lecture on Racine, what better way to gauge the importance of Racine: "quoi de plus vrai que le vrai rôle que tient un auteur dans notre propre vie? Son oeuvre prend place alors dans les facteurs de notre existence."¹

The second area concerns the importance of Phèdre. This play is first mentioned as early as 1906: "Racine vivant indéfiniment, écrivant mille Phèdres aussi belles"² remains for Valéry the supreme

example of Racine's perfections. He is still analysing it in 1943: "Comment traduire l'amour vrai [...] en langage des Dieux? Il [Racine] a fait ce qu'il a pu, et merveilleusement, sans doute. Le mot 'proie' est excellent."³ We examine, therefore, the relationship of this play to La Jeune Parque, written to escape from the stresses of love and war, and the first of Valéry's poems to show the signs of a new manner. The choice of themes and imagery, which come next under review, stems naturally from the study of Phèdre, for its two main characters, Hippolyte and Phèdre, embody orgueil and the monstrous, although the pattern of reactions they display is common to all Racine's plays. The study of his nature imagery too, so important to a symbolist poet, begins with the two elements which dominate in Phèdre, the sun and the sea, but broadens out to include the elements of air and earth, and other plays and the poems, as we seek to define what Valéry called Racine's symbolisme infiniment habile⁴ and the use he may have made of it.

After such general consideration we examine the actual components of Racine's poetic language, the core of the matter for Valéry: "Quel est l'élément efficace (pour nous, aujourd'hui) de Racine? La mélodie, ce distique inoubliable, la langue précise et pourtant fluide."⁵ However, before we study these we must consider the conditions under which Racine wrote. These were important to Valéry, as providing the sort of constraint which Valéry imposed upon himself, but which was necessary to him. This leads us into the domain of 17th century preciosity, for the poetic language of the time obeyed its precepts: "Style noble. Espèce d'ésotérisme, langage de clan et de caste. Rôle immense de la phobie de la grossièreté [...] Règles compliquées, barrières de l'étiquette [...]"⁶

We turn next to Racine's chosen vocabulary, passed through this filter, and to the rhetoric of his time, which Valéry considers so important to poetry: "L'ancienne rhétorique (qui existe encore) regardait comme des ornements et des artifices — ces figures [...] que les raffinements successifs de la poésie ont fait enfin connaître comme l'essentiel de son objet."⁷

Finally we discuss Racine's syntax and his prosody, which Valéry sees as a unity: "la combinaison qui peut se produire, et qui le doit, entre l'égalité (grossière) des nombres des syllabes 12 = 12 = 12, et d'autre part les membres syntaxiques d'un discours suivi."⁸

While some of these questions belong to the broader, and hence more speculative domains of literary criticism, they are nevertheless based upon considerations of technique — that is, upon the function of Racine's structure and language in the achievement of certain poetic aims outlined by Valéry. But both in these areas and in those devoted to the constituents of Racine's language we try to emphasise that however great Racine's contribution, and however unmistakable its colouring, one of its greatest assets was the way in which it could be combined with the contributions of other poets to enrich Valéry's own melody — "orchestrated" was Valéry's own term:

On peut considérer les types de notre poésie, Racine, Hugo, Baudelaire etc. comme les instruments chacun plus approprié à de tels [illegible word] effets et plus adapté par sa langue choisie, ses rythmes, ses images à telles et telles nécessités. Il n'est pas impossible de conjuguer ces violons, ces "cuivres et ces bois", pour posséder un orchestre. Habileté qu'il y faut.

Pour démontrer cette proposition, ou plutôt pour illuminer ce point de vue, il suffit de rappeler que chacun de ces poètes est dans la langue, que leurs effets sont distincts, incomparables, non contradictoires, dans la suite. Il faut, naturellement, savoir orchestrer.⁹

The following chapters, then, represent an attempt to clear the way to determining Racine's contribution to such an orchestration.

CHAPTER I

LE VRAI MONDE INDIVIDUEL

Le Vrai Monde Individuel

... Deux faits capitaux dans ce monde que je pourrais appeler le vrai monde individuel — Ce sont le désir et l'acuité de l'amour et l'idée de la mort.¹

It is not in itself surprising that similar situations should produce similar reactions in the man who comes up against them. Nor is it unusual that a poet should react more violently than others to a common experience. What is remarkable is the way in which Racine — and, moreover, certain plays of Racine — appear to be linked both to the recurrence of important situations in Valéry's life, and with the violence of his reaction to them.

By far the greatest number of references to Racine in the Cahiers, and in Valéry's published work, occur during those periods when he was deeply affected by the two world wars, and by two of his more important love affairs — the one with Catherine Pozzi, and the one which ended shortly before his death. There are, of course, references to other poets and writers during these periods — notably to Mallarmé, whose effect upon Valéry the man, as well as upon Valéry the poet, cannot be over-estimated. Hugo is frequently mentioned, and references to Poe, Rimbaud and Baudelaire also appear. The effect of all these writers upon Valéry's poetic development was considerable; but the tone and content of the references to Racine seem to have an intensity and significance second only to those of his references to Mallarmé, and on this, and other counts, to be of far-reaching importance.

Now love, war and death (which war brings into immediate and overwhelming prominence) can all be seen as aspects of violence. They threaten the sovereignty of the mind and can totally destroy

the body. They bring disorder to man's laboriously constructed private universe, and their shocks, to a mind like Valéry's, so fiercely jealous of its autonomy, are felt as lèse-majesté, intolerable insults. His was a mind, moreover, not only naturally acutely sensitive, but one made still more vulnerable by the poet's early concentration on developing its sensibility and its perceptions, so that the shock of any one of these intrusions of reality was likely to be profound. When the effects of love, war and death were combined (as they were for Valéry during the periods of the two world wars) they were cataclysmic.

In examining the references to Racine which appear over these periods, in their connection with Valéry's reactions, we may begin with the more obvious aspects of violence offered by war and death, though Valéry himself placed love first in the quotation cited at the beginning of this chapter.

There is ample evidence of Valéry's state of mind during both world wars. He describes it in the Cahiers and in letters. Of 1914 he writes to Duhamel:

[...] Je perdis ma liberté intérieure — l'angoisse, les prévisions inutiles, le sentiment de l'impuissance me dévorait sans fruit [...]²

and in 1938, when war was imminent, he speaks of the same state of anxiety — ... l'angoisse du jour³ — a state of anxiety which in 1940 becomes one of absolute despair:

La France expie le crime d'être ce qu'elle est. Je voudrais n'avoir pas vécu jusqu'à ce jour.⁴

His reaction to this state of mind, in both wars, was to take refuge in creation; during World War I, La Jeune Parque and her offspring, the Merveilleuses Parques which are Charmes; during the second world war, the Cantate du Narcisse (a development of the most

Racinian poem in Charmes) and Mon Faust. Of La Jeune Parque, Valéry states that the poem was written during, and because of, the 1914-1918 war sub signo Martis.⁵ Similarly, in 1940, he writes of

Mon Faust:

[...] J'ai énormément travaillé comme dérivatif, — sans quoi je serais mort de rage et de désespoir.⁶

The connection of certain of his own poetic works with Racine is confirmed many times by Valéry; the best-known reference is the entry in the Cahiers of 1917,⁷ giving the sources of the poem, and in which the Songe d'Athalie and a quotation from Phèdre are prominent. In 1938 Valéry thrice links the Cantate du Narcisse with Racine and with the anxiety inseparable from war; once in Sur Phèdre Femme,⁸ where, after seeing a beautifully printed page of Racine's Phèdre, he has the impression of looking at a version of his own work;⁹ again, in the Cahiers, where he writes of the same occasion:

Je lis cela — (je suis, d'autre part, en train de faire le Cantate du Narcisse [...], Je me sens [...] en état d'auteur de ce morceau de Phèdre sous mes yeux.

L'amusement cesse — et je reviens à l'angoisse du jour — guerre ou non.¹⁰

Finally, the link between Racine and La Jeune Parque, the connection of Racine with Mon Faust and the war of 1940, and the influence of the war in both cases, are attested by a passage in the Cahiers of 1940, too long to quote in full, but of which these are the salient points:

Honneur et justice au théâtre classique! Pendant la guerre 14-18 — faisant [...] La Jeune Parque [...] j'ai compris ou cru comprendre ce Racine que j'ignorais [...]

Aujourd'hui — 1940 — ayant commencé le III^eme Faust [...] sous le poids de la défaite honteuse [...] et lisant [...] ce Faust I et II — je remarque surtout la quantité de poésie expresse [...] dont l'absence dans le théâtre classique est si frappante [...]¹¹

Was Valéry so fascinated by Racine during these periods merely

because of the perfection of his technique? Certainly, Phèdre and Athalie are supreme examples of his perfection. In my opinion, however, it was even more the themes and contents of these plays which account for the way in which Valéry appears to be obsessed by them during the two wars. Valéry recognised early the recurrence of certain states of mind in himself: "Souvent j'ai observé les modes de sentir [...] toutes choses se succéder comme des saisons internes",¹² he remarks in 1910, and the most striking element in his anguish during the two world wars is not so much the personal anxiety of any man for his family and friends, or the anxiety of a Frenchman for his country (elements which are predictable), as the consciousness of being helpless in the face of disorder. Both wars threatened not only life, and the autonomy of France, but the autonomy of the mind. "J'avais perdu ma liberté d'esprit," he writes to Mockel in 1917¹³ and in 1940 he refers not only to the violent cross-currents of feeling, contradiction totale [qui] s'empare de l'être, but to the feelings of disarray, impression de désordre vivant, poignant.¹⁴ The physical effect of war was simply the culmination of the disintegrating effect of the cold inhumanity of science, its attack upon the human personality¹⁵ and upon the whole of European culture. Of that attack upon the total integrity of mind and body, Valéry felt himself, I believe, to be the target. The researches of science had finally produced mortal fruit, the Grenades of the trenches and the splintering of human personality revealed by the Freudian doctrine. Now Athalie and Phèdre both contain vivid descriptions of physical destruction and the dissolution of the body — the Songe d'Athalie (to which Valéry so often returns) and the Récit de Thérémène (to which Valéry refers in 1918).¹⁶ In both instances, flesh and blood are mingled

with the earth, as in the trenches, and both Songe and Récit are the translation into physical terms of the mental degradation inflicted by forces outside our control — the rape of the mind. They reflect that loss of the mind's freedom which we find in the other great plays of Racine, but which is most perfectly demonstrated in Phèdre.

If, as Valéry states in 1915, there is a process of transference of content and form from one creator to another,

[...] Toute lecture prolongée d'un auteur dispose le lecteur à émettre des pensées ou des formes [...] homogènes à celle de l'auteur ...¹⁷

it seems unlikely that La Jeune Parque and Charmes would have emerged so unmistakably Racinian in content as well as in form, but for Valéry's recognition of his own states of mind, reflected back at him from the lines of Racine — "ce Racine que j'ai cru [...] comprendre pendant la guerre 14-18."¹⁸ — to whom he returned during the second world war, when he wrote of being personally concerned with the Racine of whom he is writing.¹⁹

This reflection of the essentially Racinian quality of his own states of mind can also be traced in Valéry's reaction to the death of the individual. The daily background to his thoughts, in World War I, was the death of thousands; but the death of one person, Mallarmé, had already violated Valéry's personal universe. This personal grief, as Madame de Lussy has demonstrated, found its expression through La Jeune Parque. In her valuable exegesis, La Genèse de La Jeune Parque de Paul Valéry, she shows that two lines²⁰ of a poem written shortly after Mallarmé's death are to be found at the heart of La Jeune Parque, but were at first intended to be the conclusion; moreover, the sentence "Senti monter les

larmes de l'esprit", appears beside the poem, and Madame de Lussy concludes:

[...] le thème de la larme sur une trame sonore de bruits marins, qui est à l'origine de la Jeune Parque, semble être venu se cristalliser sur le souvenir de la mort de Stéphane Mallarmé [...] ²¹

When I myself saw the manuscript of another source-poem of La Jeune Parque, Hélène, at the 1976 exhibition of Valéryana at the Edinburgh Colloque, I noted with particular interest the fragmentary lines "ourdir de bruits marins" and "Mélange de la lame en ruine, et de rame ...", themes of grief and disorder, which to me immediately recalled Racine and Lesbos, ravaged by Achilles:

Troie en a vu la flamme, et jusque dans ses ports,
Les flots en ont poussé les débris et les morts.
Que dis-je? Les Troyens pleurent une autre Hélène ...

(Iphigénie, I, 2, ll.235-237)

Once more we note the aspect of impotence in the face of violation and disorder.

The intensity of Valéry's helpless grief at Mallarmé's death finds expression also in a letter to Fourment.

J'ai été heureux en amis — Seulement — il y a déjà longtemps. Aujourd'hui le fond du coeur de mon esprit est très désert [...] A la mort de Mallarme, ce coeur-la a été bien atteint ... ²²

The appearance of Hippolyte's fond de mon coeur here is to me very striking, given Valéry's underlining here, and the prominence of this line in Valéry's own description of the sources of La Jeune Parque, ²³ and it becomes even more so if we remember that Mallarmé, for Valéry, took the place of a father, as well as that of a friend, and if we remember how much of Phèdre is an exposition of the relations between Hippolyte and Thésée — the latter's desertion of his son, his supposed death and Hippolyte's passionate desire to emulate his

father — even the death-blow dealt by Thésée to his son, to which all of the father's actions throughout the play have led. Valéry, in fact, refers to the deadly effect of Mallarmé's work upon all other poetry, and thus necessarily upon Valéry's own work — "C'était un étrange poison que versait à toute autre poésie celle de Mallarmé, dans mon esprit"²⁴

... Quel funeste poison
L'amour a répandu dans toute sa maison ...

(Phèdre, IV, 6, ll.991-992)

(and we remember that it is Thésée who, as agent of Venus, creates the situations favouring the release of the poison of love in Phèdre.)²⁵

I can trace no reference by Valéry himself to his own father's death, and this strange absence of all comment was confirmed by Judith Robinson in the course of a conversation at the Colloque in Edinburgh. One of Fourment's letters, however, describes him, "les yeux rouges de larmes [...] affligé [...] abattu,"²⁶ and it seems more than possible that the memory of the grief described by Fourment, revived by Mallarmé's death, was also expressed through La Jeune Parque via the mediation of Racine; the more so, as the psychological effect of the death of a parent is to rouse feelings of guilt, and of being deserted, in the child; the death is felt as a deliberate rejection.

It seems to me, therefore, that Phèdre here, too, offered a mirror to Valéry, and a pattern through which, in La Jeune Parque, he could find expression not only of his despair at the shock of Mallarmé's death, but also of the despair induced by his poetry, "le désespoir de l'esprit découragé par les perfections des poésies singulières de Mallarmé", perfections which were also a shock "brusquement révélées."²⁷

Mallarmé was, as I have emphasised, both father and friend for Valéry. While his feelings for Mallarmé were therefore on an infinitely deeper plane than his affection for Degas, the latter was nevertheless a friend of long standing. Degas' favourite misquotation from Iphigénie can be found in a passage from the Cahiers:

... Et que me fait à moi cette Troie ... ?²⁸

(Et que m'a fait à moi cette Troie, où je cours?)

(Iphigénie, IV, 6, 1.1372)

and Valéry, in the almost illegible notes in which he jotted down what first came to his mind about Degas, on hearing of his friend's death, remembers Voltaire's verdict on Athalie, "ce chef-d'oeuvre de l'esprit humain", and goes on to head a list of Degas' most admired writers and painters with the name of Racine.²⁹ He obviously drew on these notes for his reminiscences of the painter in the later Degas, Danse, Dessin³⁰ where again he returns to Degas' knowledge of Racine, "nourri de Racine ..."

Even from this summary appraisal of the recurrence of Racine in Valéry's Cahiers, it is evident that Racinian tragedy was a constant background to Valéry's experience of the tragic of life and its disruptive effects — the tragic of the idea of death, with the connotation of destiny which he gave it, in a passage written a year after Mallarmé's death:

Le goût amer et ferme de la fatalité - tout par rapport à la mort - c'est comme l'infini ou zéro paraissant dans les calculs.³¹

The living can only experience death at second hand — through the death of others, or by contemplating the inevitability of their

own. The experience of love, however, consists not only of the generalised longing for love — le désir — but also of the physical reality — l'acuité. The shock of the reality of love upon the living Valéry was as devastating — if not more so — than the shocks delivered by war and death. He reacted against love's physical invasion of the senses and its invasion of the mind with the terror of a man possessed — cet incubé, he calls his first obsession, in a letter to Pierre Louÿs.³² A study of the Cahiers and of Racine's plays, above all of Phèdre, may well convince us that in Racine's picture, Valéry recognised an image of love which corresponded to his own experience in a frightening and consoling degree — frightening, because it was so exact, and consoling, because it was that experience transformed into a creation of the mind, and therefore, both distanced and controlled. In 1921, Valéry wrote of French classical poetry:

[...] de toutes, celle dans laquelle la distance entre la 'pensée' initiale et 'l'expression' finale est la plus grande possible [...] Il y a tout un travail immense entre l'émotion reçue et l'achèvement de la machine qui la restituera ...³³

We are led to this conclusion not only by the number of references to Racine during the periods of Valéry's love affairs, but by their content, which is particularly relevant during the periods of three of his affairs, and especially significant during the fourth and final period, when he, as it were, sums up his experience of love and life:

J'ai la sensation de me résumer. Des souvenirs me reviennent, des états d'esprit de 1883 se restituent ...³⁴

Valéry's references in the Cahiers to his love affairs, which he himself calls crises, are extremely discreet, even hermetic, although the candour of his self-analysis, as each affair progresses, will be no less remarkable, — an analysis like a laser beam which

operates on every aspect of his own mental and physical processes, leaving those of the beloved, for the most part, in the shadow. In general, Valéry avoids names and dates, but a few are available in the Cahiers, largely in the form of marginalia, in which he uses initials, anagrams, pseudonyms, or mysterious mathematical formulae — anything but a name which might be recognisable to others — in order to denote the woman who is obsessing him at the time — as obsessed he certainly could be. Alternatively, he may leave clues as to the dates and times of various crises in the form of sums; for instance, with regard to Valéry's first and most famous love affair, his passion for Madame de Rovira, evidence is available from letters which he wrote to André Gide, to Gustave Fourment or to Pierre Louÿs; while a few details are given on the faith of anecdotes or conversations cited by Henri Mondor in his Précocité de Valéry.

Among Valéry's affairs with women, four stand out as being particularly important. Evidence as to the dates and durations of three of them comes from a calculation Valéry has jotted down alongside a passage of 1931 describing love,³⁵ beginning with the words Etats aigus ... The calculation is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{r} 91, 2 \\ 20-28 \\ 31 \\ \hline 142.68 \\ \hline 39 \\ \hline 11 \end{array}$$

(Valéry has crossed out his incorrect addition.) We are indebted to Judith Robinson for an elucidation of these figures. She relates them to three important love affairs:

... trois grandes crises sentimentales que Valéry avait vécues jusqu'à l'époque où se situe ce cahier [that is, up to 1931] : celle de 1891-1892, celle des années 1920, et celle qui a commencé en 1931. Le chiffre 39 représente le nombre d'années qui a séparé la fin de la première crise du début de la troisième : le chiffre 11 indique la période qui a séparé le début de la deuxième du début de la troisième [...]³⁶

Both Valéry and Judith Robinson refer to crises — a term which emphasises culmination rather than duration. However, the woman bound up with the second of Valéry's crises, Catherine Pozzi, was already influencing him in 1910, when, according to Judith Robinson's list of the original Cahiers, the first of the annotations "d'une main étrangère" appears³⁷ and all the annotations so qualified were, in fact, made by K, Catherine Pozzi, as a close study of the notes will suggest (and which Judith Robinson confirmed to me later). I consider, therefore, that the second period may be extended accordingly. With this in mind, and following the subtle calculations of Judith Robinson, Valéry's love affairs fall into three important periods, 1891-1892, 1910-1930 and the year 1931 (but Valéry's dates for this crisis vary : in 1937 he refers to his affairs of 91 - 20 - 32³⁸). It seems to us also that there is evidence for a fourth period, 1941-1945. We can deduce this from another cryptic calculation, appearing below an entry made, probably, in March or April 1945,³⁹ which is immediately followed by a passage analysing love. The entry consists of the word Fin in large letters, surrounded by flourishes, and preceded by the figures 445/991. The first of the preliminary set of figures, the 445, is difficult to read, and could be either 1945 or 445, but the second is clearly 991. This is a cipher which, together with the 773 which Valéry first used to designate her, is a cryptogramme for Valéry's final passion, "la femme qui a inspiré à Valéry son dernier grand amour ..."⁴⁰ Below this first set of figures we find the

unfinished sum:

$$\begin{array}{r} \dots \\ 9 \\ \hline 1 \end{array}$$

and below this, another sum,

$$\begin{array}{r} 32 \\ 9 \\ \hline 41 \end{array}$$

By analogy with the earlier sum in the Cahiers for 1931, this is apparently another calculation of Valéry's personal cycle. If this is acceptable, we can posit that in the above sum, the figure 9 represents the lapse between his love affair of 1931-2 and the beginning of what was to be his last obsession, which dates from 1941 (here represented by the figure 41). This supposition is supported by a reference to the same woman in 1941, under the heading Eros:

On serait comme des dieux, des harmoniques intelligentes en correspondance directe, des vies sensibles dont l'accord sonnerait comme pensée, idée. Sommet de la poésie qui est, après tout, communion ...⁴¹

Valéry's ostrich-like discretion in the Cahiers has, as I said above, led him to provide pseudonyms for the women he loved. These, however, are just as valuable, if not more so, for our purpose, for they reveal his attitude towards their bearers, and they will be used in what follows. The years, then, between 1891 and 1892 belong to La Méduse, the decades 1910 and 1920 are dominated by K; Néère is prominent between 1931 and 1935; while the woman designated by the figures 773 or 991 rules the years between 1940 and 1945.

La Méduse was, of course, Mme de Rovira. In the Cahiers, Valéry refers to her variously as Mme de R., la R. and la Rov. In a letter to Gide, however, he calls her La Méduse,⁴² and a note to these letters⁴³ states that Méduse was a name given by Gide and Valéry

to Valéry's first love, and subsequently to any other such woman. Considering her almost supernatural influence on Valéry, it seemed appropriate to use this pseudonym throughout for Mme de Rovira. Although personal descriptions of her are scanty, part of the secret of her fascination is suggested by Mondor's description of her, "femme de dix ans plus agée que lui [...] catalane," and again, "languueur, coquetterie, aisance troublante."⁴⁴ There is no doubt that her total personality had a shattering effect upon the young man of twenty from his very first encounter with her in the streets of Montpellier. There were to be other encounters, equally disturbing: "Je viens de faire une rencontre qui me démolit," Valéry writes of one such chance meeting to Pierre Louÿs in 1891.⁴⁵ He wrote to her, he tells Gide, but never sent the letters.⁴⁶ She came between him and the sacrament, if indeed she was not identified with it:

Il y a eu une ou deux scènes de Messe [...] avec à l'Élévation une concentration de volonté sur telle chevelure ...⁴⁷

Finally at some charitable fête, the poet received a glass of champagne from her, "et ce fut tout, m'a-t-il dit," if we are to believe Henri Mondor⁴⁸ — an anodyne account which contrasts strongly with Valéry's own account of the affair in 1940, when he lays down Stendhal's Racine et Shakespeare in fury, remembering La Méduse:

Je me suis rendu fou et horriblement malheureux pour des années par l'imagination de cette femme à qui je n'ai jamais même parlé!⁴⁹

In its disastrous effect, we here recognise a form of love which is unmistakably Racinian. Just how Racinian it was, in every detail, is attested by Valéry's own description, in 1931, of his crises, Etats aigus — a chart of the symptoms of love. He recognises and describes them with clinical accuracy; and that they

are valid, not only for the context in which they appear — the affair of 1931 — but also for Valéry's state of mind in 1891-92 and in the twenties, is shown by Valéry's own annotation, the mathematical calculation of his periodicity in love which accompanies them. When, in 1943 — the year in which Valéry had the feeling of again passing through his former states of mind, and when he seeks again to define love, l'amour vrai ...

cette composition de TOUS ingrédients de la vie sensible - sensitive, selon une sensibilisation particulière, donnant une valeur "infinie" à un être et à la capture de cet être [...]⁵⁰

— he turns to the tirades of Phèdre as examples of the transformation undergone by the individual activated by passion — "les tirades passionnées de Phèdre ne sont en vérité que des programmes."⁵¹ They provide a poetic description of the sensations he recognised in himself, and had done so before, and which he had characterised as Etats aigus; and an analysis of the passage under that heading, in connection with what it is possible to trace of the effect of La Méduse on Valéry's life, as she set the pattern for his responses to all the women he was to love, will show the startling applicability of the tirades of Phèdre to the functioning of Valéry the lover.

Here, then, is the passage in full:

Etats aigus — auto-suggestion. En somme maladie à décrire. Sensation — organique.

Tenerezza qui tourne, floccule. Choc — Chute.

Jusqu'à dolor capitis — au sommet du crâne.

Caractère cependant feint. Comédie du système?

Douleur = rêve des nerfs sensitifs?

Chose remarquable — en ces états, on sent la douleur instantane sous l'état plus calme; et la liberté sous l'état de douleur. Et aussi — Sentiment humiliant de donner à l'ennemi des forces qu'il n'a pas.⁵²

Here the most important points seem to be the maladie à décrire and the Comédie du système. The maladie à décrire vividly recalls

both Phèdre's mal and Valéry's own description of the affaire Rovira as "ma grande maladie mentale de 91-92".⁵³ The auto-suggestion, the caractère feint, underline the mental aspect of the illness, Phèdre's madness — "Où laissais-je égarer mes vœux et mon esprit? ..." (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.180) — and her continued insistence upon her aberration. Valéry's later remark, "Je me suis rendu fou et horriblement malheureux ... par l'imagination de cette femme [...]"⁵⁴ could not be better confirmed than by the letter to Pierre Louÿs, written in 1892, after Valéry thought he saw La Méduse at a concert:

[...] Je crois voir mon démon de ces mois morts [...]
J'ai couru, fou, à la sortie, la revoir (cet incubé) un
instant, puis j'ai fui dans un fiacre; la folie réelle [...]
Si j'ai mal vu, je suis un halluciné [...]⁵⁵

Tout retrace à mes yeux les charmes que j'évite ...

(Phèdre, II, 2, 1.545)

There is another aspect of auto-suggestion — the process of turning another human being into a divinity. Valéry's Sur Phèdre Femme⁵⁶ shows that he considered Phèdre's adoration of Hippolyte to come into this category:

Les actes essentiels de l'existence [that is, procreation]
ont trouvé leur maître, qui est un fantôme, un souci [...]
les plus folles créations se produisent ...⁵⁷

and these fantastic creations can apply to Phèdre's idolisation of her god:

J'adorais Hippolyte; et le voyant sans cesse,
Même au pied des autels que je faisais fumer,
J'offrais tout à ce dieu que je n'osais nommer ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 11.286-288)

and to Valéry's adoration of his goddess, "Je vénérâis de loin celle dont la rencontre hasardeuse certains jours me troubla."⁵⁸

Valéry's illness, however, like that of Phèdre, has physical symptoms, chiefly distressing. In the Cahiers, Valéry joins the

words Etats aigus and the word douleur, which appears lower down the passage. Here we have Phèdre's tourments inévitables⁵⁹ and Valéry's own sufferings, "tourments si souvent racontés."⁶⁰ As for the sensation organique, what else is it but Phèdre's disarray:

Je le vis, je rougis, je pâlis à sa vue;
Un trouble s'éleva dans mon âme éperdue; ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, ll.273-274)

Phèdre's troubles and Valéry's bêtise physique of 1891: "Je suis très capable d'avoir une syncope ou bêtise physique, détail qui manqua d'arriver plusieurs fois ..." ⁶¹ For the tenerezza we may again link Phèdre's distress and her earlier tears:

Je te laisse trop voir mes honteuses douleurs;
Et mes yeux, malgré moi, se remplissent de pleurs ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, ll.183-184)

with Valéry's demand, in 1891, "Ai-je méconnu une seule possibilité de détresse ou de tendresse?" ⁶²

The choc is perhaps self-explanatory. It is Phèdre's shock at the sight of Hippolyte, her âme éperdue, Valéry's "l'autre âme est quasi morte" — the self, that is, that he had constructed and which the shock of love had almost destroyed; ⁶³ and it is, of course, the hackneyed but immortal coup de foudre. Here it is worth noting that Valéry connects the word foudre with La Méduse, when he recognises the relationship between his first and his second great loves:

J'ai lancé la foudre sur ce que j'étais en 92. 28 ans après, elle est tombée sur moi, de tes [K's] lèvres ... ⁶⁴

The chute is physical weakness, certainly, but something more. The physical weakness will recall Phèdre's state. She is several times on the point of fainting, both at the sight of Hippolyte (Mes yeux ne voyaient plus,) and also when we first see her:

Et mes genoux tremblants se dérobaient sous moi ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, l.156)

while Valéry, as we already know, feared nothing more than fainting at the sight of La Méduse. He refers, too, to jambes abolies;⁶⁵ but there is more here, perhaps, than the merely physical. In 1943, Valéry says of himself, "Depuis 50 ans je tombe vers ce moi-même, mon poids vers mon plus haut."⁶⁶ The analogy, it seems to us, is with a planet which is drawn inwards towards its own centre of gravity, and also, paradoxically, with the earth, which, drawn by the attraction of the sun, falls inwards constantly towards its highest point. Love, for Valéry, seems always to have been a means of reaching himself through the other; in 1891 as in 1944: "ce que je chercherais dans l'amour? C'est moi! ..." ⁶⁷ and again:

L'amour, dans la perfection de son acte, est le drame de l'accomplissement, de la connaissance [...] de se fuir en soi-même, figuré par un autre ...⁶⁸

— a perfect description of Phèdre, which is indeed a play in which all the characters arrive at the recognition of themselves through the medium of the other. They do not, of course, find the heroic self to which they aspire, and the fear and horror with which they regard the goddess of love is perhaps an instinctive recognition that this will be the case. We find that Valéry also feared what he might discover — as early as 1905 he wrote,

Dans [les] phases [de passion et d'émotion] [...] des individus différents se ressemblent le plus à ce moment — ce qui explique [...] ma répugnance — ma peur de trouver mon semblable, mon ennemi, mon inférieur — moi-même.⁶⁹

After his choc, his chute, Valéry continues his list of symptoms in veiled terms, some medical, as befits the description of an illness. He cites dolor capitis — au sommet du crâne. Racine was here too:

Que ces vains ornements, que ces voiles me pèsent! ...
Tout m'afflige et me nuit ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 11.158, 162)

Valéry then seems to be asking himself if this present anguish is unreal, simply a memory of his previous suffering in the presence of a similar object of desire (for the whole passage was written when he realised that he was once again in love): "Douleur = rêve des nerfs sensitifs?" Or, as Phèdre puts it:

J'ai revu l'ennemi que j'avais éloigné :
Ma blessure trop vive aussitôt a saigné

(Phèdre, I, 3, 11.303-304)

reminding us that in 1891 Valéry compares himself with a recently wounded man:

Je voudrais te raconter tout ce que j'ai senti [...] si
resonger aux jours passés n'était aussi douloureux pour
moi que le geste d'un blessé curieux qui effleure les
linges sensibles et coagulés [...] ⁷⁰

a comparison he returns to in a later letter to Pierre Louÿs:

"Je viens de faire une rencontre qui me démolit. Ecrivez-moi vite,
j'ai besoin de pansement [...]" ⁷¹ and which persists into 1942 —

when, in Sur Phèdre Femme, he speaks of Phèdre's immobility:

arrêt de l'esprit semblable à l'immobilité du blessé,
qui attend une immense douleur du moindre mouvement ... ⁷²

Valéry tells Gide of attempts at suicide — "J'ai, très
raisonnablement, failli me détruire deux ou trois fois [...] pour des
motifs simples" ⁷³ — of which one is his folly in loving like other
mortals, and here we remember Hippolyte's fury at being reduced by
love to the same state, as was his father:

Et moi-même, à mon tour, je me verrais lié!

(Phèdre, I, 1, 1.195)

or, indeed, as Théràmène is careful to point out, to the state of
so many others:

Et, vous mettant au rang du reste des mortels,
[Vénus] Vous a-t-elle forcé d'encenser ses autels? ...

(Ibid., 11.63-64)

Valéry concludes his list with the heading Sentiment humiliant de donner à l'ennemi des forces qu'il n'a pas. This takes us back to the Comédie du système. The arms which he has given are the value lent to another: la valeur infinie qui s'est attachée à un être, à la promesse qu'il parut être.⁷⁴ They are the imaginary qualities with which the lover endows the beloved. Phèdre's vision of Hippolyte,

Tel qu'on dépeint nos dieux, ou tel que je vous voi ...

(Phèdre, II, 5, 1.640)

her self-delusions,

Il instruira mon fils dans l'art de commander;
Peut-être il voudra bien lui tenir lieu de père ...

(Ibid., III, 1, 11.804-805)

are all part of this Comédie, and it was one which Valéry had enacted for himself in 1891. "Tout le drame était mien," he writes to Gide, "[...] je me suis donné le spectacle de l'amour ..."⁷⁵

He idolised La Méduse, as he was later to recognise,⁷⁶ and curiously, he continues the parallel with Phèdre ("[...] et maintenant je m'intéresse vraiment à son enfant [...]"), as he thinks of La Méduse, absent on holiday with her child, adding, "[...] Nous aurons été bien heureux!"⁷⁷

All this, for Phèdre as for Valéry, or for any lover, is totally unnecessary for procreation, of whose nature Valéry speaks in Sur Phèdre Femme: "Sa fin n'est point l'exaltation de l'union le plus intime possible de l'Unique avec l'Unique ..."⁷⁸ Hence the artificiality, the caractère cependant feint, the Comédie; but nature is nevertheless inescapable, whether, like Racine's Phèdre, we call her Vénus — "C'est la région de l'Hyster qu'elle appelle Vénus."⁷⁹ — or whether she takes the form, as she did for Valéry, of La Méduse.

She, first of all his loves, set her mark upon him: la signe et le sceau de ces variations,⁸⁰ and the pattern she imposed was to endure to the end of his life. The coils of her hair, cheveux marins d'Odyssée,⁸¹ were to re-appear in the Parque's tresses and, more terribly, in the coiled snakes, ornements vipérins, of La Pythie (l.117), with whom, indeed, we can directly connect her. In 1918 Valéry sent Pierre Louÿs a copy of the poem and wrote on the text, "Je reviens à ton Pythie. Je commence par te rappeler que toute ma vie intellectuelle est dominée par l'événement 10 novembre 1892."⁸²

The event was, of course, the "apparition" of La Méduse at the concert Colonne, 26 years previously; yet the description of Valéry's feelings in the letter which he wrote to Louÿs at the time of the occurrence is unmistakably apparent in the text of the poem. The letter mentions various sensations: "[...] mouvement d'horreur, des effrois, des triomphes trop loin, de chutes et toutes les températures cruelles, des ongles aux vertèbres [...]"⁸³ A full comparison would be otiose, but the last element, the ongles, is particularly striking in relation to lines 195 - 197 of La Pythie:

Le long de ma ligne frileuse
Le doigt mouillé de la fileuse
Trace une atroce volonté ...

This apparition of the monstre (démon, incube)⁸⁴ can be compared with an earlier "apparition" of La Méduse, described in letters written (one of which was never sent,⁸⁵) to Fourment; she appeared "la veille exacte de mon départ" from Montpellier to Paris. Here we have another event which left Valéry, like Hippolyte, horror-struck:

[...] stupide, aveugle à la grâce, à la beauté du charme -
et seulement affolé de l'étonnement [...] La structure
de l'événement annulait même l'être et le mien qui le
faisons ...⁸⁶

Valéry may well have had this extraordinary experience in mind when

his sensibilities were again so deeply aroused in 1943 and he writes of the monstrous in Phèdre. The letter refers to the sign of some design, or plot, une combinaison,⁸⁷ to a connection, rapport voulu; the passage, to the moment when the revelation of the monstrous must appear, which can only be with the shock,

au moment où il put apparaître - à la lueur du choc de l'événement. Et, en ce point, sur le faite, entre les versants de la sensibilité, illumine cette ruine, Phèdre.⁸⁸

The dominating idea of destruction already linked with La Méduse ("rencontre qui me démolit") is conveyed by the annulait of the letter, the ruine of the passage, and is inherent in the shock of the apparition, l'événement, in both letter and passage. Here, surely, we have the Parque and the Pythie together — la lueur de la douleur (La Jeune Parque,⁸⁹ 1.41), l'épouvantable éclair (La Pythie,⁹⁰ 1.151), ornement de ruine (LJP, 1.454). The poems are connected, as Lawler points out in his marvellous analysis, Lecture de Charmes, "La Pythie, non seulement par les circonstances de sa genèse mais par son affabulation même, se relie étroitement à La Jeune Parque [...]"⁹¹ The feelings of outrage, violation ("Victime d'un viol secret," is how Lawler describes La Pythie) and terror at the possible loss of reason before the incomprehensible, the vertigo, horreur du vide, of which Valéry writes⁹² and which resulted from his first experience of love, so vividly expressed in La Pythie,

Qu'ai-je donc fait qui me condamne
Pur, à ces rites odieux? ...

(11.121-122)

led to reactions of paranoiac intensity. Again he felt himself to be the target, the victim of a conspiracy (combinaison, rapport voulu):

Le doigt mouillé de la fileuse
Trace une atroce volonté ...

(La P, 11.196-197)

His reactions led to the well-known attempt to divorce thought and sensibility, to reduce his reactions to an object of observation, "phénoménaliser tout le psychisme."⁹³ His efforts to regain control over his own mind were Racinian, both in method:

Pour bannir l'ennemi dont j'étais idolâtre ...
Je pressai son exil ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.295)

and in intensity:

Contre vous, contre moi, vainement je m'éprouve ...

(Phèdre, II, 2, 1.541)

and might indeed have eventually led to a state not far removed from schizophrenia — he himself writes of his schizophrénie intellectuelle,⁹⁴ but for Racine, and the release he achieved through the form he owed to Racine. In the content of the plays, and of Phèdre in particular, he found his own experiences; through the form of the plays, he was able to transcribe those experiences. The importance of Racine for Valéry's first experience of love, the relevance of Racine to the whole of Valéry's personal life, does not merely lie in Valéry's recognition of the essentially Racinian nature of his own reactions to love, but in the fact that the whole of his intellectual development was directed by that first experience of love, was an attempt to exorcise his devil, "mon démon de ces mois morts."⁹⁵ When he acknowledges that La Jeune Parque — a poem instinct with Racinian thought and feeling, owing so much to Racinian form — is bound up with his own life, is in a sense autobiographical,⁹⁶ we must inevitably think of his other statement to Pierre Louÿs, "toute ma vie intellectuelle est dominée par l'événement 10 novembre

1892 . . . ,"⁹⁷ and recognise the importance of Racine as companion and exorcist in the personal experience of passion which energised the whole structure of Valéry's life.

Valéry's second experience of passion was to renew and develop the pattern set by La Méduse. The woman who revived his feelings was Catherine Bourdet-Pozzi, the K of the Cahiers (where she is also referred to as Karin, CK, Eurydice, Béatrice and Bice).⁹⁸ He brought to this second experience all the intensity of feeling roused by La Méduse — a fact he acknowledges, when K had produced a similar crisis:

Si je me regarde historiquement je trouve deux événements formidables dans ma vie secrète. Un coup d'état en 92 et quelque chose d'immense, d'illimitée, d'incommensurable en 1920.

J'ai lancé la foudre sur ce que j'étais en 92. 28 ans après, elle est tombée sur moi - de tes lèvres.⁹⁹

If the presence of K's annotations in the Cahiers is accepted as evidence that her influence over Valéry can be extended as far back as 1910, she too, as well as La Méduse, may have had her part in La Jeune Parque and Charmes — may perhaps be the Ismène of a passage which appears in the Cahiers of 1918, beginning -

Ismène semblait vivre par son propre goût et parce qu'il lui plaisait. Son visage et son corps semblaient à son choix . . .¹⁰⁰

(Ismène is, of course, the double ensoleillé of Aricie in Phèdre.)¹⁰¹

Even more interestingly, K may have been connected in Valéry's mind with the femme à la Racine of whom he writes in 1915,¹⁰² especially as we later find a passage on critics of Racine marked with her initial — a passage which introduces Phèdre: "C'est ainsi que parlait la vraie Phèdre et non d'après un plan . . ."¹⁰³

Certain pseudonyms other than K which Catherine Pozzi was given in the Cahiers, in particular Béatrice, suggest that she was for long

the ideal mistress; the process of divinisation was in action. At the peak of this period of exaltation there is a passage which suggests the consummation rather than the beginning of passion, pace Judith Robinson:¹⁰⁴

5-11.30 - 26 Sunday. P. le Serpent. —

"Et maintenant allez! Ite nunc missa est! A présent que vous vous êtes fait ... le plus grand bien, il ne vous reste plus qu'à vous efforcer de vous causer le moindre mal", dit la Sagesse la plus profonde, ... de l'aube et du corps apaisé.

— Séparez-vous, corps curieux.

Some pages after this passage, Valéry takes his love to Racine's tribunal,¹⁰⁵ as it is pictured in Phèdre, and presents it to Phèdre's judge, Minos:

Puis je me faisais de graves reproches
(Contraint d'avouer tant de forfaits divers ...)

[One hesitates to bring conventional morality into this situation, but both Valéry and K were married, and K's first annotation in the Cahiers is a Greek sentence whose translation is Personne ne pèche volontairement.¹⁰⁶] The passage continues:

J'écoutais Minos dans l'absolu de la nuit et la limpidité du silence ...

(... Fuyons dans la nuit infernale ...
Minos juge aux enfers tous les pâles humains ...)

and, in a moment of exaltation, triumphs over the judgments of reason (or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, over the dictates of experience):

Je lui répondis par une analyse effrayante de rigueur.
Je montrais à ce juge infernal que sa balance n'était ni sensible, ni juste. Je lui enseignai l'usage de décimales
[...]¹⁰⁷

[...]Je cassais ses arrêts. Je renversais ses jugements.
(Je crois voir de sa main tomber l'urne fatale ...)

Unfortunately, Minos was to be proved right. It would be a hard task for any woman to coincide with her image in a poet's mind. The

woman who is so loved, as Valéry already knew, is unreal, the creation of her lover — "Je t'aime, donc je te ne sais pas. — Donc je te bâtis — je te fais, tu te défais."¹⁰⁸ — was what he wrote in 1913. He was to see K as just such a chimaera, in another passage demonstrating the persistence of his pattern, when the claws of La Méduse, ongles aux vertèbres, reappear as the eagles' talons below:

La femme qu'on aime est un monstre - et on ne peut aimer qu'un monstre. Nécessairement [...] On ne peut aimer que l'on n'assemble à l'être aimé une quantité de propriétés ou qualités - qui justifient cette passion - comme on donnait au griffon des puissances d'aigle et de lion. (Memento K!)¹⁰⁹

"Délivre l'univers," cries Phèdre, "d'un monstre qui t'irrite!" (Phèdre, II, 5, 1.701). K, like the Méduse, was to be a powerful obsession, the Racinian mistress, l'objet, in the language of préciosité (a term which Racine and Valéry use frequently); and love was again to be the Racinian mal, the irresistible force. Once desired,

l'être aimé joue désormais dans la machine profonde de celui qui l'aime, le rôle d'une pièce essentielle ...
[...] Cet objet sur lequel je ne puis rien, dont les lois me semblent caprices, correspond donc aussi à l'idée que l'on se fait des divinités - 110

C'est Vénus toute entière ...

Again we have the passage from love to hate, the transformation of goddess into Fury, the Parque into the Pythie, the degradation:

... Altération profonde, ruineuse, due à une attente à notre "orgueil" ou à notre conception de notre puissance naturelle ou espérée ...¹¹¹

a change for the worse which Valéry later summed up in Sur Phèdre Femme, "le masque se difforme et devient celle d'une Furie ..." ¹¹² under the shock of an unbearable insult:

Et d'un refus cruel l'insupportable injure, ...

(Phèdre, IV, 6, 1.1229)

It is the classic reaction of the Racinian hero, and reminds us not only of a Phèdre but of a Hermione, of a Roxane; and we even find in the Cahiers the alternate tu and vous so characteristic of Racine's transcription of an outburst of passion rejected by its object —

Tu as cassé quelque chose en moi - tu m'as fait si mal
que je ne pense plus qu'à moi [...]
Vous me dites que ce sera mon dernier amour. Je l'espère
bien ...¹¹³

in the same speech, as it were, as with Hermione's tu:

Ingrat, je doute encor si je te n'aime pas ...
(Andromaque, IV, 5, 1.1368)

succeeded by her vous:

Achevez votre hymen, j'y consens ...
(Ibid., 1.1371)

Hermione is here chosen as an example of unrequited desire because she too, we remember, became a fury for Oreste:

Dieux! quels affreux regards elle jette sur moi!
Quels demons, quels serpents traîne-t-elle après soi? ...
(Ibid., V, 5, 11.1635-1636)

and Valéry too shows the almost triumphant despair of an Oreste:

Il y a dans l'amour [...] un élément de désespoir presque
infini, à l'état pur, comme satisfait [...] et je
reconnais à ce sentiment les amours les plus profondes [...]¹¹⁴

Grâce aux dieux, mon malheur passe mon espérance!
Je te loue, ô ciel, de ta persévérance!

(Andromaque, V, 5, 11.1613-1614)

Nothing is lacking of Racinian love, down to the sentiment
d'humiliation of the passage Etats aigus. Valéry apostrophises
himself thus:

Tu t'es avili. Tu t'es laissé [...] enchaîner de
regards [...] puis obéir, puis contraindre, subir, souffrir,
toucher à l'extrême de douleur, traîner à terre, et enfin
bafouer [...]¹¹⁵

Oreste, Hippolyte, Phèdre spring to mind. Again we leave the word

with Phèdre:

O toi qui vois la honte où je suis descendue,
Implacable Vénus, suis-je assez confondue! ...

(Phèdre, III, 2, 11.813-814)

Moreover, it is after the transformation of the beloved from goddess to Fury has taken place that Valéry, considering love, rejects the Stendhalien image of love as crystallisation in favour of the Racinian image of poisoning: intoxication. Valéry sees the poison as injected by the contaminating weapon, the aiguillon envenimé du sexe, in a passage which goes on,

Traiter amour comme poison.

Idee des poisons par voie sensitive.

L'intoxication image plus féconde que la cristallisation.

Ces poisons se diffusent, se généralisent ...¹¹⁶

Hippolyte, we are told in the récit de Théràmène, that description of the effects of passion, was destroyed by a god¹¹⁷ and it is

Hippolyte whose speech describes the diffusion of passion:

Dieux! que dira le roi! Quel funeste poison
L'amour a répandu dans toute sa maison!

(Phèdre, IV, 6, 11.991-992)

even before Phèdre's image of the chemin plus lent (Ibid., V, 7, 1.1636).

Let us also cite finally this passage on love from the Cahiers, written at a time when Valéry's passion for K was obsessive, and appreciate the echoes of Racinian language, the Racinian images, the Racinian passion:

Les agitations insensées de l'amour, ces flammes qui
soufflent et se tordent, éclairent fantastiquement suivant
la direction du grand vent, la nuit la plus noire!¹¹⁸

It is a passage in which we see Valéry experiencing the reality of the agonies suffered by a Phèdre, possessed by the flamme si noire, the accuracy of the description,

J'ai languì, j'ai séché dans les feux ...,

(Phèdre, II, 5, 1.690)

and the power of the vision which obsessed Hippolyte:

La lumière du jour, les ombres de la nuit ...
Tout retrace à mes yeux les charmes que j'évite;
Tout vous livre à l'envi le rebelle Hippolyte ...

(Ibid., II, 2, 11.544-546)

So far, we have cited examples of Valéry's expression of his experience of love which seem to us to echo the images and conceptions of love which he had met in Racine. The resemblance seemed too great to be accidental, although we have to wait until the period of Valéry's third passion to find him comparing himself implicitly with Racine, and recognising the kinship between his own experience of love and Racine's portrayals. In an entry which begins as literary criticism, he dismisses Racine's imagination as very ordinary, but, and this he again underlines, this imagination was drawn from personal experience, "bien alimentée par son expérience intime affective." Then, after briefly dismissing Corneille, Valéry continues with one of his more revealing personal admissions: "[...] Je connais par moi-même que l'écrivain ose plus ou moins user de ce qu'il est. [...]"¹¹⁹

That is, we repeat, Valéry recognises Racine's portrayals of love as relevant to his own experiences. He could only have recognised emotional truth, as distinct from dramatic expediency or adherence to a conventional picture, by comparing Racine's concept of love with his own emotional experiences (and not for the first time). This recognition is further borne out by his verdict on Corneille in the same passage, where he states that the latter's work is not, like Racine's, fed by his own experiences: "Ce qui n'est pas dans Corneille, qui voit gros, fort, et devant témoins."¹²⁰

This admission, which it took Valéry so long to make, was to be

repeated in the unpublished notes of his speech for the Racine Tercentenary, which sum up for us all his thoughts on Racine. In the notes he again writes of the part Racine played in his own intimate life, "qui parle d'un auteur parle de soi-même,"¹²¹ and again, "quoi de plus vrai que le vrai rôle que tient un auteur dans sa propre vie?"¹²² Indeed there are other signs which point to Racine's involvement with Valéry's emotional life — the use of arithmetical calculations, especially those which appear on the same page as deals with Racine's Phèdre¹²³ — and a lapse into Italian on page 17, always a sign of deep feeling on Valéry's part.¹²⁴

The personal affinity between himself and Racine which Valéry in 1931 had begun to acknowledge and which he proudly admits in 1938 continues to be apparent in his third and fourth experiences of love. His third grande passion was that for the woman who appears most often in the Cahiers as NR, nr, but also as Néère. This pseudonym, Judith Robinson tells us, is an anagram of Renée,¹²⁵ but combining the elements of the sea and its mythology, it must also remind us of Valéry's first goddess, with her cheveux marins d'Odysée. The feeling of repetition, of recognition, as Valéry's description of an encounter with Néère shows, were at this time very strong:

[...] Te revoici, coincidence — Exquise torsion et tension de l'être. Étranges jalousie, ivresse, énergie, idolâtrie, tendresse et volonté [...]¹²⁶

— a vocabulary reminiscent at once of his passion for La Méduse and of Phèdre's state of mind in Act I, scene 3 — and it is, of course, at this period that we find the passage Etats aigus, Valéry's own chart of his recurring symptoms, with the dates of his 'attacks'.

If no more Racinian conception of the nature of love can be found than the above-mentioned Etats aigus, this resemblance was,

once more, to be borne out by the more tragic aspects of the affair.

In 1933 we find the despairing analysis:

La sensation d'impuissance sur un être, - enveloppant et masquant l'impuissance où l'on est d'agir sur soi.

Il y a alors un triple thème de destruction: tuer le désir; tuer le désirant; tuer le désiré. Et ceci fournit un cycle psychique ...¹²⁷

— the theme of the Racinian hero in all its variations from a Hermione or an Oreste to a Phèdre, and one which Valéry later comments on in his Sur Phèdre Femme:

[...] Et si la possession de quelqu'un s'impose à la vie profonde de quelque être comme sa condition indispensable (ce qui est la loi même de l'amour absolu) cette affection devenue vitale fait bon marché de toute vie quand le désespoir la déchire [...]

Phèdre, quand elle désespère, tue. Ayant tué, elle se tue.¹²⁸

If Valéry recognised and commented upon the recurrence of familiar states of mind, familiar sufferings, during this affair —

Quelle étrangeté - que de souffrir les mêmes tourments ou presque les mêmes - pour des objets toujours les mêmes, et reconnaissant les mêmes phénomènes [...] ¹²⁹

he observes — we find that when we turn from this period to the final years of his life and consider his terminal attack of the malady of love, the cycle is complete. While Valéry was absorbed by his last great love, the woman referred to in the Cahiers as 773 and 991,¹³⁰ it is not too much to say that Racine's translation of love in Phèdre and the play itself — even, dare I say, the character of Phèdre herself — were a constant background against which Valéry was re-living his past experiences and a referent for their validity.

The obsessive power characteristic of his passion, when "l'Objet n'est pas de ceux dont l'esprit peut avoir raison"¹³¹ — a remark from a passage connected with both K and 733 — is underlined by another passage for the same year:

Divines sont toutes les choses [...] qui sont telles [...] que l'on ne peut vivre sans elles une fois qu'on a vu qu'elles existaient. Elles prennent alors une nécessité redoutable.¹³²

Je reconnus Vénus et ses feux redoutables ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.277)

He dwells on Racine's most famous heroine at length in his preface Sur Phèdre Femme, written for a special edition of Phèdre printed in 1942. This essay, I was assured by Judith Robinson, is linked with his passion for 733, and it contains, among much else, the horrifying description of the moment when love changes to hate; and in this year, too, Valéry plays on Racine's word monstre when recognising the state of intoxication which sees the beloved as a creature of fable, "La femme que l'on aime est un monstre et l'on ne peut aimer qu'un monstre."¹³³

We have already underlined the reappearance of earlier states of mind in the Valéry of these final years — the man who was again under the double stress of love and war. We shall conclude by noting that at the end of his life the Valéry who at 20 had described his passion for La Méduse as "un triomphe d'indomptable gueuse,"¹³⁴ found at 72 that Racine was right to use the word proie to describe the victims of love, l'amour vrai, as he himself had experienced it.

Everything that has been deduced with reference to the first and second periods of Valéry's important love affairs is thus confirmed in periods three and four, when Valéry shows us how he has known that the passion which has struck him down is that described by Racine, and how his whole lifetime's experience only served to convince him of the accuracy and justesse of Racine's depiction of love as applied to himself, down to Racine's very choice of images. The best-known of all Racine's lines,

C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée
(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.306)

is renewed in all its force for the septuagenarian whose poetry had, as we shall see, borne the imprint of Racine, but whose life also was inseparable from his experience of that work.

Le Vrai Monde Individuel

Notes

1. Cahier 6, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (hereafter C 6), p.820 (1918).
2. Lettres à Quelques-uns (hereafter L Q), p.179.
3. C 22, 24 (1938).
4. Agathe Rouart-Valéry, Introduction Biographique (hereafter I B), Valéry, Oeuvres Complètes Tôme I, la Pléiade, p.65.
5. Valéry, Oeuvres Complètes, Tôme I, la Pléiade (hereafter O C V, I), Notes, p.1637.
6. Letter to Pasteur Valéry-Radot, I B, p.65.
7. C 6, 508-509 (1917).
8. O C V, I, p.499.
9. "J'eus l'impression d'être devant mon ébauche" Sur Phèdre Femme (hereafter S P F), O C V, I, p.508.
10. C 22, 24. See also unpublished notes for a speech for the Racine tercentenary celebrations (hereafter Racine notes) (Appendix A), p.12.
11. C 23, 736-737.
12. C 4, 361 (1909-1910).
13. L Q, p.123.
14. I B, p.65.
15. C 5, 570 (1915).
16. C 7, 162.
17. C 5, 750.
18. C 23, 736 (1940).
19. C 26, 119. See also Racine notes (Appendix A, pp.7, 8, 12, 14).
20. Terre mêlée à l'herbe et rose, porte-moi
Porte doucement moi, ô trouble et bienheureuse ...
21. Op. cit., p.26.

22. Correspondance de Paul Valéry et de Gustave Fourment (hereafter C V F), p.169.
23. See note 7.
24. C 23, 411 (1940).
25. See Chapter II.
26. C V F, p.57.
27. C 22, 842.
28. C 4, 439 (1910).
29. C 6, 747 (1917).
30. Valéry, Oeuvres Complètes, Tôme II, la Pléiade (hereafter O C V, II), p.1163.
31. C 1, 689.
32. C V F, Préface, p.28.
33. C 8, 268.
34. C 27, 687.
35. C 15, 358.
36. Cahiers, la Pléiade, Tôme II (hereafter C P, II), Notes, p.1602.
37. Cahiers, la Pléiade, Tôme I (hereafter C P, I), Appendice, section 46, p.1384.
38. C 20, 383 (1937).
39. C 29, 296.
40. C P, II, Notes, p.1605.
41. C 24, 836.
42. Correspondance Gide-Valéry (hereafter C G V), p.159.
43. Ibid., p.204.
44. Henri Mondor, Précocité de Valéry, p.37.
45. Unpublished letter to Pierre Louÿs, 21 November 1891, communicated to me by Dr C. G. Millan.
46. C G V, pp.122, 127.
47. Ibid., p.147.

48. Précocité de Valéry, p.37.
49. C 23, 89-90.
50. C 27, 457.
51. Ibid.
52. C 15, 358.
53. C 23, 589-590 (1940).
54. Ibid.
55. C V F, Préface, p.28.
56. O C V, I, p.449.
57. Ibid., p.506.
58. C G V, p.122.
59. Phèdre, I, 3, l.278.
60. C G V, p.140.
61. Ibid., p.160.
62. Ibid., p.127.
63. Ibid., p.107.
64. C 8, 762. (My italics)
65. C V F, p.127.
66. C 27, 416-417.
67. C G V, p.113.
68. C 29, 575.
69. C 3, 553.
70. C G V, p.110.
71. See note 45.
72. Op. cit., p.506.
73. C G V, p.160.
74. S P F, O C V, I, p.499.
75. C G V, p.110.

76. Ibid., p.122.
77. Ibid., p.159.
78. S P F, p.502.
79. C 27, 457.
80. C V F, p.125.
81. C G V, p.159.
82. Unpublished note, no.189 of Vente Château d'Écrouves, written in 1918. (Communicated to me by Dr C. G. Millan)
83. C V F, Préface, p.28.
84. Ibid.
85. This was the letter describing his sensations, toutes ces démolitions, aroused by the vision (or imagination) of La Méduse. (C V F, p.127)
86. C V F, p.125. (My italics)
87. Ibid.
88. C 24, 401.
89. Hereafter L J P.
90. Hereafter La P.
91. Op. cit., p.134.
92. C V F, letters 31 and 32.
93. C 20, 383 (1937).
94. C 16, 459 (1933).
95. C V F, Préface, p.28.
96. C G V, p.448.
97. See note 82.
98. C P, II, Notes, p.1597.
99. See note 64.
100. C 6, 864.
101. Barrault, Mise-en-Scène de Phèdre (hereafter M S P), p.99.
102. C 5, 570 (1915).

103. C 6, 460 (1918).
104. C 7, 632. There is a marginal addition to this entry giving the date, 22.9.20. Valéry's dates are rare indeed and usually alert us to the importance of an occasion. Judith Robinson's note on p.1597 of her edition of the Cahiers describes this passage as referring to the birth of Valéry's love for K.
105. C 7, 644 (1920). All the bracketed quotations from Phèdre which follow, in parallel with quotations from this passage in the Cahiers, come from Act IV, Scene 6, ll.1275 et seq.
106. C P, I, p.1384.
107. It seems possible that Valéry may here be thinking of a passage in a letter to Gide, written at the time of his love for la Méduse. In it he speaks of spider-web scales, "les balances de toiles d'araignée ou j'ai pesé quelques larmes" (C G V, p.110). In this case the "Minos" in the passage from the Cahiers stands for the mind (toiles d'araignée) which can judge the value of passion — his own mind, and Racine's. One would certainly need a delicate balance to judge the weight of a tear!
108. C 5, 91 (1913).
109. C 26, 211.
110. C 7, 867.
111. C 7, 427-428.
112. Op. cit., O C V, I, p.507.
113. C 7, 664.
114. C 7, 691. (My italics)
115. C 8, 439.
116. C 9, 640.
117. "On dit qu'on a vu même, en ce désordre affreux
Un dieu qui d'aiguillons pressaient leur flanc poudreux ..."
(Phèdre, V, 6, ll.1539-1540).
The idea of divine intervention is clearly there, though Racine, in accordance with the dramatic conventions of his time, is careful merely to suggest (on dit) the god who goads Hippolyte's steeds on to their destruction.
118. C 8, 385.
119. C 15, 334 (1931). See also the earlier passage C 9, 301 (1923), and Racine notes (Appendix A, p.12).

120. Ibid.
121. Racine notes (Appendix A, p.12).
122. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.7.
123. Ibid., pp.7, 13. The figures on p.13, in conjunction with the content of the page on which they appear, cannot but remind us of the ciphers designating Valéry's mistresses.
124. See passages relating to his mother's death (I B, p.51), and to K's death (C 7, 694).
125. C P, II, Notes, p.1602.
126. C 15, p.31.
127. C 16, 475.
128. Op. cit., p.504.
129. C 16, 498.
130. C P, II, Notes, pp.1605-1607.
131. C 27, 507.
132. C 27, 708. (My italics)
133. C 26, 211.
134. C G V, p.109.

CHAPTER II

UNE FEMME A LA RACINE

Une Femme à la Racine

In 1915, Valéry's heartfelt conviction of the superiority of 17th century literature over all others finds expression in the following vivid passage, where he looks at it in general and contrasts it with the literature of other ages:

La littérature du XVIIème paraîtra [...] un jour le dernier mot de toute la littérature humaine - avant la "Science" - avant le temps où les habitudes, les froides violences, les visées anti-humanistes de la science ont pénétré même les lettres. Une femme à la Racine, un bourgeois de Molière deviennent des personnages impossibles [...] L'écrivain s'est [...] guindé jusqu'au voyant - l'écrivain, isafe! l'écrivain, Napoléon, l'écrivain, homme d'Etat [...]
Quant au musicien, c'est Dieu - c'est la création par l'orchestre, l'ordre et le chaos en mi.b. majeur.¹

No-one, reading this statement, can doubt the cardinal importance of Racine to Valéry the writer. It becomes even more significant when we discover its relationship to other references to Racine throughout the Cahiers. It was written in 1915, that is, when Valéry was engaged on La Jeune Parque and on some of the poems of Charmes. It is the first of four references to Racine which appear in that year.² This increase in number is sudden, for until 1915 we find only single, sporadic references to Racine in the Cahiers.³ This interest is further developed in 1916, with nine references,⁴ and although the number drops to five in 1917, we must remember that that year saw the completion of La Jeune Parque, and indeed, one of the references is the vital list of referents⁵ under the heading "Comme j'ai fait la J[eune] P[arque]". Here, in the marginal addendum, Racine is specifically mentioned by name as one of the authors whose work has contributed to the composition of La Jeune Parque (the others being Virgil, Chénier, Baudelaire, Euripides, Petrarch, Mallarmé and

Rimbaud). Furthermore, two of the great plays are mentioned by name (or, at least, by easily identifiable initials), Esther in the addendum, under the citation P[rière] d'E[sther], and Athalie in the main body of the entry

A l'inverse de Lulli au Th[éâtre] Français j'ai mis des notes sur le S[onge] d'A[thalie] [...]

while an extremely prominent position is given to a quotation from Phèdre, Hippolyte's line from Act IV, scene 3:

Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur ...

which occupies a whole line to itself below the time-table detailing the years devoted to the composition, from 1912 to 1917.

Then in 1918 there are ten references to Racine, fairly close together,⁶ suggesting that Valéry was dwelling on those qualities of Racine which had aided him in his long struggle, especially as one of the references consists of a lyrical description of Hippolyte's tragic and hubristic claim, quoted above, which Valéry hails as "Ce vers le plus beau des vers,"⁷ and another is an analysis of part of the Prière d'Esther.⁸

After this plethora, the references drop to one in 1919 (C 7, 451) and although there are some six in 1920,⁹ the number of references gradually drops to only one or two a year, three in 1922,¹⁰ two in 1923.¹¹ One of these, however, is the capital Préface-Dédicace, which merits a full quotation here:

Préface-Dédicace

Comme autrefois les dieux ou les anges ou non moins [illegible word, possibly aisément] les démons et les mauvais esprits [Valéry's cancellation] prenaient la figure de - (ou de quelque - [Valéry's lacunae]) afin de parler aux hommes, ou de les épouser ou bien de se mêler de leurs affaires, et de connaître leur condition par eux-mêmes, de partager leurs plaisirs (et même dans le cas le plus illustre, de subir la torture et la mort).

Ainsi l'esprit que j'ai/qui est en moi [Valéry's

alternatives] ~~est-peut-être~~ que [Valéry's cancellations] peut-être, quelquefois, a pris le visage de Racine ou de Jean de la Fontaine ou de Malherbe ou de tel autre pour dire dans leur langage ce qui [passage unfinished]¹²

Such sporadic references continue at this lower rate, averaging one to three per year, with one in 1924,¹³ two in 1926,¹⁴ and four in 1927 - the year in which, if we are to believe Valéry, he first saw a performance of one of Racine's plays. He dates the entry, a rare occurrence with Valéry, but one which marks moments of particular significance. It is headed Bájazet (Petite Scène) and continues:

Cinq actes sans arrêt
Première fois que je vois et entends Racine!¹⁵

There are again only sporadic entries from 1928 to 1937.¹⁶ With the approach of the second world war, and Valéry's renewed preoccupation with composition, and a return to memories of the composition of La Jeune Parque during the first world war, there is a marked rise in the number, as in the importance, of references to Racine.¹⁷

The last of these is of cardinal importance, referring back to 1914 and La Jeune Parque:

Honneur et justice au théâtre classique! Pendant la guerre 14-18 - faisant laborieusement La J[eune] P[arque] avec le sentiment intime d'accomplir une oeuvre parfaitement inutile et déliée du temps, hommage à une tradition littéraire expirante, me comparant à quelque moine du IVième ou Vième siècle, etc. -

j'ai compris ou cru comprendre ce Racine que j'ignorais, puisqu'il m'avait été imposé 25 ou 30 ans par le collège - donc ennemi - etc. Je lui donnai alors une valeur mienne, une importance réelle, - parce que je voyais, çà et là, dans son travail, des solutions à des problèmes qui étaient analogues à certains des miens, (dont le principal était la continuité de la forme - et les sacrifices qu'elle exige si on la place devant tout [...])¹⁸

This renewed interest in Racine continues with six entries in 1941,¹⁹ and seven entries in 1942.²⁰ Then we witness a gradual decrease in the last years of Valéry's life, with three entries in 1943,²¹ one in

1944²² and three in 1945.²³ Thus the interest aroused by his study of Racine in the period of World War I never left Valéry completely, reaching its height during the periods of the two world wars - that is to say, we repeat, during the period of Valéry's first great period of poetic creation, and of the composition of La Jeune Parque in particular, and during the period when he returned in spirit to that achievement. This pattern of increased numbers of references to Racine from 1915 onwards, in particular these passages which we have quoted at length, must surely invite us to consider the work of Racine in relation to La Jeune Parque, especially when we bear in mind Valéry's comment that the greater part of the poem was completed in 1915 and 1916.²⁴

Now, interesting as such references are, what is far more important is their content. This makes it imperative to consider, not just the plays of Racine in general, but one play in particular, Phèdre. We might well have begun to suspect its supremacy from Valéry's list of sources for La Jeune Parque, where a quotation from the play is so prominently displayed, and from the way in which Valéry subsequently dwells upon the same quotation, analysing it in detail, and praising it in the highest terms.²⁵ This supremacy, however, is confirmed beyond doubt, when we find that throughout the Cahiers references to Phèdre, to its technique and the perfection of its poetry, and to the character of Phèdre herself, predominate over references to any other work of Racine's. Out of almost one hundred references to Racine in the Cahiers, some 26 (that is, over one quarter) have to do with Phèdre, as against half that number for Athalie, four for Bérénice (one of these is a quotation from the preface), three for Esther, two for Iphigénie (again, one is from the

preface), one for Bajazet and one each for Britannicus and Andromaque. Again, the range of reference for Phèdre is very wide, extending from language to love, education, criticism, character analysis (in spite of Valéry's contention elsewhere²⁶ that this is superfluous in evaluating a tragedy). Remarks on Athalie are almost totally confined to the field of language. Those on Bérénice, to language and sensibility, on Esther to language (the Prière in particular) and stage technique. The single reference to Bajazet is valuable, for it confirms Valéry's attitude towards Racine's treatment of the psychology of his characters, but nowhere, save in references to Phèdre, is there that concentration on all the qualities of a Racinian tragedy. This is equally true of Valéry's references to Racine, and to Phèdre, other than in the Cahiers. Among the published essays there is nothing, with regard to Racine's great plays, to compare in intensity with Sur Phèdre Femme, written during the second world war. Its blend of repulsion and attraction may have other roots besides Valéry's recollections of La Jeune Parque (see section I, p.31), but it confirms the hold which Racine's greatest play had upon Valéry. A final piece of evidence which has only recently become accessible is the unpublished notes for Valéry's proposed speech for the Racine celebrations. These again confirm the importance of Phèdre. In them, Valéry enlarges on his experience in front of a copy of Phèdre on the quais,²⁷ mentions Racine's preface to Phèdre, (p.18), and quotes Phèdre as an example of Racine's heroines (p.11). He does include Agrippine and Athalie in these also, but if they were, as he notes, among Racine's choir of tragic singers, we suspect that the principal singer, the prima donna assoluta, was Phèdre.

Such confirmation of the importance of Racine, and of Phèdre in particular, is of great value. Enriching and supporting the evidence of the Cahiers, it justifies our study of Phèdre in relation to La Jeune Parque. In the following pages, therefore, we shall examine certain aspects of Phèdre which may have provided Valéry with some of the answers to his problems. Some aspects of Racine's work certainly did - Valéry says so specifically in the passage already quoted in full on p.46, part of which is repeated here for convenience:

Je lui [Racine] donnai alors une valeur mienne, une importance réelle, parceque je voyais çà et là dans son travail, des solutions à des problèmes qui étaient analogues à certains des miens ...

(C 23, 736-737)

Some of Valéry's problems had been Racine's own. Our first concern, therefore, is to determine what, exactly, were Valéry's problems. It is useful to enumerate them here.

They were, above all, problems of form. His poem was to be a sort of funeral oration to the beauty of the French language:

un petit monument peut-être funéraire, fait des mots les plus purs et de ses formes les plus nobles, - un petit tombeau sans date - sur les bords menaçants de l'Océan du Charabia ...²⁸

and to its music, by using all the resources of its prosody:

... utiliser tout ce qu'il y avait de chantant dans la poésie française - entre Racine et Mallarmé [...] ²⁹

The passage just quoted above gives us a clue to a third problem, the problem of content. It later continues:

[...] il y a eu dans le désir ou le dessin de cette fabrication de La Jeune Parque l'intention absurde [...] de faire chanter une Idée de l'être vivant-pensant? [...] de supposer à ce chant, aussi uni et continu que possible, une substance de ...³⁰

Here the passage breaks off, but not before it has provided us with the valuable word "Idée". Light is thus thrown on Valéry's famous and vital definition of the heroine herself:

[...] c'est une rêverie dont le personnage en même temps que l'objet est la conscience consciente [...]³¹

With this clue, Idée, to guide us, we can better understand Valéry's difficulty in reconciling content and form in his projected elegy. What was to be its final subject-matter (substance) had in fact long occupied Valéry, and insisted on obtruding on his attempts to banish speculation through poetic composition:

J'étais las d'agiter depuis bien longtemps des questions assez difficiles. Mon esprit, occupé de certains sujets qu'il s'était donnés, et dont il n'était pas aisé de se défaire en les épuisant, se trouvait s'être construit des cercles infernaux [...]. Mais comme je me remettai à la poésie, cet esprit, toutefois, ne me quittait point, et je ne tardais pas à reconnaître, sous les premières fleurs de ma nouvelle saison, bien des problèmes et énigmes de l'ordre abstrait ...

(LQ, pp.122-125)

Two quotations from the Cahiers, separated by a three-year interval, will best explain what abstractions Valéry was seeking to embody through his Idée:

Trouver les modulations bonnes pour unir dans le même ouvrage les différentes activités - styles - moments d'un esprit - le mien.

and

Je cherche ce qui me permettrait d'imaginer le sommeil comme le raisonnement [...] et suivre même légitimement jusque chez l'enfant, jusque chez l'animal, chez l'ivrogne, chez le malade, le fol et l'idiot, - le mot à mot de leur être tout entier.³²

The second passage, in particular, develops what is involved in Valéry's 'consciousness', "une Idée de l'être vivant-pensant."³³ He wishes to reproduce the total human entity. This necessarily

implies a portrayal of the physical situation of such a being, for its surroundings impinge upon any consciousness in its quality of point of interaction between microcosm and macrocosm, man and his universe. It implies too, some account of the nature of the stimulus which activates consciousness, the forces which drive it; the impact of reality upon the interdependent systems of mind and body.

To sum up, we now have some conception of the magnitude of the problems confronting Valéry, as a poet searching for a particular form. He needed nothing less than a framework vast enough to include the physical world, a pattern generalised enough to contain the revolutions of the physical universe together with the revolutions of the successive phases of a consciousness, his Idée, as it passed from one state to the next. These successive phases must portray not only all the possible moods of a mind in possession of its senses, but also show the same mind in its non-reasoning states of dream, folly, or madness. They must include too the passage from waking to sleep, from life to death - that complete eclipse of consciousness, but without an account of which no reproduction of its activities would be complete. Moreover, such a pattern must accommodate the description of a stimulus which could embody those forces acting upon the consciousness to arouse it, to initiate the series of moods, its successive states, or bring about its eclipse, either through madness, sleep or death.

Such were the formidable outlines of the problem of presenting the mental processes and situation in the world of Valéry's complete human being. When we remember that, in addition, the presentation of this complicated pattern was to be couched in a language so

severe and pure, yet so musical and rich ("tout ce qu'il y avait de chantant") as to resemble an aria by Gluck,³⁴ and the whole was to embody a lament - a lament for the language, perhaps too for the minds which had brought that language to its perfection, we marvel.

Let us now, therefore, examine in detail the various ways in which Racine's greatest achievement, Phèdre, may have helped Valéry solve his problems.

As we know it today, La Jeune Parque is not the enclosed and tragic circle of Valéry's first intention. That the tragic was, indeed, his intention is shown first, by the emphasis upon the funereal in his description of the poem, as a "monument funéraire", "tombeau sans date", in his letter to Albert Mockel quoted earlier.

Secondly, there are the earlier states of the poem, which appear in Octave Nadal's study of La Jeune Parque.³⁵ These show that the Parque contemplated suicide in two forms: firstly by adding her own efforts to the attempt of her slayer:

Oui, si d'un fer fortuit, j'eusse trouvé la pointe,
A la pressante main, ma main se serait jointe,
Forte de la conduire et de substituer
Ma violence au dieu qui ne sait pas tuer.³⁶

secondly, as a sacrificial victim:

Que boive le soleil ce flot qu'elle dédaigne,
Que le jour en ruine orne ce flanc qui saigne
Et que baissant leur gloire aux grandeurs de ces yeux,
S'assombrisse le sable et s'efface les cieux ...³⁷

Furthermore, as Nadal notes, she was finally to achieve it, in yet a third form:

Sur un feuillet qui précède immédiatement la transcription

de la fin du poème, on voit s'amorcer cette solution du suicide [...] Le dernier acte est bien en effet celui d'une tragédie [...] La note funèbre est elle-même recherchée; elle ne sera trouvée que dans l'admirable séquence de "l'invisible rocher glissant d'algues" [...]

and he gives drafts for the final act, one of which will suffice to confirm our contention with regard to the intended suicide:

L'invisible rocher glissant d'algues, propice
A ne vouloir qu'un rien distrait
A ne vouloir pas même éviter le trépas
disparaître victime d'un seul pas
A ne laisser de soi qu'un souvenir de cri³⁸
que l'alarme d'un cri

It is noteworthy too that the idea of the tragic circle was very much in Valéry's mind at this time, as is proved by his own annotation of one of the pages of the fourth state of the poem:

"Final. Je reviens à l'état initial. Je ferme mon cercle. J'efface mes pas."³⁹

Nadal himself does not show how Racine is relevant here, but when we remember Valéry's preoccupation with Racine and with Phèdre, during the composition of his poem, we can see that the 'blueprint' of Phèdre (if we may borrow Valéry's description of another Racinian tragedy⁴⁰) is a perfect example of the closed universe common to all tragedy, as Jean-Louis Barrault has pointed out.⁴¹

Indeed, the outstanding characteristic of the structure of scenes in Phèdre, and hence of the play as a whole, is the return to the point of inception. Barrault illustrates this with reference to Hippolyte and Phèdre in the opening scene of the play:

Il [Hippolyte] termine la boucle de la scène (qui se ferme comme une circonférence parfaite) [...] Il est revenu à son idée fixe, chercher son père [...]⁴²

and

A la fin du monologue (I, 3, ll.269-316) nous retrouvons la Phèdre mourante qui avait fait son entrée

au début de la scène [...] la circonférence a encore une fois été parfaitement dessinée.⁴⁵

To these comments of Barrault's, we may add that as the circumference of the total circle closes in Phèdre, the characters have returned to the situation that was theirs when the play began. Hippolyte, Phèdre and Aricie are still on the shores of Trézène, as at the start of the actual play. At the very end of the play, there is a return to the situation as it was in the remote past, at the real beginning of the tragic cycle, for Thésée is left alone with Ariane/Aricie, with the monster slain in the background. This applies no less to the two main divisions within the play, as they are defined by the presence or absence of Thésée (Acts I-III, 2 covering his absence, Act III, 2-7, his presence), for at the end of the first half Hippolyte was still resolved on flight (II, 6, 11.773-774) and Phèdre had attempted to kill herself (II, 5, 11.710-711), while at the beginning of the second half of the play, Phèdre (or Oenone acting for her) was attempting to banish Hippolyte (III, 3, 11.899-900) and to efface herself, as she had done in the past (I, 3, 11.295-296, and 11.309-310). Hippolyte too, repeats his effort to flee from Trézène (III, 5, 11.925-926). But Hippolyte cannot escape, except by death. Thésée brought him there and Thésée keeps him there, dead, and thus for ever. Hippolyte's "escape", his death, which Théramène must describe, completes his cycle. Phèdre's actual suicide, coupled with Oenone's, completes hers.

Now this construction of a system of cycles, as described by Barrault, corresponds very well with Valéry's conception of consciousness itself:

Si l'on pouvait voir la suite vraie des pensées et sentiments on trouverait une certaine périodicité

(compliquée) qui serait humiliante. Ce qu'on croyait une création perpétuelle apparaîtrait cyclique.⁴⁴

Or, as he puts it earlier and more picturesquely, describing his own mental processes:

Comme un animal intellectuel - son esprit circule - broie - dans un cercle.⁴⁵

In Phèdre, then, the first great circle enclosing the tragic universe of the play, with its system of scenes as inner circles, can be seen as representing the total cycle of consciousness/life, whose end is in death, the extinction of consciousness.

Again, continuing the parallel with Valéry's system of successive cycles of consciousness, we find a similar possibility of a new potential in the series of inner cycles, and even in the apparent finality of Phèdre's suicide and Hippolyte's death. In the inner circles, we see how, at the end of the first half of the play, a new potential has been created for Oenone, as she seizes the initiative from Phèdre,⁴⁶ for Hippolyte, as he moves towards Thésée in order to confess his love.⁴⁷ Even the close of the great outer circle holds the promise of a new potential, a new life for Thésée and Aricie, a re-birth of Hippolyte's innocence and a promise of undying fame.

It thus seems reasonable to claim that the great outer and lesser inner circles of Phèdre may well have offered Valéry a pattern for his blueprint of consciousness, which he saw as following a similar pattern.

It is equally possible that part of the inner divisions of Racine's play may have served as the pattern for another aspect of the consciousness which Valéry wished to portray, namely the total entity, - what he calls the "être vivant-pensant" - that is, sleep:

Je cherche ce qui me permettrait de regarder ou imaginer
le sommeil comme le raisonnement [...]⁴⁸

In Phèdre, the presence or absence of Thésée, which defines the bounds of the two inner circles, as indicated above, can be seen as bringing about the differences between the sleeping and the waking mind. During Thésée's absence from Trézène, the remaining characters abandon themselves to the fantasies of desire, unhindered by the restraints of the waking world of reason, the barriers that Thésée's existence and his rule impose on them. With his return, all the characters are brought together and the barriers of the waking mind are re-imposed. The characters see themselves, and each other, in the light of Thésée's judgement.⁴⁹ This activity, be it noted, is not confined to Thésée's entourage. He too, recognises himself in the mirror held up to him by the events in the second half of the play, and passes judgement on himself:

O mon fils! cher espoir que je me suis ravi! ...⁵⁰

for the supposed actions of Hippolyte, as Oenone presents them, (in IV, 1) reflect the rape and adultery of which Thésée himself has so often been guilty in the past, and Hippolyte's real crime (if crime it be; Racine allows us to be in two minds about this), namely the attempt to abduct Aricie, repeats Thésée's own abduction of Ariadne. It is Phèdre who, in reinstating the son, restores a long-lost innocence to the father, and thus reflects the earliest events of Thésée's own past (II, 5, ll.638-644).

Now, whether we think of sleep as the normal or bodily abnegation of the conscious reasoning faculty, or as the reverie of the dreamer, both entail a withdrawal of the personality from everyday life, and wakening brings the reintegration of the divided

personality. In 1906 Valéry wrote:

L'homme qui s'éveille se donne des sensations pour se retrouver lui. Il retrouve quoi? Sa mémoire en relation avec ses sensations actuelles. Le présent lui restitue son passé - et quel qu'il soit, s'y enchaîne.⁵¹

The man who awakens looks at himself, as in a mirror, until he has re-assembled his fragmented identity:

(...) On se retrouve, RE - On se fait Je. Comme celui qui voit quelqu'un dans un miroir et s'y reconnaît - puis se fond, et de 2 fait 1.⁵²

Having re-assembled and recognised all the dispersed elements of his personality, the awakened dreamer differentiates dream and reality, judges the elements presented to him and acts upon the judgement:

Veille est l'état dans lequel la faculté d'agir JUGE tout ce qui advient, le classe - et donne suite ou non.⁵³

The passage which we have already quoted (p.50) and which refers to Valéry's desire to find a logical substratum for a portrait of the mind in sleep or awake, continues:

Je cherche ce qui me permettrait de suivre même légitimement, jusque chez l'enfant, chez l'animal, chez l'ivrogne, chez le malade, le fol, et l'idiot, - le mot à mot de leur être tout entier.

(C 3, 23) (1903)

Now, in Phèdre, not only is there no character who does not experience Goya's sleep of reason which engenders monsters, but the play itself exhibits a series of states of mind which are the logical result - "légitimement" - of the effects of shock upon body and mind. The scenes of Phèdre trace these effects, from the physiological effects upon the body (I, 3, ll.273-276), through the varying degrees of folly, intoxication, delirium and madness caused by love, which has all the effects of a disease, which reduces its victims physically,

J'ai langui, j'ai séché, dans les feux, dans les larmes.
Il suffit de tes yeux pour t'en persuader ...

(Phèdre, II, 5, 11.690-691)

and in the end, kills them. These states are shown affecting the mind of each character - but always in an oscillation between the poles of attraction and repulsion, and always arousing the defences of pride and self-deception.

From the above analysis of the cyclical structure of Phèdre, we can see that the play offers a form which can be adapted to Valéry's description of the cycles of the mind. Now, if we look at the structure of La Jeune Parque in broad outline, we find striking parallels with the structure of Phèdre as we have described it. The totality of the poem can be seen as enclosed in the great outer circle which contains the whole of the Parque's existence and which was, in fact, to have been closed by death. We have, too, the pattern of inner circles - the two parts of the poem corresponding to the double structure of Phèdre, the Parque's night of abandon and her day of reason with its reflection on the events of her night, and her final judgement. We have, in addition, a series of inner cycles, that succession of states of mind aroused by the stimulus of passion, desire, pride, fury, despair, hope. The Parque too, as she passes from one mood to the next, oscillates between desire and repulsion and the stimulus of desire arouses the same defences of pride and self-deception as are common to all the characters of Phèdre.

These considerations warrant a more detailed examination of La Jeune Parque, but before we embark on this, there is yet another aspect of the structure of Phèdre which merits consideration, for it relates to the first of Valéry's problems as we indicated them above, particularly the problem of form.

The need to find a means of portraying the cycles of the mind had, as it were, obtruded itself upon the first of his preoccupations with regard to La Jeune Parque - the need to find a musical and poetic language for his elegy, a voice for his lament. Valéry's early drafts betray this need. "Vox, retrouve le vox"; we find this remark, emphasised by the red pencil he used, in one such note. This preoccupation may be seen, perhaps, as an underlying thread linking the changing states of mind he describes (and we remember that it is his own mind, the poet's mind, that is in question). Here, too, it may be that Phèdre contributed to the emergence of the Parque's final voice, in the inner logic of the play.

The reference here is to the definition by Hubert of such logic as that which gives a true structure to a play:

Celle qui consiste à maintenir une sorte de cohérence intérieure, une logique profonde, et qui donne à la pièce sa véritable structure [...]⁵⁴

This inner logic in Phèdre, leads inexorably towards the exteriorisation of speech. Speech is a phenomenon which provokes further speech, the voice from the sea, the rumours in the first half of the play (I, 4, ll.323-324 and II, 1, ll.380-388), Thésée's own voice in the second (IV, 4, l.1168), in a logical progression. Not only Phèdre's final confession to Thésée, but all the other confessions - Phèdre's to Oenone (I, 3), Hippolyte's to Aricie (II, 2), Phèdre's to Hippolyte (II, 5) and Hippolyte's to Thésée (IV, 2), proceed inexorably from the first confession, that of Phèdre to Oenone.

Furthermore, speech reveals the characters to themselves and to each other, in a continuous process of gradually increasing perception, until the final stage of complete recognition. One may even say that such an effect is achieved by what is virtually the same argument

between the same antagonists, whoever is speaking, for the inner logic of the play reduces the multiple voices of the characters to two warring factions. There is on the one hand the voice which argues for physical desire, urging Phèdre towards Hippolyte, Hippolyte towards Aricie, and on the other, the voice which is absolute for gloire, and therefore for silence and extinction of the body. The comparison with La Jeune Parque and its central dialectic, is, we submit, inescapable, and we shall see this in detail later in the chapter.

Not long after the appearance of La Jeune Parque, and while Valéry was still analysing Racine's work and dwelling on the uses to which it could be applied,⁵⁵ we find the following significant statement:

Racine a trouvé [...] une forme de qualité. On peut alors tirer de cette forme des applications, un fonctionnement [...]
(C 7, 567) (1920)

Can we identify some of these "applications"? Phèdre offers a wonderful example of construction, a whole series of patterns. Are there signs (in La Jeune Parque) that Valéry made use of them? Or, if he has, has the palimpsest of superimposition, the result of Valéry's desire to achieve simultaneity together with continuity, and produce something like a poetic version of the surfaces of Riemann,⁵⁶ obscured all trace of such patterns?

Well, of some, at least, it is possible to say that they have left signs. Firstly, there is evidence, for instance, of the circular design Barrault ascribes to Phèdre, which we have already discussed. For, in La Jeune Parque (as in Phèdre), we find the principal characters, namely the Parque and the Sun, in the same position at the end as at the real beginning of the events of the poem.

The Parque is still on the rock, her Trézène, sur ce roc (1.505). She is still facing the sea, as she was at the outset (11.104-106 bring the sea on to the scene). The poem in its final form shows a return here to the earliest moment of the Parque's memory, as she remembers the entry of the sun upon the scene:

Quel éclat sur mes cils aveuglement dorée ...
(1.110)

She is again in the presence of the sea at the end of the poem,

Recevant au visage un appel de la mer, ...
(1.500)

and coming to meet her is the Sun, her lover, "ce jeune soleil" (1.467). There is evidence too of a new potential, similar to the one we observed in Phèdre:

Doux et puissant retour du délice de naître ...
(1.510)

Within this framework or outer circle, the complete return of the circumference upon itself, the first of the secondary system of circles, - the two main sections into which the poem is divided, and which are defined by the absence of the sun and its return - displays the same return to the original situation. The first half begins with a movement towards the rock. The Parque has risen (ayant quitté ma couche, 11.24-25), and moved to her position at the sea's edge (et sur l'écueil mordu par la merveille, 1.25), hearing the sea's voices,

La houle murmure une ombre de reproche ...
(1.9)

borne on the wind (vent simple, 1.1).

The close of the first half repeats this situation of the Parque, a movement towards the rock and towards the sea and its voice borne

on the wind:

Où va-t-il, sans répondre à sa propre ignorance
Ce corps dans la nuit noire ...

(11.302-303)

Non loin parmi ces pas, rêve mon précipice ...
L'insensible rocher, ...

Et le vent semble à travers un linceul
Ourdir de bruits marins une confuse trame,
Mélange de la lame en ruine ...

(11.313-314, 316-318)

These lines effectively suggest the close of a cycle (linceul), and would, in fact, have closed a complete cycle of existence in the poem as originally conceived.⁵⁷

As we now have the poem, there is the close of a cycle, as at the end of Phèdre, but also the initiation of a new one (again, as in Phèdre, where the suggestion of a future for Aricie begins a new cycle (Act V, scene 7, l.1654)). In Valéry's poem, the Parque's movement away from the sand with its footprints (1.322) and the dangerous sea, back towards the earth, initiate the new potential:

Terre trouble, et mêlée de l'algue, porte-moi! ...

(1.324)

Again a similar return is discernible in the second of the two great inner circles of La Jeune Parque. The Parque is still on her sea-washed rock (affleurement d'écueil, 1.336; l'onde basse, lave, 1.337), facing the sun (Un miroir de la mer / Se lève, 11.327-328), and the paling stars, l'effacement des signes (1.329). This situation is echoed in the finale, where we again find her on her rock, facing the sea, watching the stars disappear,

Quoi! mes yeux froidement que tant d'azur égare
Regardent là périr l'étoile fine et rare ...

(11.485-486)

and in the presence of the sun:

O, sur toute la mer, sur mes pieds, qu'il est beau! ...

(1.492)

A cycle is closing. We have a suggestion of this in the very line which implies rebirth, if we can forgive Valéry his pun, the n'être hidden under the délire de naître (1.510).

The parallel with the smaller circles of Phèdre, although less clear-cut, can also be detected. The series of sensations and moods through which the Parque passes, find her always returning to her basic situation, the border-line between life and death,

Je pense, sur le bord doré de l'univers, ...

(1.164)

enclosed within her variously described bounds, confins sans espoir (1.68), plages de soie (1.174), Pierre et paleur (of her body) (1.211), bords sinueux (her body, again) (1.261). The shores of the devouring sea (l'oubli vorace, 1.321) echo perhaps the shores of Trézène, bords dangereux (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.268), for the Parque? They are the shores to which she inevitably returns from each mental evasion of her circumstances — or rather, as for Phèdre and Hippolyte, limits from which she has never really escaped. She is continually brought back to a consciousness of their barriers, and she recognises this when she sums up the situation in the second half of the poem:

Mon corps désespéré tendait le torse nu
Où l'âme, ivre de soi, de silence et de gloire ...

Ecoute, avec espoir, frapper au mur pieux
Ce cœur, qui se ruine à coups mystérieux ...

(11.372-373, 375-376)

This recognition does not occur until the second half of the poem after the return of the light — just as recognition, in Phèdre, comes with Thésée.

Let us now come to another major preoccupation of Valéry - namely, with sleep. In the contrast between the first and second acts of La Jeune Parque we may see Valéry's contrast between the mind asleep and the mind awake. In the second half, the Parque reunites her fragmented self, and recognises the whole.

Mystérieuse Moi, pourtant, tu vis encore!
Tu vas te reconnaître au lever de l'aurore
Amèrement la même! ...

(11.325-327)

This process of recognition has here begun with the return of the light, as again, it has begun in Phèdre with the return of Thésée:

Regarde: un bras très pur est vu, qui se dénude ...

(1.333)

and the Parque reunites her past and her present,

Je te revois, mon bras ... Tu portes l'aube ...

(1.334)

for she sees her past mirrored in the light of the returning day,

... Un miroir de la mer
Se lève, et sur la lèvre, un sourire d'hier ...

(11.327-328)

just as, in Phèdre, the mirror of events, to which we have referred, reveals their true selves to the characters of Racine. Like them, she judges, separating dream from reality:

Alors, n'ai-je formé, vains adieux si je vis,
Que songes? ...

(11.495-496)

Here the Parque is judging the drama she plays out to herself during the sleep of her reason:

Je sais ... ma lassitude est parfois un théâtre ...

(1.69)

As we have already seen, the poem consists of just such a

procession of sensations and states of mind as the successive scenes which we discovered in Phèdre. Again there is oscillation between attraction and repulsion, all at the demand of an irresistible force. The physiological and mental impact of desire, the reactions of pride, intoxication, shame, fury, delirium, rejection, compassion and despair which we have seen the characters of Racine experiencing, all are here, while parallel with the changes of mood there is that increase of perception such as accompanies the changes of mood in Phèdre.

This increase in perception, comparable with that which we uncovered in Phèdre, is to be found in the Parque's dual recognition of her own nature and of the nature of the world around her. It stimulates and indeed requires the creation of speech. Words are the instrument the Parque uses to question herself, and to express what she finds. They are of major importance to the progress of perception; as she expresses what is happening to her, the Parque, like a Racine character, discovers herself. The same impact of reality, the shock that was responsible for the Parque's sensations and her reactions to them, is responsible for the emergence of the language through which the Parque betrays her self to herself and creates her dream with its characters,

Dites! ... J'étais l'épouse et l'égale du jour. ...

(1.107)

The shock is responsible too for the increase in the effect of speech, as for the first time she hears herself:

Et de mon sein glacé rejailisse la voix
Que j'ignorais si rauque, et d'amour si voilée ...

(11.200-201)

Similarly, once she has exteriorised her passion through speech to

Oenone, Phèdre can go on and expose it to Hippolyte. Finally comes the voice of the rest of the world, as with Phèdre -

Lorsque jusques au ciel mille cris élancés ...

(1.831)

N'entends-tu pas frémir ces noms aériens,
O Sourde ... (?)

(11.235-236)

accompanying and increasing the Parque's perception, until the final tremendous voice, the summons from the sea, produces a complete awareness, embracing body, mind and soul. The Parque pronounces her own verdict, after the summing-up:

Alors, malgré moi-même, il le faut, ô Soleil,
Que j'adore mon coeur où tu^{te} viens connaître,
Doux et puissant retour du délice de naître,
Feu vers qui se soulève une vierge de sang
Sous les espèces d'or d'un sein reconnaissant!

(11.508-512)

We have now compared the main structures of Phèdre and La Jeune Parque as they can be related to Valéry's problems of portraying his cycles of consciousness. Let us now turn to a related problem - that of translating the contrasting periods of lucidity, the mind in control of its functions, and of the eclipse or final extinction of the lucid consciousness, whether through sleep, mental disorder, or death.

The obvious solutions were the eternally reproduced contrasts between day and night, summer and winter. That the first was under consideration by Valéry is borne out by an entry in the Cahiers in 1913:

Le Jour et la Nuit de l'homme, l'intellect fini,
finissant, et la netteté; et le Confus, ce reflux,
cette reprise. Cette nuit confuse - engendre et reprend
les êtres. Ce jour les termine, les élève à l'essence -
les sépare entre eux, les recombine.⁵⁸

There are, of course, any number of ways in which these

comparisons could be used, but we must remember that any imagery Valéry might choose had to be compatible with the imagery used to portray his cycles of consciousness. Since, therefore, the structures of Phèdre have been shown to lend themselves to Valéry's own structure of the cycles of the mind, and since the structures of Phèdre already contain a division of the play into two contrasting halves, it seems relevant to enquire if Valéry could have borrowed more than the broad outline of its structures from Racine's play.

It is useful to start with Thésée. Thésée, as Racine presents him, is not merely a legendary hero. He is the double of Hercules:

L'ami, le compagnon, le successeur d'Alcide ...

(Phèdre, II, 2, 1.470)

He is therefore a solar hero, and his presence or absence imposes a psychological time-scale upon the play which runs counter to the apparent time-scheme of dawn to dusk required by the rules of 17th century tragedy. Phèdre proceeds from the darkness of Thésée's absence to the light of his presence. This darkness, when the play opens, is still lit by the star of gloire (for Thésée's wife and son are determined to be worthy of their status), and by the flame of desire, Phèdre's flamme si noire (I, 3, 1.310). This flame is made more intense by the news of Thésée's death, the sea-borne rumours, apparently confirmed:

On sème de sa mort d'incroyables discours.
On dit que, ravisseur d'une amante nouvelle,
Les flots ont englouti cet époux infidèle ...

(II, 1, 11.380-382)

Thus his absence, like that of the sun, may symbolise death, or, as we have had occasion to note, the dreams which haunt the mimic death of sleep. Ismène's description of his absence and later, his own, of his sojourn in Hades, lend themselves to either interpretation.⁵⁹

In reality, however, Thésée is already on the point of return. The news of this (Act III, scene 3) brings awakening to Phèdre,

Je connais mes fureurs, je les rappelle toutes ...
(III, 3, 1.853)

as the return itself does to Hippolyte:

Quel il [Thésée] m'a vu jadis, et quel il me retrouve! ...
(IV, 6, 1.994)

This return of Thésée brings chill and terror, the cold of the false dawn perhaps.

Où tendait ce discours qui m'a glacé d'effroi? ...
(Ibid., 1.987)

Hippolyte asks, for this sun is still hidden by clouds, as his son, confronting him, discovers,

Puis-je vous demander quel funeste nuage,
Seigneur, a pu troubler votre auguste visage? ...
(IV, 2, 11.1041-1042)

and full daylight will only return with Phèdre's dying words,

Et la mort, à mes yeux dérochant la clarté,
Rend au jour, qu'ils souillait, toute sa pureté ...
(V, 7, 11.1643-1644)

Here, then, in Phèdre, is the double circle of darkness and light, what Valéry calls "le sommeil comme le raisonnement" (C 3, 23). But we have begun in mid-cycle. The second half of our double circle, though it gives us the dawn of reason, does not complete the day for us. For a description of the effects of full sunlight, the day preceding Thésée's night, we must turn to the primal dawn of Phèdre's recollections in Act II of Thésée's first godlike appearance (1.640) in Crete, and how, later, he bore her off to Athens, where her future happiness seemed assured:

Mon repos, mon bonheur semblait être affermi; ...
(1.271)

We must turn to the childhood happiness of Hippolyte in Trézène, in the past regretted by Hippolyte and described by Théramène,

[...] ces paisibles lieux, si chers à votre enfance, [...]
Cet heureux temps n'est plus [...]

(I, 1, 11.30, 34)

This "day" has closed for both Phèdre and Hippolyte with Thésée's departure from Trézène, whither he had brought Phèdre, only to abandon her.

When we come to Valéry's poem, we see that the Parque's double circle follows the same pattern of dark on light. The poem, like the play, opens in the final hours of darkness, presided over by the stars,

L'immense grappe brille à ma soif de désastres ...

(1.17)

amid the voices of the sea,

La houle me murmure une ombre de reproche,
Ou retire ici-bas, dans ses gorges de roche,
Comme chose déçue et bue amèrement ...

(11.9-11)

and lit by the same fires:

Dieux! dans ma lourde plaie une secrète soeur
Brûle ...

(11.48-49)

The darkness is deepest immediately preceding the dawn. The Parque find herself in the night, nuit noire (1.303). The return of light is accompanied by the same foreknowledge of complete recognition (by the same icy chill as pervaded the return of Thésée):

Tu vas te reconnaître au lever de l'aurore
Amèrement la même ...

[...] un sourire d'hier [...]

Glace dans l'orient déjà les pâles lignes
De lumière et de pierre ...

(11.325-326, 328 and 330-331)

with the same burning effects of recollection as Phèdre's memories produce:

Sur le terrible autel de tous mes souvenirs ...

(1.340)

Again, as in Phèdre, the full light of day is not seen until the end of Valéry's poem. Concealment and illusion (voile évaporé, vêtements ravis (11.494-496)) are at an end; the apparently lost is restored through the presence of the young sun

[...] sa flamme aux remords ravit leur existence,
Et compose d'aurore une chère substance
Qui se formait déjà substance d'un tombeau ...

(11.489-491)

It must be noted also that the Parque's night, her sleep of reason, is a mimic death, as was Thésée's absence. Her couch is a tomb (1.468), her sheets winding sheets.

Dans vos nappes, où lisse elle imitait sa mort,
L'idole malgré soi se dispose et s'endort ...

(11.475-476)

The day preceding her sleep, her first dawn, her golden day, are brought before us by her memory. She remembers the period of her innocence,

Femme flexible et ferme aux silences suivis
D'actes purs! ... Front limpide, ...

(11.103-104)

and of her happiness, her security as the companion of the light, l'égale et l'épouse du jour (1.107) (again, the vocabulary attests Phèdre's position as wife of Thésée), as her long promenade in the sun finally leads her to the edge of the world, le bord doré de l'univers (1.164), and her evening with its sunset light, reflet de rougeur (1.188). The shadow (its length reflects the setting of the sun) envelops the Parque in a rêverie which insensibly becomes sleep;

the similarity between her description of 11.30-31,

J'ai de mes bras épais environné mes tempes,
Et longtemps de mon âme attendu les éclairs,

and her "daylight" memory of reality,

Et nouée à moi-même au creux de mes cheveux
J'ai mollement perdu mon empire nerveux, ...

(11.435-436)

would permit this interpretation. Thus her first day is grafted on to the moment when we first perceive her in her darkness, and her full cycle of dawn to dawn is complete. Her day has closed, as had that of Hippolyte and Phèdre. In La Jeune Parque, as in Phèdre, we live through Valéry's "Le Jour et la Nuit de L'Homme" - more, the cycle of the seasons of the mind.

We have seen that the actions of Thésée in Phèdre provided a model which Valéry could have used for the lighting of La Jeune Parque, and for the movement of the seasons, but the importance of Thésée for the construction of Racine's great play does not end here. A solar hero, Thésée brings light, but not light alone. He is also an ally of Venus and Neptune, and, like the sun, has the power to assist generation and bring destruction. We shall find that his actions in Phèdre provide the conditions in which desire, with all its consequences, can be generated.

As befits the bringer of light, Thésée acts through the eye. In the illumination he provides, each lover sees the other, and desire is aroused. Again, as ally of Venus and Neptune, Thésée acts through the sea — first by means of sea-borne rumours, and then through his

own voice, raised in the terrible prayer to Neptune (IV, 2, 11.1065 et seq.), and through the final, terrifying voice from the sea,

Un effroyable cri, sorti du fond des flots ...

(V, 6, 1.1507)

In the first half of the play, Thésée's actions through eye and voice are directed towards the generation of desire, and in the second half, of death. Or rather, the emphasis in the first half is on desire, and in the second half, on death, for, in Racine's world, desire implies death, as Phèdre herself tells us:

Ariane, ma soeur, de quel amour blessée
Vous mourûtes aux bords où vous fûtes laissée ...
Puisque Vénus le veut, de ce sang déplorable
Je peris la dernière et la plus misérable ...

(I, 3, 11.253-258)

The actions which are described in the three expositions, Hippolyte's to Théràmène in Act I, scene 2, Phèdre's to Oenone in Act I, scene 3, and Aricie's to Ismène in Act II, scene 2, underline the kinship of desire and death, but they also show us that Thésée's actions have been an indispensable preliminary to the play. He has abducted Phèdre, and brought her to Athens, where she first sees Hippolyte (I, 3, 1.272), and later has taken her to Trézène, where she is again obliged to see Hippolyte: J'ai revu l'ennemi que j'avais éloigné (I, 3, 1.303). In Trézène, Hippolyte sees Aricie (I, 1, 11.50-51), and is seen by her (II, 1, 11.436 et seq.). We find Phèdre and Hippolyte resolving, the one on death (I, 3, 1.309), the other on flight (1.50). But the news of Thésée's death (a ruse — c.f. I, 1, 11.17-21), brought by ships newly docked (I, 4, 11.323-324), removes the restraints he had imposed on Phèdre, as his wife, and on Aricie, as his captive (II, 1). It also threatens Phèdre's son (I, 5, 11.343-348). Hippolyte goes to Aricie (II, 2), intending still

to depart, but her presence forces him to confess his love (II, 2, 11.525-555). Aricie urges him to see Phèdre (II, 3, 1.566-568), and Phèdre, persuaded by Oenone (I, 5), has already consented to see Hippolyte. Seeing Hippolyte, Phèdre confesses her love (and we note that it is the mention of Thésée that releases all her constraints):

... Puisque Thésée a vu les sombres bords,
En vain vous espérez qu'un Dieu vous le renvoie:
Et l'avare Achéron ne relâche point sa proie.
Que dis-je? Il n'est point mort, puisqu'il respire en vous ...
(II, 4, 11.632-627)

She is rejected, and again, resolves on death (but is prevented by Oenone (II, 5, 1.711)), and Hippolyte again resolves to flee (II, 6, 1.717). Thus the play hovers anew, as it were, upon the critical point of death and flight, and again is given fresh impetus by the actions of Thésée, brought, as before, by rumour,

Cependant un bruit sourd veut que le roi respire ...
(II, 6, 1.729)

and Hippolyte's flight is arrested (II, 6, 11.732-733). Phèdre, however, does not yet know of Thésée's approach and, still acting under the influence of Hippolyte's presence, abandons herself completely to the madness of desire (1.792), leading to the fatal submission to Venus of her desperate prayer,

Déesse, venge-toi: nos causes sont pareilles
Qu'il aime ...
(III, 2, 11.822-823)

It is at this very moment, this turning-point, that the other face of desire appears, Thésée's face of death, as Oenone announces his return, heralded by the shouts of the crowd (11.830-831).

At once, Phèdre resolves to die (III, 3, 1.857). But now, her death is a sign of guilt (III, 3, 1.872), and she fears for her children, hearing the voices of the world denouncing her (III, 3,

11.860-865), as she has already imagined the very walls accusing her:

Il me semble déjà que ces murs, que ces voûtes
Vont prendre la parole, et prêts à m'accuser
Attendent mon époux pour le désabuser ...

(III, 3, 11.854-856)

Thus her death is delayed by the means which appeared to urge it, Thésée's return. But the deciding factor is still the eye — Oenone announces Thésée's entry,

On vient; je vois Thésée ...

to which Phèdre answers:

... Ah! je vois Hippolyte
Dans ses yeux insolents je vois ma perte écrite ...

(Ibid., 11.909-910)

She allows Oenone to convince her, and the conditions for Hippolyte's death are now prepared. However, as Valéry is careful to observe,

Racine procède par de très délicates substitutions de
l'idée qu'il s'est donnée pour thème ...

(Rhums, Oeuvres Complètes, la Pléiade,
Tome II (hereafter O C V, II))

and this applies to the themes of desire and death here elaborated.

Desire is still acting upon Hippolyte. Although frozen by terror after seeing and hearing Thésée, he is still resolved to seek his father out again, to confess his love for Aricie (III, 6). Now, Thésée's fury, already aroused by Oenone's lying story (IV, 1), exasperated by the sight of Hippolyte, passes all bounds. His voice, raised in the terrible prayer to Neptune (IV, 2), brings Phèdre to him, in fear for Hippolyte's life:

Votre voix redoutable a passé jusqu'à moi, ...

(IV, 4, 1.1167)

Now she hears from him that Hippolyte loves Aricie, and first in shock, then in a fury of destructive jealousy (IV, 5, 1.1200), she remains silent, and the seal is set upon Hippolyte's destruction.

The same fury, however, is turned first upon herself (and again, at the height of her passion, by the mention of Thésée (ll.1263-1264)), and then upon Oenone (ll.1317-1318). Having dismissed Oenone, for a while she remains undecided,

... Elle porte au hasard ses pas irrésolus ...

(V, 5, l.1475)

and this indecision contrasts with the absolute firmness of her final action, her ineluctable resolve to confess to Thésée in Act V, scene 7. It is perhaps not too fanciful to suppose that it was the sound of that last echo of Thésée's voice from the sea, the effroyable cri (which responds to the voix formidable (V, 6, ll.1507-1509)), which determined her. At the very last, impregnated through the mediation of Thésée with desire and death, she brings truth to light, and so makes possible a new cycle of generation which will begin with Aricie.

In this way ends the play, to which the actions of Thésée have given the lighting, provided the scene of action which has brought the characters together, and allowed desire and death to act upon them. Can we find any "character" which fulfils a similar function in La Jeune Parque? Let us examine the rôle of the sun in Valéry's poem.

The Parque's sun is specifically a deity. He is the dieu brillant of l.122, and although not the only trigger of the Parque's drama, acts in concert with another agent, the bird, to permit it to function. We find the sun linked with the bird, and with death. The bird, un oiseau qui varie (l.170), appears and vanishes against the sun (ll.171-172). The dangers it brings are those of perception,

O dangereusement de son regard la proie! ...

(l.173)

which the light of the sun makes possible, cent fois sur le soleil.

The sun is also an agent of generation and destruction:

Rien ne me murmurait qu'un désir de mourir
Dans cette blonde pulpe au soleil pût mûrir ...

(11.115-116)

The sun's effects are first felt in the past, before the start of the poem, when the Parque sees herself as his bride, and his equal, just as Phèdre had been before her husband left her:

J'étais l'égale et l'épouse du jour ...

(1.107)

His first appearance, Quel éclat sur mes cils (1.110), is made against a background which suggests movement, vol (1.106) - flight, or theft, and by sea, ondes (1.104), large (1.106), together with rape, ravis (1.106), soulève (1.104), suggesting a parallel with Thésée's abduction of Phèdre.

Again, it is the sun which leads the Parque to the perception of her shadow, with the hint of sea, and death, under its aegis, as well as the suggestion of love (for as we know, the enemy, in the language of preciousness, is the beloved of either sex):

Si ce n'est, ô Splendeur, qu'à mes pieds l'Ennemie
Mon ombre! la mobile et la souple momie ...

Glisse! Barque funèbre ... [my italics]

(11.141-142, 148)

The Parque is thus shocked into the halt, the long rêverie, the mental darkness, that will merge into the dream from which she will awaken at the beginning of the poem. Now the sun has vanished, but she hears the voices from the sea, with their rumours of grief and desertion:

Une rumeur de plainte et de resserrement ...

(1.12)

In the darkness, lit by the stars, she has seen the serpent, and felt its bite. The resemblance between the earlier shadow, mobile, souple, glisse, and the shape and the action of a serpent, allow us to recognise the shadow's reappearance here, grown monstrous in dream, and linked with desire,

Quel repli de désirs, sa traîne! ...

(1.38)

and with pain, douleur laissée, lourde plaie (11.41, 48). Again we notice the parallel with Phèdre's blessure trop vive (I, 3, 1.304), and with the freezing and burning effects of desire, Phèdre's

Je sentis tout mon corps et transir et brûler, ...

(Phèdre, III, 1.276)

and the Parque's sensations, hérissée, main glacée (1.15), brûle (1.48).

The conditions for the triumph have now been created, and the poem/play can begin. It duly proceeds, from reaction to reaction, from resolve on death to abandon (L J P, 1.97), in the long delirium of desire, interrupted by reality, to the irresistible uprush of passion which paints the future spring. This surge of desire is bound up with the nearness of death:

O mort, respire enfin cette esclave de roi ...

(1.219)

but also with the return of the sun, which the Parque hears:

Les arbres regonflés ...

Meuvent sur le soleil leur tonnantes toisons ...

(11.230-231)

What she hears is also the voice of death, N'entends-tu pas frémir ... (1.235), linked with the sea as it bears away the individual, or the race, flottante forêt, arbre unanime (11.238-239).

Un fleuve tendre, ô mort, et caché sous les herbes, ...

(1.242)

The return of light, un miroir de la mer (1.327), and its sourire d'hier (1.328), which now follow immediately upon the passage in which the voices from the sea threaten death and oblivion (11.316-321), introduce a section of the poem which, although it looks forward to restoration of innocence, nevertheless sees a series of destructions — the destruction of the Parque's imaginary characters. The description of the Parque's "deaths" (11.361-405) is preceded by lines which suggest a reminiscence of the past, evoking Phèdre's memories of both Hippolyte and the young Thésée, Tel qu'on dépeint nos dieux (II, 5, 1.640), in her statement:

Nulle jamais des dieux plus près aventurée ...
N'osa peindre à son front leur souffle ravisseur ...

(11.366-367)

while the continuation

Et de la nuit parfaite implorant l'épaisseur
Prétendre par la levre au suprême murmure ...

(11.368-369)

conjures up Phèdre's vain attempts to achieve the darkness of death, dérober au jour, a final extinction;

Un reste de chaleur tout prêt à s'exhaler ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 11.310, 316)

as they do her final sacrifice with its dying speech.

The Parque's imagined deaths, too, are sacrificial deaths, as are those of Phèdre and Hippolyte, offered up to Venus (Phèdre, 1.249). Her description suggests this, evoking the altar steps, pente plus pur, (1.385), victime entr'ouverte (1.386) and the pyre

Vers un aromatique avenir de fumée
Je me sentais conduite, offerte, et consumée ...

(11.397-398)

Indeed rarely, it seems to us, can the elements of Racine's poetry have been transferred by another poet to another poem more than in this section of La Jeune Parque. It is not surprising that Valéry

should have recognised his own success here,⁶¹ nor that we should recognise the shades of Phèdre and Hippolyte. We may perhaps also be allowed to remark that a third death, adumbrated in the section on the couch (ll.465-480), was voluntary, as were the deaths of Phèdre and Oenone, and that its form recalls Oenone's suicide,

Dans la profonde mer Oenone s'est lancée ...

(Phèdre, V, 5, l.1466)

as the Parque recalls her mimic death in her couch-tomb:

Voici que tant d'orgueil qui dans vos plis se plonge
A la fin se mélange aux bassesses du songe ...

(11.473-474)

We remember too that Racine speaks of Oenone's evil deeds as bassesses (Phèdre, Préface). All the Parque's deaths are dreams:

Alors, n'ai-je formé, vains adieux si je vis,
Que songes? ...

(11.495-496)

They are the creations of the Parque's sleep, her mock death, and thus generated by its tides. The couch and its coverings repeat the idea of the trame (1.317), the linceul (1.316) that we find in the passage on the devouring sea. Its tides are suggested in the retours (1.472), the water by the nappes (1.475); and the idea of destruction, noyer (1.416), corrompirent (1.480), repeat the lame en ruine (1.318), while the Parque's tears, *les yeux dans ses larmes* (1.477), provide the essential bitterness of the sea.

Thus the absence of light, together with the sea and its voices, so important in the pattern of Phèdre, are agents in the Parque's dreams of love and death. The return of light, with the sun, combines with the voices from the sea in the destruction of her illusions, and of her supernatural and monstrous image of herself which she has created — the bird, the serpent and the image of

impossible perfection and purity, the monstre de candeur (1.503). She comes, in the sun (1.492) and hearing the waves, appel de la mer (1.500), is brought to the edge of a sea which is now truly the bord doré de l'univers (1.164), whither she has been led by the sun. Thésée has returned, young and glorious, and the Parque, her real innocence restored, rushes to meet him, as though Phèdre had accepted herself as no sinner in the 17th century, no adulteress of the ancient world, could have done. Yet the human being, the vierge de sang (1.511), is perhaps no less truly tragic than at the end of Racine's great play.

A major theme within the complex subject matter of La Jeune Parque is that of love, or rather the ravages of love and its effects upon the individual who experiences its domination. Here again it is significant that in defining this subject Valéry refers to Racine whom he admires for attempting to portray it:

Comment traduire l'amour vraie (C'est-à-dire cette composition de TOUS ingrédients de la vie sensible-sensible, selon une sensibilisation particulière, donnant une valeur "infinie" à un être et à la capture de cet être) en langage des dieux? [...] Il [Racine] a fait ce qu'il a pu, et merveilleusement, sans doute ...

Le mot proie est excellent ...

(C 27, 457)

J.P.

... (... grand sujet, amour haine ...).

(Notes diverses)⁶²

How to represent l'amour vraie, the absolute invasion of the self, the stimulus which should shock it into consciousness — "cette possession d'un système vivant par l'amour". Here was a project

to daunt even Valéry in his projection of "la conscience consciente".

Phèdre's own descriptions of its origins in herself are famous:

Le ciel mit dans mon sein une flamme funeste; ...

(V, 7, 1.1625)

and again, in the full impact of her torment,

Ce n'est plus une ardeur dans mes veines cachée,
C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée ...

(Ibid., I, 3, 11.305-306)

Now Venus, it is plain from Thésée's career (Phèdre, I, 1, 11.83-94), is a goddess whom Thésée has always served. Moreover, Venus, no less than Neptune, is a sea-deity, and she will produce results equally fatal and extraordinary at the end of the tragedy. However, as Marc Eigeldinger remarks,⁶³

La fatalité divine et héréditaire se confond avec la fatalité intérieure, en ce que la volonté des dieux ne demeure pas extérieure aux personnages, mais qu'elle agit en eux, qu'elle est incorporée aux mouvements de leur affectivité et leurs passions ...

(Mythologie solaire dans l'Oeuvre de Racine, p.91)

Valéry puts it rather more brutally, saying of Phèdre,

C'est la région de l'Hyster [Valéry's italics] qu'elle appelle Vénus ⁶⁴

In his equally brutal essay, Sur Phèdre Femme, Valéry writes of Phèdre possessed by desire as Racine's "Phèdre assez animal."⁶⁵

"Animal", however, is a word which can have a double meaning, if we think of the Latin anima; and the passion of desire in Phèdre can be seen as a longing of the mind and soul, as well as of the body.

Phèdre's passion for Hippolyte was also a passion for something pure and immortal, a longing for the godhead she sees in him, as well as the source of intolerable suffering, and of the degradation Racine describes in his preface to the play:

Les passions n'y sont présentées ... que pour montrer tout le désordre dont elles sont cause: et le vice est peint partout avec des couleurs qui en font connaître et haïr la difformité ...⁶⁶

Other aspects of desire emerge in Aricie's longing to conquer Hippolyte. Here a desire for the riches of the mind, and virtue, des plus nobles richesses (I, 1.441), les vertus de son père (Ibid., 1.442), co-exists with the cruelty of love, as a spur to action. Hippolyte's love is tantamount to treachery and disaster — for Aricie is the enemy of his father's house.

Contamination, poison (IV, 6, 1.991), love is nonetheless a source of possible tenderness, Théràmène's douceur (I, 2, 1.121), or the happiness Phèdre imagines for Hippolyte and Aricie:

Tous les jours se levaient clairs et sereins pour eux ...
(IV, 6, 1.1240)

Even she has been made happy by love, in her marriage to Thésée, and this double aspect of the nature of love holds even for Oenone's view of Phèdre's love for Hippolyte. To her, love is either a crime and threat (I, 3, 1.266), or hope for the future, a means of fulfilling the demands of her own overmastering passion for the life of her nursling. Her view varies turn by turn, as Phèdre's desire either threatens Phèdre's life and power (as in Act I, scene 3), or offers a means of preserving both (as in Act I, scene 5).

This double aspect explains why desire, in Phèdre, both fascinates and repels (Amour, haine); why it is both inspiration and poison to Thésée's entourage, as Hippolyte tells us,

... quel funeste poison
L'amour a répandu sur toute sa maison ...

(Phèdre, IV, 6, 1.1437)

and why it leads to both death and new life. Instigator and subject of Racine's tragedy, desire, following the path created for it by the

activities of Thésée, produces both mental and physical changes in the characters of Phèdre, as they waver between attraction and repulsion, desire for gloire and the desire for the beloved, through the successive stages of revolt, folly, hope and despair, of jealousy and fury.

The final stage, however, sees the birth of another force which has accompanied desire, and slowly grown along with it, — the force of compassion and tenderness. Only Phèdre is truly compassionate, and it is her compassion which betrays and destroys her, pity for Oenone,

Je n'ai pu soutenir tes larmes ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.311)

pity for her children, for their very existence and their inheritance, used by Oenone, who reminds Phèdre of her son,

Ses larmes n'auront plus de main qui les essuie ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.346)

and finally pity for Hippolyte (IV, 4, and V, 7) brings the truth to light. Phèdre's compassion restores innocence, and opens the way to rebirth. The tear of La Jeune Parque, as we shall see, is not far away.

We must here remind ourselves of the part love played for Valéry. An intolerable invasion of the personality, it acted as a goad to his mental powers. Creation, to Valéry, was escape from the suffering love inflicted. It thus gave the impetus not only to all the moods through which the mind could pass, to its reactions to the original stimulus, but to its intellectual activity. What more likely then than that Valéry should have chosen desire as the stimulus to set his drama of the mind in motion, and that he should have turned yet again to that play of Racine's in which he recognised

the most striking parallel to his own experience, as he described its effect upon his Parque?

How, in general, does Valéry's presentation of l'amour vraie show affinities with the foregoing? The originator of the Parque's tragedy may also be seen as le ciel, acting through the gods, the stars, which preside over her first appearance,

Tout-puissants étrangers, inévitables astres ...

(1.18)

and which, in an earlier state of the poem, were gods, dieux les plus éloignés.⁶⁷

She herself accuses another agent, the bird. She feels herself the object of its attack,

O dangereusement de son regard la proie! ...

(1.173)

reminding us of Phèdre, attributing her disasters to Venus in the famous

C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.306)

and of Valéry's comment, "le mot proie est excellent" (C 27, 457).

With regard to the Parque's exclamation, we may bear in mind that Venus' bird was the dove, and that the dove is associated with the Parque's guilt, with the soir favori des colombes, at whose memory she blushes. But she will realise later what her name has already made plain to us, that she is herself her own fate — as Phèdre also finally admits. Her own desires have initiated her own disasters:

l'immense grappe brille à ma soif de désastres ...

(1.17)

and her own gaze, turned inward like that of Phèdre, is the source of her dangers and her torment:

Mon oeil noir est le seuil d'infemales demeures! ...

(1.161)

She herself is the creator of the gods she accuses, whether Venus' dove, or Apollo's swan, and of the serpent:

Au milieu de mes bras je me suis faite une autre —
Qui s'aliène? ... Qui s'envole? ... Que se vautre? ...

(11.437-438)

The mention of the shell here (1.440) further helps to identify the Parque with the sea-borne Venus, and we remember that Phèdre also "becomes" Venus (Act III, scene 2).

However, this recognition is not at first apparent, and the Parque's desires are embodied in the serpent, in all its aspects. Linked with the stars by the Parque's jewelled arm, Je scintille, liée, bras de pierreries (11.16, 58), the serpent transmits, as it were, a wounding passion for immortality and purity from the stars (gods) themselves — the pur et surnaturel (1.20). It promises riches, but also disaster, désordre / De trésors (11.38-39). Valéry enlarges on the ignoble aspects of desire, promesses immondes (1.62), as well as upon the disarray, upon the menace, menace d'amour (1.59), the cruelty:

Tu ne peux rien sur moi qui ne soit moins cruel ...

(1.60)

Crime (1.27), treachery (1.43), and above all, suffering, douleur (1.41), blessée (1.42), plaie (1.48), are the consequence of the Parque's own poison, mon poison (1.44), and of the bite which has engendered it, un serpent qui venait de me mordre (1.37). At the same time the serpent possesses the sweetness, détours tout courus de caresses (1.78), and the fascination, danses massives (1.85), which attract its victim and make it a cherished object (Cher serpent, 1.51).

This double nature, sombre soif de la limpidité (1.40), — the very words evoke the flamme si noire — will create both attraction and repulsion, will lead to birth (the serpent is an enfantement (1.65)) and then death,

Tout peut naître ici-bas d'une attente infinie
L'ombre même le cède à certaine agonie ...

(11.73-74)

and, like Racine's desire, it will be accompanied by compassion —

L'âme avare s'entr'ouvre, et du monstre s'émeut ...

(1.75)

which indeed, was born together with desire from the assault of the stars — the larmes of line 21 tell us so.

Here is the source of the Parque's tear, which will show itself to be the compassion of the soul and of the heart.

Tu procèdes de l'âme, orgueil du labyrinthe,
Tu me portes du coeur cette goutte contrainte ...

(11.285-286)

Compassion is nevertheless treacherous, "au plus traître de l'âme" (1.43), because it betrays a mortal weakness. Gods do not weep. It is the Parque's own body, her mortal self, which has betrayed her:

Hier la chair profonde, hier la chair maîtresse
M'a trahie ...

(11.425-426)

In consequence, the Parque (and the comparison with Phèdre is most moving) has run the gamut of dreams, madness, shame, rage, as she oscillates between desire and rejection; yet the result is this jewel of compassion, the tear.

Phèdre's compassion kills her, as we have already said. La Jeune Parque, child of her time, extends self-knowledge to the whole of womankind and embraces her condition.

The analysis we have undertaken in this section may perhaps be seen as an attempt to answer Valéry's question more fully:

Que vaut et comment vaut pour A la trouvaille étrangère, 68
celle de B? désirable, utilisable = traduisible, etc ...

It seems to us that the relevance of Valéry's preoccupation with Racine, and in particular with Phèdre, has been demonstrated by a detailed comparison between Phèdre and La Jeune Parque. Let us look again at Valéry's own words:

Je lui [Racine] donnai alors une valeur mienne, une importance réelle, parce que je voyais ça et là dans son travail, des solutions à des problèmes qui étaient analogues à certains des miens. 69

The pattern of Phèdre has indeed been shown to offer viable solutions to some of Valéry's problems; its structure displays a pattern analogous to Valéry's conception of the pattern of consciousness, a model for the stimuli which arouse that consciousness. Its internal logic provides a blueprint for the effect of those stimuli in producing a language with which the consciousness can be explored, and a pattern that allows the findings of science, and the stress of personal emotion, to be translated into poetry. The mythological background to Racine's play provides the scenery and the actors for the universal tragedy of man and nature, namely that there is no escape from the natural destiny of birth and death, and that consciousness can only exist in partnership with the physical. There is, however, a continual renewal of the differing forms of the products of consciousness, the multiple creations of the intellect, whose existence is just as precarious — even the immortality of a work of art is relative, even the immortality of a Racine, of a

Mallarmé; yet the pattern of Phèdre in La Jeune Parque shows that the vanished gods of the French language could not only furnish material for their own memorial, but give birth to a new voice. And capital though the importance of Mallarmé's work and of his personality were to Valéry's poem, it is from Racine, and from the melody of Phèdre, that the Parque takes up and develops the voice which laments for reality and consoles for its attack.

It may be that this voice, in Valéry, from the nature of the post-18th century consciousness he was striving to reproduce, and from the nature of his individual dilemma, dictated perhaps more than he knew in this portrait of what he describes as "l'être vivant et pensant." The end of Le Cimetière Marin would seem to endorse such a view. Provisional the ending of La Jeune Parque may be, but then the answer to her, as to Racine's tragic vision, is tantamount to an answer to life itself.

Une Femme à la Racine

Notes

1. C 5, 570 (1915). The word froides appears to have been added by Valéry — it may have occurred to him that the literature of Racine's time was not without violence, but of another nature.
2. The others are C 5, 649, 705, 639.
3. C 3, 661 (1905); C 4, 167 (1906); C 4, 439 (1910); C 5, 180 (1913).
4. C 6, 6, 131, 140-141, 169-170, 188, 296, 317, 319, 350, 375.
5. C 6, 508-509.
6. Two at the end of Cahier 6 (857-858 and 864), and eight within the first 300 pages of Cahier 7 (151, 162, 190, 195, 209, 210, 237 and 251).
7. C 7, 151.
8. C 7, 209.
9. C 7, 538-539, 567, 620, 622, 644, 798.
10. C 8, 741, 835, 897.
11. C 9, 301, 354.
12. C 9, 301.
13. C 9, 811.
14. C 11, 187, 402.
15. C 12, 462. (The other entries are C 12, 165, 202, 229.)
16. C 13, 389 (1928); C 14, 80, 172 (1929); C 14, 663 (1930); C 15, 334 (1931); C 17, 21 (again, an extended analysis of Hippolyte's line from Phèdre, IV, 3); C 17, 489-490, 672 (1934); C 17, 830; C 18, 190 (1935); C 19, 729 (1936); and C 20, 106, 467, 655 (1937).
17. C 20, 735-736; C 21, 418, 693; C 22, 24 (1938); C 22, 65, 248, 699, 785; C 23, 180, 327, 589-590, 639, 706, 734-737 (1940).
18. C 23, 736-737 (1940).
19. C 24, 391, 401, 560, 599, 796-797; C 25, 221 (1941).
20. C 25, 706; C 26, 115, 117, 119, 157, 446, 551 (1942).

21. C 27, 429, 457, 702 (1943).
22. C 29, 365 (1944).
23. C 29, 486, 488, 721-722 (1945).
24. Letter to Albert Mockel, L Q, pp.122-125.
25. C 7, 151 (1918) and again C 17, 21 (1933).
26. C 6, 857-858 (1918).
27. Racine notes. See Appendix A, p.12. The same experience is described not only in the Cahiers (C 22, 24), but in the essay on Phèdre (O C V, I, p.508).
28. L Q, pp.122-125.
29. C 25, 706 (1942).
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. C 1, 823 (1900); C 3, 23 (1903).
33. Or, as he puts it in a letter to Aimé Lafont, "la conscience consciente" (O C V, I, Notes, p.1635).
34. C 6, 508-509.
35. La Jeune Parque : étude critique (hereafter E C).
36. Alpha de la Lyre, Élégie Intérieure, ll.147-150, E C, p.222.
37. Alpha de la Lyre (second state), E C, p.232.
38. Roughs for the fourth state of the poem, E C, pp.239-240, 242.
39. E C, p.244.
40. Bajazet, "C'est une épure," (C 12, 462).
41. "La tragédie [Phèdre] est construite selon la circonférence parfaite." (M S P, p.217).
42. Ibid., note 29, p.79.
43. Ibid., note 53, p.93.
44. C 14, 431 (1930).
45. C 2, 191 (1901).
46. Phèdre, III, 3, 1.911.

47. Ibid., IV, 6, 11.997-1000.
48. C 3, 23 (1903).
49. See Phèdre, III, 3, 11.840-856 and IV, 6, 11.991-994.
50. Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1571.
51. C 4, 32 (1906).
52. C 15, 134 (1931).
53. C 2, 223 (1902).
54. Essai d'Exégèse Racinienne, p.11.
55. See C 7, 451, 538-539, 567, 620, 622, 798 (1919-21). See also the essay Sur Adonis, O C V, I, p.495.
56. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Valéry compares Wagner's music to Riemann's structures, commenting on Wagner's power to embody simultaneity: "[la] combinaison de divers plans de la conscience sensible et des modulations psycho-physiologiques qui les joignent comme soudures de Riemann" (C 18, 78 (1935)).
57. "Final [...] Je ferme mon cercle. J'efface mes pas."
(Nadal, E C, p.244).
58. C 5, 39 (1913).
59. "Il s'est montré vivant aux infernales ombres," (Phèdre, II, 1, 1.386) is how Ismène puts it. For Thésée's own description, see Phèdre, III, 5, especially lines 965-966.
60. See also Phèdre, I, 5, 11.363-366 and III, 3, 11.911-912.
61. "De ces morceaux [of La Jeune Parque] il en est un qui, seul, représente pour moi le poème que j'aurais voulu faire. Ce sont les quelques vers qui commencent ainsi : O n'aurait-il fallu, folle, etc." (Letter to Albert Mockel, L Q, pp.122-125).
62. Notes Diverses.
63. Eigeldinger's point of view may be compared to Valéry's : "L'amour archaïque, tel qu'il apparaît dans la plupart des mythes, ne manifeste que son implacable essence instinctive [...] Les dieux d'alors [...] ne figurent que les pouvoirs de réaliser ce qui s'ébauche vainement dans les desirs de l'homme ..." (S P F, O C V, I, p.502).
64. C 27, 457 (1943).
65. S P F, O C V, I, p.503.

66. Racine, Oeuvres Complètes, Tôme I, la Pléiade (hereafter O C R, I), p.747.
67. Nadal, E C, p.306.
68. C 7, 253 (1918).
69. C 23, 736-737.

CHAPTER III

LE FONCTIONNEMENT

DE L'ÊTRE HUMAIN

Le Fonctionnement de l'être humain¹

In Valéry's poetic accounts of the changing emotions and states of mind triggered by the action of certain stimuli upon the individual, we have already seen him drawing upon the basic construction of Racine's greatest play.² Phèdre can, however, from one point of view, be regarded as but one example of a construction which underlies the major plays of Racine, from Andromaque to Athalie. It was to this basic construction that Valéry, in our opinion, referred, when he was analysing Bajazet in 1927. He sees the construction of the play as a blueprint — that is, a formula applicable to any character in any given situation:

... Ce qui frappe le plus c'est l'absence de quoi que ce soit étranger à la question.

Grande simplicité des personnages — très peu dissemblables. Ne diffèrent que par leur valeur de position dans le jeu. Cette valeur donnée et le numéro du coup de la partie, une "psychologie" générale commune s'applique et combinée avec les "ressorts" donne la scène. Formule.³
C'est une épure ...³

In La Jeune Parque we have, it seems to us, the first conscious use of the Racinian blueprint for the workings of the human mechanism, set in action by the stimulus of desire or the threat of annihilation — a first description of the points along the curve traced by the path of action:

La tragédie n'est que le prélèvement d'une partie de courbe [...] caractérisé par le maximum d'énergie dissipée en réponse 1° aux impulsions des individus 2° aux événements.⁴

These points, where the maximum of energy is deployed, illuminated by the white heat of the tirades in all the plays, not only mark the

progress of the action, but also offer a further pattern for the mechanics, le fonctionnement. The same emotions are aroused at the same points, regardless of the individual, and for these emotions too, Racine provides blueprints, or as Valéry later put it, programmes: "Je trouve que les tirades passionnées de Phèdre ne sont, en vérité, que des programmes."⁵

The emotions, or states of mind, thus analysed, correspond, as we have noted, to some of the major themes common to Racine and Valéry. Thus Valéry's initial use of Racinian patterns, in La Jeune Parque, is followed by an extended and even more skilful use of them in Charmes.

We can best begin by taking the example of the theme of orgueil, which, Valéry considered, was of fundamental importance. In 1919 he wrote:

L'orgueil est une passion (tourment) d'être le seul esprit au monde.

Il est chez les hommes de l'esprit une nécessité vitale ...⁶

Mutatis mutandis, orgueil is also vital to the characters of Racine, since they demand, in general, nothing less than absolute sovereignty, either over the rest of the world, or over themselves, by a kind of divine right. The essence of their pride is that it arises from the conceptions the characters have formed of themselves, and what is their due — their gloire; and the extent of their orgueil becomes visible only when it encounters an obstacle. Since, however, this obstacle, in Racine's great plays, has first been encountered before the play begins — from Pyrrhus' rejection of Hermione,⁷ to the insult offered to God himself by Athalie⁸ — we are present at the reactions of orgueil from the beginning. The immediate response to the shock of surprise and insult is a hardening of

resistance, a concretisation of illusion. The reactions become more violent, with every affront to pride, and the demands of the characters upon each other and upon themselves more impossible to fulfil, until the illusions defended through orgueil have finally been shattered, or until death supervenes — or, as with Phèdre, both.

The premisses which the characters of Racine take for granted (or rather, which they have taken for granted in the past) and on which their pride builds its illusory structures, are those which we might expect of gods. The powers they assume are Olympian, be they the power of absolute beauty (as with Hermione), absolute purity (as with Hippolyte), or, as with Thésée, the power to conquer even death; while Athalie measures herself against the ultimate power, Jahveh himself.

The obstacles which limit the bounds of these imaginary empires and eventually destroy them are the limits imposed by the other, and found within the self. The universe of Racine, reduced to its essentials (the épure), contains only two protagonists. All that is not self, or cannot be absorbed by or annexed to the self, is obstacle, imposes bounds. The real obstacle, however, is the weakness within the self: "Mon coeur, mon lâche coeur, s'intéresse pour lui!" Hermione exclaims (Andromaque, V, 1, 1.1404) and this is the crux of the matter. The limits imposed by the other merely throw into relief the fundamental insufficiency. This is not of course to say that each protagonist encounters one obstacle alone (though Bérénice, in its simplicity, comes very near to this one-to-one confrontation) but that this schéma underlies Racine's dramatic presentations of the workings of orgueil. In the plays, Racine

provides different backgrounds, different colourations for this abstract design. The apparent obstacles take varying forms: love, death, pity, or the claims of an opposing power — Greece, Troy, subsumed in the persons of their representatives — or God himself, in the person of his representative, Joad. We are presented with the confluence of forces against which pride has to contend, and with different aspects of the defeat of pride, but the basic elements (and the course of the battle) can always be distinguished.

Bearing all this in mind, it is possible to see in the Parque's tirade, her apostrophe to the serpent,⁹ Valéry's first presentation of the Racinian épure for orgueil, the first of those points characterised by the maximum of energy dissipated in response to the protagonists' inner impulses and to outside events¹⁰ — the first reaction to the Racinian insult.

This tirade is, as Alain has observed in his commentary, "le premier chant de l'orgueil."¹¹ Its quality of speech elevated to music by intensity of feeling relates it to the tirades of classical tragedy. Moreover, its development follows a similar pattern. In it, as in the first tirades of the great plays of Racine, and more particularly as in Phèdre, we find a summary of the past and a foreshadowing of the future; but, in this instance, the tirade is coloured throughout by that illusion of absolute power which is typical of orgueil defending gloire. Because it is the description of a state of mind, an absolute of pride, which is dictating the behaviour to be followed, it is mainly in the present tense — the tense of the imperative. The salient points of the progression of orgueil, however, can be referred to events throughout the poem which took place in the past, as is the case for the first

tirades of Hippolyte,¹² of Phèdre,¹³ of Aricie,¹⁴ and much later, of Thésée;¹⁵ and the conclusion of the Parque's tirade, as the character comes back to reality, foreshadows the inevitable defeat, just as Phèdre's

Je voulais en mourant prendre soin de ma gloire ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.309)

is an indication of her failure, which will be absolute at the end of the play. The Parque's failure is implicit in the contours de mortelle (1.92). The obstacles, which in the plays of Racine set limits to the absolute power of his characters (and which, in Phèdre, take the shape of love and death) are, in La Jeune Parque, represented by the serpent (which, we later find, is no other than the Parque herself.¹⁶ Thus it is both the 'other' and the self). The first appearance of the obstacle in Phèdre is followed instantaneously by the movement of rejection, accompanied by a retreat into illusion — the illusion of self-sufficiency. Thus Hippolyte, rejecting the suppositions of Théràmène:

... Ami, qu'oses-tu dire? ...

Dans un âge plus mûr moi-même parvenu
Je me suis applaudi quand je me suis connu ...

(Phèdre, I, 1, 11.65, 71-72)

Thus Phèdre:

Pour bannir l'ennemi dont j'étais idolâtre, ...

Je pressai son exil ...

(Ibid., 11.293, 295)

and thus the Parque:

Va! je n'ai plus besoin de ta race naïve
Cher serpent! ...

Mon âme y peut suffire ...

(11.50-51, 54)

At this stage, the obstacle is seen as external, and not insuperable.

A second stage comes when the protagonists realise that the obstacle has taken possession of their minds, and that the weapons of their pride must be turned against themselves. It is marked by Hippolyte's (unwitting) recognition: "Et moi-même, à mon tour, je me verrais lié?" (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.95); by Phèdre's acknowledgement of her possession: "C'est Vénus tout entière à sa proie attachée ..." (ibid., I, 3, 1.306) and in Valéry's poem, by the Parque's acknowledgement of her own weakness:

L'esprit n'est pas si pur ...

L'âme avare s'entrouvre, et du monstre s'émeut ...

(11.70, 75)

Orgueil demands a total sacrifice. Thérémène's observation, "Vous périssez d'un mal que vous dissimulez" (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.136), Phèdre's "Je voulais en mourant prendre soin de ma gloire" (ibid., 1.309) — indicate the cost, which, in La Jeune Parque, is indicated by the repetition of the words tombeau (1.72), tombe (1.93) and the suggestion of death in the Parque's nuit d'éternelle longueur (1.80). The final defence of insulted pride, as it attempts to banish the cause of the offence

J'ai pris la vie en haine et ma flamme en horreur ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.308)

Fuis-moi! Du noir retour reprends le fil visqueux! ...

(1.84)

is to reaffirm the vision of the absolute, the denial of humanity: an apotheosis of gloire evoked by orgueil. The Parque sees herself as a supernatural being: "... pâle et prodigieuse, / Toute humide de pleurs qu'[elle] n'a point versés" (11.90-91). She is in fact described as a goddess, for gods cannot weep.

Nevertheless, because the absolute defended by pride is an

illusion, and the emotion of orgueil will yield to other states of mind — and because this tirade, like those of Racine, is a micro-cosm of the play — defeat is there. Defeat, in Phèdre, is implicit in the choice of tense; the conditional and the past both show it.

Ne souviendrait-il plus à mes sens égarés
De l'obstacle éternel qui nous a séparés? ...

(Phèdre, I, 1, ll.103-104)

Hippolyte demands, and Phedre tells us: "Je voulais en mourant prendre soin de ma gloire ..." (ibid., I, 3, l.309). The Parque's defeat is foreshadowed also, though she denies it:

... et, brisant une tombe sereine
Je m'accoude inquiète et pourtant souveraine, ...

(ll.93-94)

What orgueil has conjured up is nothing more than a dream:

Tant de mes visions parmi la nuit et l'oeil
Les moindres mouvements consultent mon orgueil.

(ll.95-96)

So much for La Jeune Parque. When we turn to Charmes, we note a significant progress¹⁷ in the technique of compression and abstraction. In his treatment of orgueil (among other states of mind) in Grenades, the essence of the Racinian schéma relative to orgueil can, it seems to us, be found. This poem, while presenting several states of mind, also conforms to Racine's representation of orgueil. A primary stimulus, the repeated impact and penetration of the sun upon the fruit, in the past: "les soleils par vous subis" (1.5), can be seen as fostering the growth of the fantasies created by pride. The grenades, continually worked on by pride, d'orgueil travaillées (1.7), have produced the superabundant seeds, excès de [...] grains (1.2) in response to forces acting from without. This double response — the hardening of the defences of orgueil under the

impact of reality (for the sun has hardened the resistance offered by the envelope of the fruit, l'or sec de l'écorce (1.9), and by its interior structures (craquer implies hardness in the cloisons de rubis (1.8))) and the excess of growth also induced in response to the impact of reality, produces the catastrophe. The moment of death (crève, 1.11) is also the moment of enlightenment (lumineuse rupture, 1.12). We might even take the suggestion from the final lines that Valéry was commenting upon the function of orgueil in relation to the productions of Racine and his own poems;¹⁸ for the gemmes rouges of the fruit, the result of its reaction to the forces acting upon it (creations of its orgueil) are, like the plays and the poems, beauty and nourishment for other minds; while the breach, lumineuse rupture, which reveals them, reveals also the processes by which they have been formed — the secrète architecture (1.14). This can only be apparent once the process is complete, après coup, to the creator and spectator who was Valéry, confronted by Racine.

If, then, we accept that the Racinian pattern underlies Valéry's analysis of the absolute of pride, can we take the comparison further and enquire whether Valéry's variations on the theme can also be related to Racine's?

What is particularly interesting in Racine is that he varies the forces which intrude upon and threaten the apparent security and self-sufficiency of the characters, thus stimulating the reactions of orgueil. Two of the most powerful of these forces are desire and death (and we shall find that in Valéry, as in Racine, these are the main forces against which pride reacts).

In Racine's characters, the revolt against desire is always a revolt against domination. Desire is an agent of change and

therefore of diminution — for a state of perfection, by definition, can admit no change. The orgueil which revolts against desire, as such an agent, is the revolt most clearly seen in Phèdre, where Racine shows us love not only as the flaw in the godlike persona, diminution divine, but as contamination. Seen in this aspect, the revolt of orgueil is the revolt of integrity and virginity against the possession of mind and body by the alien; the revolt against change and the fear of change. It is an aspect which Valéry explores in La Jeune Parque and in Charmes. The virginal reactions of a Hippolyte, "Implacable ennemi d'amoureuses lois," (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.59) and of an Aricie, equally opposed to love,¹⁹ are those aroused in the Parque, vierge à soi-même enlacée (1.45), whose reaction against the serpent (1.50) is also the reaction of orgueil to the threat of desire. She fears the enemy without, as Hippolyte fears Aricie, and Phèdre Hippolyte (for even Phèdre is defending her innocence) — the serpent and its threat of desire (1.59).

The violence with which Racine's characters, and the Parque, react is a measure of their fear of the enemy within, which desire threatens to reveal, and of their horror of desire as contamination. This horror, Phèdre's detestation of her passion, une flamme si noire (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.310), and Hippolyte's horror of Phèdre and of himself, "Je ne puis sans horreur me regarder moi-même" (ibid., II, 6, 1.718), is quite apparent in the Parque's rejection of the self desire has shown her, the monstre (1.75); by the terms she uses to reject it, the promesses immondes (1.62), the

Fuis-moi! Du noir retour reprends le fil visqueux! ...

(1.84)

Her pride, like that of Hippolyte, wishes to see the threat of desire

as powerless. Both insist upon their purity, their 'apartness', their refusal to be grouped with ordinary humanity (au rang du reste des mortels, Phèdre, I, 1, 1.63):

Couve sur d'autres coeurs les germes de leur mal ...
(1.87)

This attempt at rejection does, in fact, illustrate the cost of orgueil and show us the other face of changelessness.

In short, paradoxically, orgueil, if successful, implies sterility and death.

This is again explored in Au Platane. Let us consider the opening lines of the poem:

Tu penches, grand Platane, et te proposes nu,
Blanc comme un jeune Scythe,
Mais ta candeur est prise, et ton pied retenu
Par la force du site.

(11.1-4)

Here, the terms in which the plane tree is described cannot fail to remind us of the purity of Hippolyte. Hippolyte is fils d'une Scythe (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.210), the tree is blanc comme un jeune Scythe (1.2). Hippolyte's essential purity —

Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur, ...
(Phèdre, IV, 2, 1.1112)

— is echoed in the pur de l'âme (1.58). This purity is reinforced by the nu (1.1), the blanc (1.2), the candeur (1.3). The purity of Hippolyte's arm, which Phèdre's blood would defile,²⁰ is evoked by the tree's branches: "... bras plus purs que les bras animaux," (1.41).

Hippolyte's pride, which revolts against the attacks of desire, indicated by the coeur si fier (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.67), and the superbe ennemi (ibid., I, 3, 1.272), is found in Valéry's poem, where we have

the trouble fier (1.45), the tête superbe (1.70), resisting the north wind, âpre tramontane (1.46). The implications of resistance, the tree's apartness again, are comparable with the sterility and isolation of Hippolyte:

Assez dans les forêts mon oisive jeunesse ..."

(Phèdre, III, 5, 1.933)

The tree is, in one respect, not as others of its kind. Although it is seen as one of many of its fellows (tes pareils sont nombreux, 1.19), yet it is implicitly contrasted with them. They are fruitful and this fruitfulness is linked with death and disorder. Its equals, the other trees,

... par les morts saisis, les pieds échevelés
Dans la confuse cendre
Sentent les fuir les fleurs, et leurs spermes ailés
Le léger cours descendre ...

(11.21-24)

There is, too, a suggestion of desecration, a deflowering, in the sentent les fuir les fleurs. The plane consents to none of this, Mais toi (1.41), resisting the wind, agent of desire and fertility.

Again we can see Hippolyte's horror of contamination in the earlier lines:

La noire mère astreint ce pied natal et pur
A qui la fange pèse ...

(11.7-8)

As with Hippolyte,²¹ the rash pride of the plane tree covers an inner insufficiency. Hippolyte is as vulnerable to desire and death as his fellow-mortals; his attempt to escape desire, and gain immortality, is always frustrated. The plane too is one among many,

Pressens autour de toi d'autres vivants liés
Par l'hydre vénérable;

(11.17-18)

nor can it even escape to attain the desired apotheosis:

Le front n'aura d'accès qu'aux degrés lumineux
Où la sève l'exalte:

(11.13-14)

Moreover, the very terms Valéry uses to describe the bondage of the plane tree must remind us of those Racine uses to reveal Hippolyte's mortal nature and to describe his death. The monstre, and Phèdre herself, are evoked by the hydre (1.18), the noire mère (1.7), the double bonds of desire and mortality (and the means of Hippolyte's death) by the liés,²² par les morts saisis (1.21), confuse cendre (1.22), while the échevelés (1.21) will recall the torn locks of Hippolyte (Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1558).

Desire, however, brings not only disorder and death, but change. One of the most significant changes it brings about in Phèdre is the transition from silence to speech. Desire forces Hippolyte into utterance, at first inarticulate, "Mes seuls gémissements font retentir les bois!" (Phèdre, II, 2, 1.551), and then coherent: "Songez que je vous parle une langue étrangère," (ibid., 1.558). In exactly the same way, the tree would be forced into utterance by desire, Ose gémir (1.49), rendre aux vents la voix (1.51). The tree's refusal, Non! (1.69), translates the supreme revolt of Racinian orgueil against manipulation by desire (here, the desire to create), be it by inspiration,

... rendre aux vents la voix
Qu'ils cherchent en désordre!

(11.51-52)

or by the efforts of the poet, amourement des Dryades rival (1.65). And the tree's refusal also translates, it seems to us, the supreme revolt of pride against change, for there is one silence Hippolyte

never breaks — the truth about Phèdre. To do so would be to abandon his dream, the image of a perfect Thésée with whose perfection he hopes to identify himself.

We witness the cost of this refusal and the defeat of orgueil in Phèdre. The same cost is sufficiently indicated in Valéry's poem in the levelled grass, the bowed tree:

Que la tempête traite universellement
Comme elle fait une herbe

(11.71-72)

There is, perhaps, one final parallel. Hippolyte's long struggle against desire, his obstinate refusal to break silence to the very end (on one point at least), are the matter for a dramatic poem, Phèdre. The tree, in spite of its stubborn persistence, has in fact been used, as the Latin sense of the verb traiter shows,²³ to create a poem.

In Au Platane then, Valéry shows us predominantly the efforts of orgueil to break loose from the contamination of desire (fange, 1.8), and the bonds of mortality echo, it seems to us, the outward and upward direction of Hippolyte's flight in his revolt against reality. Neither the tree, nor the tragic hero, can break the bonds.

In the Fragments du Narcisse we have, it may be, the other direction of Hippolyte's flight — the inward movement through which Hippolyte seeks to become the heroic being he desires to be:

Maintenant je me cherche et ne me trouve plus ...
Portant partout le trait dont je suis déchiré ...

(Phèdre, II, 2, 11.548, 540)

Ce soir, comme d'un cerf, la fuite vers la source
Ne cesse qu'il ne tombe au milieu des roseaux,
Ma soif me vient abattre au bord même des eaux

(F du N I, 11.2-4)

The orgueil of Narcissus is nonetheless in revolt against the same basic elements of disorder and contamination as threaten the plane tree (all desire, even self love, threatens security); and his orgueil is a defence against the same basic insufficiency. The passionate self-admiration of the legendary Narcissus is here transmuted into an adoration of purity,²⁴ part of whose essence is, like that of Hippolyte's, hubris. The latter's "Je me suis applaudi quand je me suis connu," (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.72) is echoed by the former's

Jusqu'à ce temps charmant je m'étais inconnu
Et je ne savais pas me chérir ...

(F du N I, 11.136-137)

which scorns (or wishes to scorn) all others as unworthy. Hippolyte's orgueil qui l'étonne (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.70) is echoed too by the Narcissus:

Mais moi, Narcisse aimé, je ne suis curieux
Que de ma seule essence ...

Tout autre n'est qu'absence ...

(F du N II, 11.83-84, 86)

The purity of the image of self adored by Hippolyte, seen in his speech to Thésée,²⁵ is found in Valéry's fountain, identified with Narcissus (who, in approaching it, approaches himself²⁶). It contains the reflection of Narcissus, corps si pur (III, 1.1), Hippolyte's image of himself,

Seigneur, je crois surtout avoir fait éclater
La haine des forfaits qu'on ose m'imputer ...

(Phèdre, IV, 2, 11.1107-1108)

which is again suggested by the éclat fatal et pur thrown back by the fountain (I, 1.72). The passions of others, in fact, are seen as contamination by Narcissus — "A cette onde jamais ne burent les

troupeaux, ..." (I, 1.60) — and this proud rejection may be seen as the reaction of fear — fear of losing the dream of purity, the perfect self, as Hippolyte rejects the unworthy aspect of his 'ideal hero,' his other self, Thésée, resenting even the suggestion of love, although he is well aware of the succession of Thésée's conquests.²⁷

Likewise, Valéry's Narcissus needs absolute stillness:

Même, dans sa faiblesse, aux ombres échappée
Si la feuille perdue effleure la napée
Elle suffit à rompre un univers dormant ...

(I, 11.9-11)

lest the mention of desire disturb his dream: "Votre sommeil importe à mon enchantement," (1.12), and in fact it is this inner recognition of the fragility of the image, a realisation of his own weakness, which arouses the defences of Hippolyte's orgueil. His own passion (lâches soupirs, Phèdre, I, 1, 1.97), his own insufficiency (aucuns monstres [...] par moi domptés, ibid., 1.99), are at the root of his passionate self-exaltation in Act I of Phèdre; Narcissus himself troubles the waters reflecting his image with his own passion for the ungraspable self (monstre de s'aimer, I, 1.86).

... Le bruit
Du souffle que j'enseigne à tes lèvres, mon double,
Sur la limpide lame a fait courir un trouble ...

(I, 11.128-130)

Hippolyte's own recognition of his own insufficiency, "Ai-je pu résister au charme décevant" (Phèdre, II, 2, 1.523), the acknowledgement by the Narcisse of his: "D'appartenir sans force à d'éternels attraits! ..." (I, 1.109), explain the quality of Hippolyte's exaltation of his own feelings: "... trésor d'impuissance et d'orgueil ..." (I, 1.144).

Again, the other face of the purity on which orgueil insists, is sterility, for creation is seen as evil. Hippolyte wishes to reject even his apparently blameless passion for Aricie,²⁸ for this love is, as Racine shows us, evil, in that it is a danger to supremacy (in this case, that of Thésée, whose gloire is so important to his son) and hence, to orgueil.²⁹ The object of Narcissus' passion is sterile also,³⁰ "torse [...] / non formé de fruits ..." (III, 11.25-26).

The effort to rejoin the image of self cherished by orgueil is barren also. Racine symbolises this in his picture of Hippolyte's attempts to control his horses: "En efforts impuissants leur maître se consume" (Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1537) and Valéry shows us the same hopeless struggle: "Un désir sur soi-même essayer son pouvoir" (F du N II, 1.100). In both cases, the effort ends in annihilation. Ovid's lovely boy wasted away;³¹ for Valéry's Narcissus as for Hippolyte's broken body, corps défiguré (Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1568), self and image are shattered together:

L'insaisissable amour que tu me vins promettre
Passe, et dans un frisson, brise Narcisse et fuit

(III, 11.49-50)

If the orgueil in Au Platane and the Fragments du Narcisse reminds us most forcibly of the pride of innocence, the virgin Hippolyte roused by the fear of contamination, La Pythie shows us the revolt of experience, the revolt of a Phèdre. Racine's Phèdre has experienced, and resents the most profound violation of her integrity; Valéry's Pythie presents the virgin possessed, submitting at once to the processes of the act of love and of parturition, aware of her degradation:

J'ai perdu mon propre mystère! ...

(1.28)

Phèdre's revolt is against Hippolyte, and Vénus (desire itself), instruments revealing her own impurity and weakness. The Pythie's revolt is against the invading deity, Maître immonde (1.31), as she recognises what possession means for her: "Eh! Quoi! [...] Devenir la vipère" (1.71). Her orgueil reacts with a total rejection of herself, as does Phèdre's. In the second act of Phèdre, Phèdre says (in effect) to Hippolyte, "If you have rejected the image of my innocence, and of the innocence of love, which I have placed before you, and if I must recognise myself in the monster you have made of me, then I refuse existence:"

Venge-toi, punis-moi d'un odieux amour, ...

Délivre l'univers d'un monstre qui t'irrite! ...

(Phèdre, 11.699, 701)

The priestess of Valéry's poem, vierge consacrée (1.125), and still virgin, pur ventre (1.34), feeling her essential virginity insulted by the power of creation, Puissance créatrice (1.131), reacts similarly:

Si tu courbes un monstre, tue

Ce monstre

(11.55-56)

We must not forget, however, that Phèdre has a double, Oenone, whose orgueil also reacts against the insults offered by desire to her other self. Oenone has quite a different view of the same scene. For her, Hippolyte is already the monster of pride which she will set before Phèdre in Act III, scene 3, and which Phèdre will accept: "Je le vois comme un monstre effroyable à mes yeux" (Phèdre, III, 3, 1.884). Oenone sees Hippolyte, in his rejection of Phèdre's desire,

as not only proud, but cruel:

Pouvez-vous d'un superbe oublier les mépris?
Avec quels yeux cruels sa rigueur obstinée
Vous laissait à ses pieds peu s'en faut prosternée!

(Ibid., III, 1, ll.776-778)

Even for Phèdre, he is without feelings, insensible, his eyes pitiless, inhumains.³² Valéry, with extraordinary subtlety, has incorporated this aspect of the virgin orgueil, refusing contamination, into his presentation of the Pythie's access of orgueil, from monstre to monstre, as it were. The bête abattue (1.56),³³ the crins (1.58) — as earlier the naseaux (1.2), the hennir (1.17) — are not only animal, but hippine, and hence introduce Hippolyte. Now, while there is no doubt that Racine wished to show desire as evil in Phèdre, and while Valéry amply illustrates this in La Pythie, yet in stanzas 6 and 7 of that poem, the poet evokes the monstrosity of the orgueil, which, like Hippolyte's, rejects desire and imposes sterility and death not only upon the self, "Morte, errante, et lune à jamais," (1.62), but also on the other:

Que soit les humains faits statues
Les coeurs figés, les âmes tues ...

(11.65-66)

and indeed upon the whole universe:

Que cette plus pâle des lampes
Saisisse de marbre la nuit! ...

(11.59-60)

Again it is a vain aspiration. Desire and death (Venus, Neptune) prove to the characters of Racine that they are not immortal. In Valéry's poem, the god, dieu dans la chair égaré (1.224) — her own insuperable desire — defeats the Pythie's illusions of equality with the gods (Artemis, lune à jamais, 1.62; Aphrodite, conque, 1.125, don des écumes, 1.89). Racine's characters, so far from being able

to maintain a pitiless and paralysing supremacy over the self and the other, and thus manifest their stature to the entire world,³⁴ or as Valéry puts it, "l'onde / Astreinte à d'éternels sommets" (La P, 11.63-64), are compelled rather to become vehicles for the forces of creation they have denied or defied. The savagery of Hippolyte's death, "Tout son corps n'est bientôt qu'une plaie" (Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1550), "De mon fils déchiré ... la sanglante image" (ibid., V, 7, 1.1606), corresponds to the Pythie's plaie immense (1.157), the déchirante rupture (1.159); and Thésée's anguish at the gods' fatal gifts, his tears (and those of Phèdre)³⁵ "Et je m'en vais pleurer leurs faveurs meurtrières" (Phèdre, V, 7, 1.1613) are echoed in the Pythie's tears:

O pleurs dont les sources premières
Sont trop profondes dans les cieux ...

(11.173-174)

As with Racine, these tears signal the defeat of orgueil. It is Phèdre's degradation and death which achieve this defeat, chief instrument of future creation, her calm voice which opens the way for it; it is the Pythie's orgasm of passion and death which finally gives birth to the future, under the hands of the arch-priest:

... une voix nouvelle et blanche
Echappe de ce corps impur ...

(11.219-220)

If we have so far seen Valéry using Racine's model³⁶ as it has come down to us in Phèdre, we must turn to Athalie to see how Valéry uses that model in his analysis of another kind of orgueil. Phèdre shows us the pride of the mortal who aspires to divine power — as

Hippolyte aspires to become the 'divine' Thésée, or Thésée usurps the powers of Neptune, Phèdre those of Venus. Athalie shows us the orgueil of the creator himself, as he acts through his priest, Joad, who is possessed: "Est-ce l'Esprit divin qui s'empare de moi? / C'est lui-même ..." (Athalie, III, 7, ll.1130-1131). In

Ebauche d'un Serpent, Valéry transforms the profondeur [...] d'ambitions sacrées³⁷ of his model into a caricature of pride³⁸ but this caricature of orgueil simply exaggerates and decorates the same basic schéma we have already indicated. The chorus, in Athalie, links God's creation of the world and of light, in Act I, scene 4, with his act of manifestation, when the Lord on Sinai, le seigneur enfermé (Valéry's paternité voilée, l.105),

Fit luire aux mortels un rayon de sa gloire
Il venait révéler aux enfants des Hébreux
De ses préceptes saints la lumière immortelle ...

(Athalie, I, 4, ll.335, 343-344)

lending its colouring to Valéry's (or Bossuet's)

Celui qui règne dans les cieux,
D'une voix qui fut la lumière
Ouvrit l'univers spacieux ...

(ll.52-54)

If we remember the first Commandment, we can see why Valéry should write "Mais, le premier mot de son Verbe, / MOI! ..." (ll.65-66). Orgueil, in our (and Racine's) schéma, is provoked by inner insufficiency or insult from without. Valéry has treated the act of creation as a manifestation of such an insufficiency, again, it seems to us, borrowing from the Racinian picture. Racine's God, whose supremacy originally existed before the creation of time, "Son empire a des temps précédé la naissance," (Athalie, I, 4, l.313) and Valéry's "... Temps sa ruine! ..." (l.61), and who has been prodigal

of his gifts: "Il nous donne ses lois, il nous donne lui-même ..."
(Athalie, I, 3, 1.353), "Il se fit Celui qui dissipe / En
conséquences, son Principe ..." (11.58-59), is seen, in the first
act of Athalie, as a being both defeated and exhausted, unable to
help His people:

Il voit sans intérêt leur grandeur terrassée,
Et sa miséricorde à la fin s'est lassée ...

(Athalie, I, 1, 11.99-100)

Valéry's God is also weary, las de son pur spectacle ... (1.55). In
the descent from perfection, diminution divine (1.69), orgueil has
been created. The serpent's pride mirrors the pride of the deity,
and the pattern of pride continues to follow the pattern of Athalie,
as where Racine's two priests confront one another. Priest of God
and priest of Baal, Joad and Mathan use the same methods in defence
of an orgueil aroused for the same reasons. It may be argued that
Racine regarded the pride of a Joad (and of his God) as justified,
and that of Mathan as sacrilege, but for Valéry, there was nothing
to choose between the two priests: under an entry headed Racine loué,
he tells us this:

On n'a pas assez remarqué dans Athalie l'égale cruauté
et fourberie des deux prêtres — opposés — et le bon
pire que le mauvais [...] Toute la profondeur des haines
sacerdotales ...³⁹

This entry corresponds with what he wrote in 1913 of spiritual pride:

... profonde guerre des orgueils [...] cette guerre est d'une
très ancienne origine [...] C'est. Mon Dieu est plus
puissant que le tien [...] ⁴⁰

Here we could well have a reference to Athalie's remark

J'ai mon Dieu que je sers; vous servirez le votre
Ce sont deux puissants dieux ...

and Joas's retort:

... il faut craindre le mien
Lui seul est Dieu, madame, et le votre n'est rien ...

(Athalie, II, 7, 11.684-686)

Joad/God has been affronted by a withdrawal of adoration and love; only a few zealots still pay homage⁴¹ to the God who has withdrawn from them,⁴² and Valéry's God, Paternité voilée, though still adored (11.106-107), and distant, lointaine (1.109), is also troubled, like Racine's, by the schemes of his rival, and one-time follower, who is the agent of that desertion, as was Mathan. The latter deploys his powers on the rulers of Israel: "Autant je les charmais par ma dextérité ..." (Athalie, III, 3, 1.941) and the serpent uses his against his God:

Toutefois l'excès de mes charmes
Pourra de lointaines alarmes
Troubler ses desseins ...

(11.108-110)

Equally, Mathan's pride has been aroused by an insult to his thirst for power, his love of its pomp;⁴³ the serpent's by his double loss of love and of power, rejected by his Deity,

Vous que j'aimais éperdument,
Vous qui dûtes de la géhenne
Donner l'empire à cet amant, ...

(11.72-74)

Joad, and Mathan, react against their rejection by creating instruments, beings whose only functions are to reproduce the entity who has manipulated them. Joad/Dieu 'creates' Joas, the child:

Dieu l'[Joas]a fait remonter par la main de ses prêtres
L'a tiré par leur main de l'oubli du tombeau ...

(Athalie, I, 2, 11.280-281)

The God of Valéry's poem creates docile children, the faciles enfants (1.82), from the earth, dans la fange (1.81). The ductility and weakness of Racine's children of God (timides Hébreux, Athalie, III,

3, 1.950), and enfants de Lévi (ibid., 1.948) — for people and priest are alike in their feebleness: "Peuple lâche, en effet, et né pour l'esclavage ..." (Athalie, III, 7, 1.1107) — are displayed in the creations of Valéry's God, pétri (1.87), molles oeuvres (1.98). The innocence and purity of Joad's creation, Joas, are characteristic of Valéry's Eve, supreme representative of his God's creations. The qualities Valéry ascribes to these creations, bêtes blanches et béates (1.90), nus (1.89), reappear in the later Masse de béatitude (1.131) and in the stupide (1.129) qualifying the naked candeur (1.155) — naked, since we have the earlier: "Toute offerte aux regards de l'air ..." (1.125).

Again, Athalie describes Joas,

Cet âge est innocent; son ingénuité
N'altère point encor la simple vérité ...

(Athalie, II, 7, 11.629-630)

the serpent, Eve:

La superbe simplicité ...
Sa transparence de regards ...

(11.161, 163)

Joas' function is (as it should be for all God's people) obedience and adoration. Athalie asks: "Dieu veut-il qu'à toute heure on le prie, on le contemple?" (Athalie, II, 7, 1.671) and the answer is, of course, in the affirmative.⁴⁴ The same duties are expected of the children of Valéry's God, "Qui tout le jour vous fissent louange ..." (1.84), and they too are divinely inspired and obedient instruments. As Athalie remarks, "J'aime à voir comme vous l'instruisez ..." (Athalie, II, 7, 1.690), so the Serpent speaks of his God: "votre souffle sur la glaise ..." (1.79).

Mathan, however, imitating the methods of Joad (and indeed those

of his God), dictates his laws to the people of God, perverting them, "Moi seul, donnant l'exemple aux timides Hébreux," (Athalie, III, 3, 1.950), as will the Serpent:

Nous changerons ces molles oeuvres,
Et ces évasives couleuvres
En des reptiles furieux!

(11.98-100)

Mathan too promulgates his oracles, and the serpent seduces Eve:

J'approchai par degrés à l'oreille des rois
Et bientôt en oracle on érigea ma voix ...

(Athalie, III, 3, 11.933-934)

Que d'esprit n'ai-je pas jeté
Dans le dédale duveté
De cette merveilleuse oreille! —
Elle buvait mes petits mots ...

(11.191-193, 211)

Thus do Mathan and the serpent imitate the methods of their Creator (it is Joad/Jahveh whom Athalie qualifies as Séducteur, (Athalie, V, 5, 1.1705)):

... J'illumine
La diminution divine
De tous les feux du Séducteur! ...

(11.68-70)

and make of his creations their instruments:

Un instrument de ma vengeance
Qui fut assemblé de tes mains! ...

(11.103-104)

as their orgueil reflects the orgueil and complaisance of the deity.

The Racinian pattern of orgueil in Athalie is concluded, as so often, with its defeat. The double pride of Creator and created suffers a double defeat, which was already implicit in the triumph. The creations of hope, exemplified in Athalie by Joas, descendant of David and Solomon,⁴⁵ on whom they are centred, and by the bitter

fruit of mortal hopes in Valéry's Ebauche (ll.305-307), are already doomed. Joad's curse (and Athalie's) on Joas will be justified, at least as far as the rule of divine peace is concerned:

Qu'il soit comme le fruit en naissant arraché
Ou qu'un souffle ennemi dans la fleur a séché ...

(Athalie, I, 2, ll.285-286)

The tree of Jesse, arbre séché (ibid., I, 1, l.140), will, like Valéry's tree of knowledge, produce a deadly crop:⁴⁶

Il en cherra des fruits de mort,
De désespoir et de désordre! ...

(ll.299-300)

Neither do Mathan nor the Serpent fare any better. Mathan's hopes of eventual triumph once Athalie, his instrument, has killed Joad and placed himself and his god in Jehovah's temple,⁴⁷ are vain. He cannot penetrate the temple, source of creative power, and even his apparent triumph, when he had crowned himself as priest and equal of Joad:

Je ceignis la Tiare, et marchais son égal ...

(Athalie, III, 3, l.954)

was an empty one. Mathan, and the Serpent, can pervert, but not create.

No study of Valéry's use of the Racinian pattern of orgueil could be complete without an examination of Le Cimetière Marin. Here we return again to Phèdre, for the parallel with the sun-god Thésée, and his worshipper and reflector, Hippolyte, is plain, as Valéry underlines the cost of pride to the mortal who wishes to see himself as divine.

Again we have the theme of the mortal who sees change as imperfection, and whose pride reacts against such change. As Hippolyte contemplates and celebrates the divinity and achievements

of Thésée, comparing him to the sun-god: "Consolant les mortels de l'absence d'Alcide, ..." (Phèdre, II, 1.78), so the poet of the Cimetière Marin contemplates the work of the light — the sun at the zenith of its splendour, Midi le juste (1.3), les torches du solstice (1.37), a splendour which he, as Hippolyte those of Thésée, hopes to attain: "A ce point pur je monte et m'accoutume ..." (1.20) even though it may be through death. Hippolyte's "Eternisant des jours si noblement finis ..." (Phèdre, III, 5, 1.950) compares with Valéry's "Je hume ici ma future fumée ..." (1.28).

This image of stability and splendour which Hippolyte's dream confers upon Thésée, and to which he himself aspires:

Hercule, respirant sur le bruit de vos coups
Déjà de son travail se reposait sur vous ...

(Phèdre, III, 5, 11.943-944)

an image which the poet of Le Cimetière Marin describes:

Quand sur l'abîme un soleil se repose, [...]

(1.10)

is nevertheless, an illusion. It is the work of orgueil, reacting against the defect in the idol, and in the adorer. Hippolyte's pride reacts against the unworthy part of Thésée's conquests, the long tale of his infidelities (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.94), and against his own insufficiency:

Aucuns monstres par moi domptés jusqu'aujourd'hui ...

(Ibid., 1.99)

as it has reacted in the past against his ignoble birth. It does so by creating an idealised Thésée, and an idealised self: "Je me suis applaudi quand je me suis connu" (ibid., 1.72). Similarly, the poet of Le Cimetière Marin reacts against the defect in his universe, the falsity of the illusion of stability and purity given by the

creations of the sunlight, the pur travail (1.7), which seems to eternalise the passing moment: "Et quelle paix semble se concevoir" (1.9), but whose real nature is continual change, "La mer [...] toujours recommencée" (1.4), and destruction, consume (1.7). The poet reacts against this implied knowledge by erecting a pantheon, Edifice dans l'âme (1.17), wherein the ideal self is united with its idealised creation. The cost of maintaining this illusion for Hippolyte is, as we earlier indicated, sterility (under the guise of purity) and finally death. This too is the cost for the poet of Le Cimetière Marin, whose denial of creativity, dédain souverain (1.24), implies a final sacrifice of life, offrande suprême (1.22).

The brilliance of Hippolyte's chastity:

... Je crois surtout avoir fait éclater
La haine des forfaits qu'on ose m'imputer ...

(Phèdre, IV, 2, ll.1107-1108)

is echoed in Le Cimetière Marin by the sparkle, scintillation (1.23), the dispersal of creative powers (the waste of sterility) in the sème (1.23); and the poet suppresses his creativity for the sake of a dream of the ideal:

O mon silence! ... Edifice dans l'âme
Mais comble d'or aux mille tuiles, Toit! ...

(11.17-18)

The defeat of this orgueil, as of Hippolyte's, comes through the recognition of the real nature of the absolutes it has constructed. The absolute of Thésée's gloire (as of Hippolyte's) requires the total suppression of any imperfection — that is, death. In this case it requires the death of Hippolyte, too faithful mirror of his father's imperfections.⁴⁸ In the case of the poet of Le Cimetière Marin, it requires the death of the poet, whose defects are the flaw in perfection (11.80-81). Or rather, they are the defect in the

apparent perfection of the sun and its creations. The sun, apotheosis of stability: "Midi là-haut, Midi sans mouvement" (1.75), reigns over the temple of death, the graveyard is "Composé d'or, de pierre et d'arbres sombres ..." (1.58). This temple is the absolute of gloire and purity, "Fermé, sacré, plein d'un feu sans matière" (1.55), and also the acme of sterility and destruction, sécheresse (1.68), brûlé, défait (1.69), and like the temple sought by Hippolyte, "... temple sacré formidable aux parjures" (Phèdre, V, 1, 1.1394), and near which he meets his death, is fatal to the dream of parity with the immortals. Hippolyte's death defeats all the constructions of orgueil in Phèdre, its brutal actuality belying the idealised picture,⁴⁹ and Thésée's lines in Act V, scene 7 proclaim that he recognises the true nature of these illusions:

Je hais jusqu'aux soins dont m'honorent les Dieux ...

Quoiqu'ils fissent pour moi, leur funeste bonté
Ne me saurait payer de ce qu'ils m'ont ôté ...

(Phèdre, V, 7, 11.1612, 1615-1616)

The poet of the Cimetière Marin recognises the true nature of his dreams:

Maigre immortalité noire et dorée,
Consolatrice affreusement laurée, ...

Qui ne connaît et qui ne les refuse
Ce crâne vide et ce rire éternel! ...

11.103-104, 107-108)

At the end of Phèdre, Hippolyte and Thésée consent, as it were, to be mortal, and subject to the mortal changes of death and procreation. The poet of the Cimetière Marin abandons the eidolon of changeless purity, the dream of gloire:

Et vous, grande âme, espérez-vous un songe
Qui n'aura plus ces couleurs de mensonge ... (?)

(11.97-98)

to become part of the changing process of life, "Courons à l'onde en rejaillir vivant" (1.132). We find a parallel with Racine's Phèdre, both in feeling and in language, in the finale of Valéry's poem. In the récit de Théràmène, the breaking wave (1.1515), the terrified horses with their dusty flanks (1.1540), the rocks (1.1541), are all agents in Hippolyte's death, and so of the destruction of his illusion. Valéry, in Le Cimetière Marin, fuses them into one line:

La vague en poudre ose jaillir des rocs ...

(1.141)

This line too marks the destruction of an illusion, but, as with the close of Phèdre, signals the point where illusion will be transcended.

Does orgueil, then, never conquer? For Racine, the answer is that either it must be defeated, or its triumph bought at the cost of absolute suppression of the elements which do not correspond with the image it has created. The survival and triumph of Iphigénie is unreal and even at that, only defers the cost,⁵⁰ which is immediately demonstrated by Eriphile's death. She dies, untouched:

Le sang de ces héros dont tu me fais descendre
Sans tes profanes mains saura bien se répandre ...

(Iphigénie, V, 6, 11.1773-1774)

and pure, "C'est le pur sang des Dieux qui lance le tonnerre ..." ⁵¹
(Ibid., V, 5, 1.1697), in an access of orgueil. This cost, the cost of death, is implicit in Valéry's poem, Le Rameur, a poem which, although it celebrates an act of will, nevertheless has an important contribution to make to Valéry's use of Racinian orgueil. Again we must turn to Phèdre, where both Hippolyte and Phèdre, resisting the irresistible, are clearly embarked on a course leading to death, in a prolonged act of self-destruction carried out by an effort of will — will aroused by the affront to orgueil. The rower is engaged in a

similar effort:

Il faut que le ciel cède au glas des lentes lames ...

(Le R., 1.4)

Just as the orgueil of Hippolyte "... endurci par de sauvages lois ..." (Phèdre, III, 1, 1.783) disdains Vénus (and Phèdre),⁵² so the rower, coeur dur (1.5), hardens his heart against the beauty he thrusts away from him — beautés que je bats (1.5), rompre l'illustre monde (1.7).

Such pride tries to resist the deceptions of even an apparently innocent desire, the charme décevant of an Aricie,⁵³ the charmes du jour of Le Rameur (11.13-14). Both Hippolyte and the rower are in rebellion against love: "Attaque un ennemi qui te soit plus rebelle," is Phèdre's prayer to Venus, and the rower tells us of his efforts:

Jamais, charmes du jour, jamais vos grâces n'ont
Tant souffert d'un rebelle essayant sa défense ...

(11.13-14)

Hippolyte's movement against the current of life is also a resistance to change, and an elevation of the self. It leads him towards the scene of his death, the tombs of his ancestors, tombeaux antiques, froides reliques,⁵⁴ and in the same way the rower, obsessed by self (bandeau de soie,⁵⁵ 1.22), moves towards the funereal stone (1.31). However, not only Hippolyte's resistance to life, but the weight and affliction of Phèdre's long resistance to desire, are evoked by the stone arches of Le Rameur. Her lines,

Que ces vains ornements, que ces voiles me pèsent! ...

Tout m'afflige et me nuit, et conspire à me nuire, ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 11.158, 161)

are echoed by the heaviness of stanza 7 of Valéry's poem, the repeated porte (11.25, 28), the "[...] front qu'ils écrasent d'ennui" (1.27).

Even the annelés (1.25) contain a suggestion of Phèdre's locks, noeuds.

Again, Phèdre's revolt against herself in Act III, scene 3, and her hallucinations:

Il me semble déjà que ces murs, que ces voûtes
Vont prendre la parole ...

(11.854-855)

are evoked by the rower's stone arches: "Voûtes pleines de vent, de murmures, et de nuit" (1.24). And we remember that Phèdre's speech of revolt against herself reaches its high point with the "Mourons." of 1.857.

The double cost of the triumph of pride over its circumstances, which in Valéry's poem is seen to be at once death and the hardening of the image of self into a rigid eidolon, "os orgueilleux [...] plus dur" (1.28), is the same price which pride exacts from Phèdre and Hippolyte. It is Oenone's "Mourez donc, et gardez un silence inhumain" (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.227), echoed by the rower's nuit (1.29). Valéry translates the cost to Hippolyte of his long struggle, Racine's:

J'ai poussé la vertu jusques à la rudesse
On sait de mes chagrins l'inflexible rigueur ...

(Phèdre, IV, 2, 11.1110-1111)

by the magnificent "mouvement qui me revêt de pierres" (1.131). Here we have the effect of the rower's scorn of life and love, "mépris de tant d'azur oiseux" (1.32) — a line which also suggests not only the rigidity and enclosure of the tomb, but the monuments erected to eternal fame, even perhaps the glitter of jewels (mouvement, pierres), the brilliance of Hippolyte's reputation and the fame he hopes for.

From Le Rameur, it seems to us, we can gauge the importance of orgueil as an impulse to creation in Valéry's poetic world. As in Racine's tragic universe, the reactions of orgueil concentrate all the vital forces of the hero, suggesting to him that only the impossible,

the absolute, is worth being, or possessing; it acts as a springboard to action — even if the action is disastrous. In defining a hitherto unconscious ideal for the hero, it impels him to attempt to attain it. Hippolyte moves towards Thésée (an ideal Thésée), Phèdre resolves on death, or the conquest of Hippolyte, the poet attempts to conquer his own universe of absolute purity. Racine's blueprint of orgueil, and its varying connotations offered an invaluable pattern to Valéry in his extended exploration of the workings of the mind (his own mind) and of the poetic process.

In La Jeune Parque we see the Racinian pattern of the functioning of pride, described in a Racinian form, the tirade, and in Racinian language, in a context which allows us to see it in relation to the poetic process of inspiration. We see the poet reacting against a shock to orgueil with a determination to achieve the absolute of purity and abstract beauty. It gives us too the defeat of orgueil, as the poet accepts that an element of imperfection has its part in all creation. Again, in Charmes, we have a series of descriptions of the rôle of orgueil (inter alia!) and of its shadow, vanity, in the creation of the poem itself. Here the constant is, again, the orgueil roused by an obstacle; the poet as creator or lover, encounters the obstacle offered by his material (Au Platane), or by his own inadequacy (Fragments du Narcisse, Ebauche d'un Serpent), or by his own resistance to possession by an alien force (La Pythie). The reaction defines the impossible ideal for the poet, and his orgueil is, necessarily, doomed to failure, since the ideal cannot exist. Nevertheless, objects — poems — of enduring beauty result from the process. For the poet's readers, they transcend defeat, and, as we have seen, can assist materially in generating new works of art in their turn, as Racine, it seems to us, contributed to La Jeune Parque and Charmes.

Le Fonctionnement de l'Être Humain

Notes

1. "Il n'est pas d'aventures si merveilleuses, si tragiques, si extraordinaires, qui pour moi passent en intérêt le fonctionnement de l'être humain" (C 6, 857-858 (1918)).
2. See Chapter II.
3. C 12, p.462 (1927).
4. C 26, 115 (1942).
5. C 27, 457 (1943).
6. C 7, 451 (1919).
7. "Lui qui me fut si cher, et qui m'a pu trahir" (Andromaque, II, 1, 1.415).
8. "L'audace d'une femme, arrêtant ce concours / En des jours ténébreux a changé ces beaux jours ..." (Athalie, I, 1, 11.13-14).
9. L J P, 11.50-96.
10. See note 4.
11. La Jeune Parque commentée par Alain, p.68.
12. Phèdre, I, 1, 11.65-113.
13. Ibid., I, 3, 11.369-316.
14. Ibid., II, 1, 11.415-460.
15. Ibid., III, 5, 11.953-978.
16. "Au milieu de mes bras, je me suis faite une autre / [...] qui se vautre" (L J P, 11.437-438).
17. Valéry's own comments support this impression, when he writes of his newly-acquired mastery of technique : "Je me sentais en possession d'une liberté durement acquise dans le métier de faire des vers" (O C V, I, Notes, p.1623).
18. And, indeed, in relation to the productions of Mallarmé, and to a lesser degree, those of Hugo and Baudelaire; but their contribution is outside the scope of this study.
19. See Phèdre, II, 1, 11.433-434.
20. Phèdre, II, 5, 11.709-710.

21. "D'un téméraire orgueil exemple mémorable," (Phèdre, II, 2, 1.530).
22. We have already referred to the je me verrais lié (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.95) — a line which in itself points forward to Hippolyte's death, and to the means by which it is accomplished, "Dans les rênes lui-même il tombe embarrassé." (Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1544).
23. The Latin sense of traiter was that of manier, to manipulate, handle.
24. A psychologist might well argue that Hippolyte's very insistence on his own purity was a reaction against his consciousness of his bastardy, as well as the reaction of orgueil against the continual assault of desire.
25. Phèdre, IV, 2, 1.1112.
26. F du N, I, 11.30-31.
27. Phèdre, I, 1, 11.94-95.
28. "Enfin, d'un chaste amour pourquoi nous effrayer?" (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.119).
29. Aricie is the sole survivor of Thésée's mortal enemies. Her marriage would revive their line of descent : "D'une tige coupable il [Thésée] craint un rejeton," (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.107).
30. Sterile, because pure : "Plus pur que d'une femme et non formé de fruits" (F du N, III, 1.26). It is interesting to reflect here that one reason why Racine endowed Hippolyte with a mistress was his fear lest he should be taken for a homosexual.
31. Metamorphoses, Book III, pp. 482-517.
32. Phèdre, III, 1, 11.744, 751.
33. This could reflect either Phèdre, peu s'en faut prosternée (Phèdre, III, 1, 1.778), or Hippolyte, amour si sauvage, portant partout le trait (Ibid., II, 2, 11.540, 554).
34. As Hippolyte wished to do : "Prouver à tout l'univers que j'étais votre [Thésée's] fils," (Phèdre, III, 5, 1.952).
35. Larmes véritables (Phèdre, V, 3, 1.1442).
36. "Racine a trouvé, — ne sachant pas exactement ce qu'il faisait, — une forme de qualité. On peut alors tirer de cette forme des applications, un fonctionnement [...]" (C 7, 567). Valéry's assumption (ne sachant pas) casts an interesting light on his own hubris!

37. C 25, 446.
38. Much could be added here on Valéry's mischievous use of other sources in L'Ebauche d'un Serpent — e.g. Hugo's La Bouche d'ombre — but that is outside the present discussion. We may note, however, that Racine, too, borrowed not only from the Bible, but from Bossuet, to whom he refers in the preface to Athalie : "l'illustre et savant prélat à qui j'ai emprunté ces paroles."
39. C 25, 446.
40. C 5, 150 (1913). 1913 was the year of the Serpent in Valéry's time-scheme for the composition of La Jeune Parque (C 6, 508-509).
41. Athalie, I, 1, 1.15.
42. Ibid., 1.97.
43. Athalie, III, 3, 1.925.
44. "Qu'on adore ce Dieu, qu'on l'invoque à jamais." (Athalie, I, 3, 1.312).
45. Athalie, I, 1, 11.130-136.
46. Racine's preface to Athalie refers to the fatal change undergone by Joas, whose reign culminates in the murder of Zacharias, principal cause of all the future misfortunes of the Jews.
47. Athalie, III, 3, 11.865-866.
48. Hippolyte's career, if we are to go by his actions, is the mirror of his father's weaknesses, as we have noted in Chapter II.
49. Hippolyte's beau trépas (Phèdre, III, 5, 1.950) is far from reality as is Valéry's beau mensonge (C M, 1.106) from the crâne vide (ibid., 1.108).
50. The cost, of course, will be the death of Achilles (and so many others) below the walls of Troy.
51. Clytemnestre's words here describe Iphigénie, whose death, as she supposes, is announced by the thunder, but they apply equally well to Eriphile, Iphigénie's "double" : "Un autre sang d'Hélène, une autre Iphigénie." (Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1749).
52. "Implacable ennemi d'amoureuses lois" (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.59). Hippolyte scorns Venus, and Phèdre too : "Pouvez-vous d'un superbe oublier le mépris?" (Phèdre, III, 1, 1.776).
53. Phèdre, II, 2, 1.523.
54. Ibid., V, 1, 11.1392-1393 and V, 7, 11.1553-1554.

55. The pun is obvious, and reminds us of a similar play on words in La Jeune Parque : plages de soie (1.174).

CHAPTER IV

LE SERPENT . . . DÉCORATIF

Le Serpent ... Décoratif

If modern man, like some of his primitive ancestors, still chose a sacred beast with whom he was mysteriously one, then Valéry's would undoubtedly have been the serpent. Drawings of serpents decorate the Cahiers, and references to serpents abound, haunting Valéry's very dreams¹ (which Freudians would interpret without difficulty). It is not therefore surprising that this obsession appears in La Jeune Parque, that autobiography of the mind.² In fact, not only is this obsession present, but the part played by the serpent is of capital importance.

This importance, both in La Jeune Parque and in the poems which grew from its composition, the poems which make up Charmes, can be gauged from Valéry's own references. Writing of La Jeune Parque at a time when he was composing the poem, he describes it as a monstre, a hydra, a serpent:

[...] J'ai là une sorte de poème [...], un monstre gonflé des loisirs de mon inutilité pendant la guerre, sans "sujets" [Valéry's inverted commas] sans nom, sans âge certain, hydre infiniment extensible [...] bref, c'est aussi un [...] train qui est sorti de mon long tunnel, un serpent de trucks, [...]³

His comment to Gide, too, on the section of the poem devoted to the serpent (ll.50-89) underlines this importance and suggests a reason for it,

... Je sens bien que je n'ai allongé et disproportionné l'apostrophe au serpent que par le besoin de parler moi-même ...⁴

Moreover, this section was technically very revealing,

[...] l'histoire technique de ce fragment est [...] un raccourci de tout le poème [...]⁵

Furthermore, the importance of the serpent theme is borne out by its primary position in Valéry's own schéma of the genesis of La Jeune Parque. The word serpent is the first referent given in the time-scheme of the poem, and the only one to be given for the three years 1912-1914, although in the following three years, 1915-1917, four referents appear (the sections shown as Harm[onieuse Moi], Iles, Sommeil, Arbres).⁶ Nor should we forget the quotation which appears in the Pléiade edition of La Jeune Parque, as an epigraph,

Le Ciel a-t-il formé cet amas de merveilles
Pour la demeure d'un serpent?⁷

Now, although Valéry chose a quotation from Corneille to introduce his poem (as an afterthought), the evidence of the Cahiers, where not only Racine is given as a referent, but where a speech of Hippolyte (who, also, was a monster) occupies a prominent position, immediately below the time-scheme we have mentioned, leads us back to Racine. A further piece of evidence links Racine with the idea of the serpent/woman, as it is used in La Jeune Parque, for Valéry, at a time when his thoughts were again haunted by memories of his poem, was unable to shape a speech on Racine for the latter's centenary without referring to the way in which Racine had influenced his own poetry. He writes of the decorative and symbolic value of both the woman and the serpent, under the heading Racine:

La femme comme personnage
expression directe de l'affectif.
comme le serpent est décoratif
plus que les quadrupèdes.⁸

Here he is thinking, too, perhaps, of his own other mask, the horse Gladiator. This link between Racine, woman and serpent is particularly striking in the roughs of La Jeune Parque, which will be referred to below. Yet, although there is much to evoke the

serpents and monsters of Racine, not only in the resonance and context of Valéry's poems, but in his own references, none of the many commentators who have been drawn to the serpent image have dwelt on this aspect. It was, of course, a common image in the 19th century in art and literature. It was common to Hugo and to Mallarmé. Indeed, we note that Mallarmé's guivre is yet another possible source of Valéry's serpent. Maurice Bémol has considered the influence of Maurice de Guérin in this connection.⁹ Cocking relates the serpent to the Ouroboros of the Gnostics,¹⁰ and Maka de Schepper writes of it in connection with the theme of the Pythie.¹¹ It is not to deny the part all, or any, of these possible sources play for Valéry's serpent, or to underrate their significance, but in an attempt to complete the picture that the following has been written.

In his chapter Palettes,¹² Nadal reproduces a series of drafts from Valéry's papers, which give us the privilege of studying Valéry's preliminary explorations of the possibilities of certain words and ideas. In the palettes concerning the serpent, we can observe the process through which a pattern of abstract ideas, whose elements and their order reflect the basic patterns of Racinian tragedy, gradually take on a substance from the Racinian language in which they are clothed. The reptile, the parque mystérieuse of palette II,¹³ begins to display the reactions of the "femme à la Racine"

The first of these palettes relating to the serpent begins, then, with a table — a programme of ideas, laid out as follows:

réflexe-Piqûre
invasion-Poison
visions-orgueil. Tentation
représentations
hallucination
lucidité ...

Now Racinian tragedy conforms closely to this pattern. It is essentially the description of a series of reactions (réflexe) set in motion by a generating event (Piqûre). This event is always an attack (invasion) on one personality by another — Hippolyte's effect on Phèdre, Aricie's on Hippolyte, or, to take another example, Eliacin's effect on Athalie. The effect of this invasion spreads through the whole personality (Poison — since in Racine, love and hate are equally destructive and often indistinguishable, as is seen in Hermione's dilemma: "Ah, ne puis-je savoir si j'aime ou si je hais? ... (Andromaque, V, 1, l.1396)) As the characters' obsessions deepen, and the process invasion-Poison continues, they react against them, and against each other, in an attempt to regain or reinforce their identity:

Contre vous, contre moi, vainement je m'éprouve ...

(Phèdre, II, 2, l.541)

This is the reaction which Valéry calls visions-orgueil. The visions are recollections of the past — Athalie's recapitulation of her lost power, Hermione's recall of the power of her beauty (Andromaque, II, 2, ll.533-534), or pictures of an impossible future, Titus'

Je connais mon devoir, c'est à moi de le suivre ...

(Bérénice, II, 2, l.551)

This future is dictated by pride — the orgueil of the palette — but is impossible because of the changes which have already taken place (the effects of the Poison), and the characters finally yield to their obsessions (tentation), as in Eriphile's

... Ah! je succombe enfin! ...

(Iphigénie, IV, 5, l.1585)

They again form visions of an impossible future, this time the images, the représentations shaped by their desire, such as

Andromaque's dream for her son through whom the power of the dead Hector is to survive under Pyrrhus' protection. Held by these images, they proceed in a trance (Valéry's hallucination) which wipes out reality (as it does for Phèdre, reshaping the past in Act III, scene 5) and which can vary in intensity from the self-deception of an Agrippine,

Il suffit, j'ai parlé, tout a changé de face ...

(Britannicus, V, 3, l.1583)

to the madness of an Oreste,

Je prétends qu'à mon tour l'inhumaine me craigne ...

(Andromaque, III, 1, l.762)

until the moment of recognition or awakening (Valéry's lucidité) is reached, as in Thésée's

Allons, de mon erreur, hélas! trop éclaircis,
Mêler nos pleurs ...

(Phèdre, V, 7, ll.1647-1648)

Now let us return to Valéry. From the abstract design in Palette I, there develops a gradual conception of the characteristics of the serpent and its metamorphoses. We see how the ideas of Piqûre and the Poison of Palette I generate the reptile of Palette II, accompanied by the parque mystérieuse, and how in Palette V the abstractions of Palette I have given rise to the scenario for a Racinian dialogue; the réflexe-Piqûre and invasion-Poison have become A pique B, B réagit — douleur — Poison d'A change B au plus intime.¹⁴

Moreover, as the first sketch expands, it does so in words or phrases carrying a strong charge of emotion they have acquired from their Racinian context. Words such as attire, coule, plonge, inhumain, orgueil, and the phrase où désormais me fuir direct us not only to the general atmosphere of the Racinian heroic struggle, but to one

Racinian heroine in particular, who was also seeking refuge from herself —

Où me cacher? Fuyons dans la nuit infernale ...

(Phèdre, IV, 6, 1.1277)

Her attitude to Hippolyte could well have been expressed in the words of Valéry's Femme d'ombre of Palette III:

Je m'attache à ce mal qui me fuit et devine ...

If, then, Valéry was able to clothe his pattern of reactions to reality (piqûre) so successfully in the vocabulary he found in Racine, and if indeed his outline conforms to Racine's dramatic framework, and to that of Phèdre in particular, it seems worthwhile re-examining the great plays. For, in so doing, we may hope to find traces of Racine's translation of a universal myth, the poetic means he used to enrich his presentation of it, which could have been used to enrich Valéry's own presentation. A study then of the metamorphoses, the attributes and the actions of Racine's monstres and those of Valéry will be our method here.

Turning to the text of Racine's plays, we see that although Phèdre is the most important source for all the aspects of the monstre, there are other, relevant, monstres. Their presence is indicated first by the actual words which qualify them and then by their attributes and actions. Let us take the simplest indications first.

The key words here are monstre, serpent and reptile. Of these, the words monstre, monstres occur 30 times altogether, and are found in the text of all the tragedies, with the exception of Alexandre, Britannicus and Mithridate. However, Racine twice identifies Néron with the monstre; once in his first preface to Britannicus: "Je l' [Néron] ai toujours regardé comme un monstre. Mais c'est un monstre

naissant ..."¹⁵ and again in Bérénice (II, 2, 1.397). While the use of the word serpent(s) is confined to Andromaque and Iphigénie, appearing four times, and the word reptiles occurs once only, in Esther.

Monstres in the mythical and fabulous sense of the word, occur only in Phèdre, where we have the Minotaure (II, 5, 1.649) and the symbolic monstres slain by Thésée (I, 1, 1.79) before the culminating apparition of the monstre itself in the récit de Théràmène. As an epithet, however, the word is applied to various characters throughout the plays; to Etéocle and Polynice (jointly) (La Thébaïde, I, 1.27), to Oreste (Andromaque, V, 4, 1.1579), to Néron (cf. above), to Eriphile (Iphigénie, V, 4, ll.1679-1680), to Phèdre (Phèdre, II, 5, 11.649, 701), Oenone (Ibid., IV, 6, 1.317) and Hippolyte (Ibid., III, 3, 1.884 and IV, 2, 1.1045), to Aman (Esther, III, 6, 1.1172) to the child Eliacin (Athalie, II, 6, 1.603) and to Mathan, (Ibid., III, 5, 1.1034).

Although the actual word serpent appears only twice, it is applied as an epithet to key characters: to Astyanax (Andromaque, I, 2, 1.167), whose influence on the plot, although he never appears on the stage, is decisive; and to Eriphile (Iphigénie, V, 4, 1.1675). The latter is also a monstre,

O monstre que Mégère dans ses flancs a porté ...
(Ibid., 1.1679)

Finally, Oreste links Hermione with serpents, and makes of her a Fury as monstrous as her companions:

Quels démons, quels serpents, traine-t-elle après soi?
Eh bien! filles d'enfer, vos mains sont-elles prêtes?
Pour qui sont ces serpents qui sifflent sur vos têtes ...
L'ingrate [Hermione] mieux que vous saura me déchirer ...
(Andromaque, V, 5, ll.1636-1643)

The single reference to reptiles is interesting, taken in conjunction with Valéry's epigraph to La Jeune Parque (albeit that he is there quoting Corneille), "Sion, repaire affreux de reptiles impurs ... " (Esther, I, 1, 1.86).

Racine's monstres appear therefore in two forms, the fabulous, and the human whose behaviour is seen as monstrous. Through the characters to whom the epithet is applied, the idea of the monstrous is linked with the idea of the lover, both male (Oreste, Hippolyte) and female (Hermione, Eriphile, Phèdre); with the monster (Phèdre, Oenone) with the child (Astyanax, Eliacin); with the dead hero, the ancestor, through Astyanax and Eliacin, so closely identified with the dead Hector, the dead Okosias;¹⁶ and also with the idolatrous priest, the pagan blasphemer (Aman, Mathan.)

Let us adopt the same principles in our search for the corresponding elements of the monstrous in Valéry's work. Again, vocabulary is our first indication of the theme of the serpent/monstre. We will therefore look at the key words, and for words suggesting the monstrous or chimaeric.

This is present in La Jeune Parque, apart from the contextual evidence, in words such as serpent (ll.37, 51, 459), monstre (ll.175, 503) and also in words which suggest the monstrous or chimaeric, such as merveille (1.25), merveilleuse and its plural (ll.382, 358) and prodigieuse (1.90). In Charmes, content and title link La Pythie and Ebauche d'un Serpent most obviously with our theme, but it is also to be found in Au Platane, Fragments du Narcisse, Le Cimetière Marin and Ode Secrète. In La Pythie, words such as serpent (1.24), monstre (ll 55, 56), vipère (1.71), vipérins (1.117), merveilles (1.134), and allusions to démon, fantôme (ll.12, 14). In the Ebauche d'un Serpent,

besides the serpent of the title, and of 11.86 and 301, there is the guivre (1.16), the vampires (1.140) and the reptile (11.142, 283). Fragments du Narcisse give us monstre (I, 1.86, II, 1.39) and merveille (I, 11.83, 141); Au Platane, Le Cimetière Marin, and Ode Secrète all refer to the hydre, in 11.18, 136 and 15 respectively.

Valéry's monstres, like Racine's, are both animal and human. In La Jeune Parque we have the serpent, and the Parque herself who is both serpent and vierge de sang (1.511), for the serpent's mélange de noeuds (1.52) is formed of her own substance (nouée à moi-même, 1.435). She is reptile (1.423) and monster (pâle et prodigieuse, 1.90). This double identity is shared by the Pythie, who is more obviously fabulous in her attributes. She too is a serpent (devenir la vipère, 1.71) and, perhaps, hydre also (multitude de tronçons, 1.74). In addition, she is monstre (1.55, 56) and Gorgon — Medusa herself in fact, with the power of transforming everything into stone (11.59-60). She is nevertheless human (vierge, 1.125) and mortal (11.178-180). The monstres of the Fragments du Narcisse include the hero himself, who is not only the monstre of self-adulation (I, 1.86), but the merveille (I, 1.83); his own image which is also described as merveille (I, 1.141); and the human lovers who form the monstre qui se meurt (II, 1.39). The serpent of the Ebauche is the caricature of the monstrous. It is clear that the humans whom he will seduce, as he is seducing Eve, will, like him, be monsters, though they are not yet so, being described as prodiges imparfaits (1.94). Eve is herself a monster of perfection, cette parfaite (1.125), merveilleuse oreille (1.194). Dédale points to the notion of a labyrinth and to the monstrous (1.193).

Such references, however, are of secondary importance. Of greater

importance is the fact that, as we observed, Racine's monstres are present in the actual characters of the play, as lover of either sex, mother and child, dead hero and idolatrous priest.

When we turn to the personae of Charmes, or to the heroine of La Jeune Parque, we find interesting parallels. The Parque and her serpent are linked like Racine's Phèdre with the identity of the lover (1.51). As a lover the Parque pursues the object of her desire (Je suivais un serpent ... (1.37)). Again, like Phèdre, she is seen (albeit potentially) as a mother (maternel contour, 1.260, mère, 1.294) and as a nurse (11.54-57). Also, like Astyanax and Eliacin, she is child (profonde enfant, 1.447). She is priestess, or at least worshipper (paroles aux Cieux, 1.168) and object of her own worship (idolâtre, 1.70; idole malgré soi, 1.476), like the priests of Esther and Athalie.¹⁷ The Pythie too is described as priestess, lover (cime de volupté, 1.200) and mother (grossesse, 1.33). The Narcissus is the lover (monstre de s'aimer, I, 1.86), the worshipper (I, 1.120), his own idol (II, 1.89), and, if not specifically mother, a parent — the image is his child (II, 1.97) — and child (ibid.).

The serpent of the Ebauche is a lover (1.72), a seducer like Mathan, who pursues the object of his desire (1.176). His appearance suggests (among much else) the priestly mitre (triangle d'émeraude, 1.6). The hydre of Ode Secrète is one with the hero (1.15), and moreover, a hero who may be seen as dead (lentement désuni, 1.14, and the funereal masse de roses, 1.12) and who has become a god, one of those elevated to the heavens in a constellation.

It seems therefore, in the light of the above references, that we can trace a similarity between the human monsters of Racine and

the aspects under which we find the serpent/monstre of Valéry. Lover, mother, child, priest or priestess, hero, these are met with in both poets under the same monstrous aspect. So far, we have seen them in those of Racine's plays referred to by Valéry (with the exception of La Thébaïde).

It is time to note the special importance of Phèdre, for it is in Phèdre alone that we find the composite portrait of the monstrosity of human desire, Phèdre herself, who combines all its aspects, and it is in Phèdre that we find the translation of the monstrosity of desire into the fabulous — foreshadowed perhaps by Hermione's serpents, but here fully expanded.

In its fusion of human and miraculous, Racine's dragon with its serpentine coils — symbolising the absolute possession of a mortal by a ruling passion — could well have provided the decorative imagery for Valéry's incarnations of a ruling passion, the serpent (décoratif) and the woman (expression directe de l'affectif).¹⁸

The Récit de Théràmène will therefore be explored here in an effort to discover whether there is also a correspondence between the appearance, the haunts, and the habits of Racine's monsters and Valéry's serpent. To assist in this exploration, the most important part of the Récit is quoted for reference.

Le Récit de Théràmène /

Le Récit de Théràmène

Cependant sur le dos de la plaine liquide
S'élève à gros bouillons une montagne humide.
L'onde approche, se brise, et vomit à nos yeux
Parmi des flots d'écume, un monstre furieux.
Son front large est orné de cornes menaçantes;
Tout son corps est couvert d'écailles jaunissantes;
Indomptable taureau, dragon impérieux,
Sa croupe se recourbe en replis tortueux.
Ses longs mugissements font trembler le rivage.
Le ciel avec horreur voit ce monstre sauvage;
La terre s'en émeut, l'air en est infecté;
Le flot, qui l'apporta, recule épouvanté ...

De rage et de douleur le monstre bondissant
Vient aux pieds des chevaux tomber en mugissant,
Se roule, et leur présente une gueule enflammée
Qui les couvre de feu, de sang, et de fumée ...

(Phèdre, V, 6, 11.1513-1524, 1531-1534)

Let us then begin with the most serpentine of the monstre's characteristics, the coils. Turning first to La Jeune Parque, we find the following descriptions of the Parque and her serpent, "Sa croupe se recourbe en replis tortueux ..." These replis can be equated with coils of hair — a translation into the monstrous of Phèdre's noeuds/cheveux of Act I, scene 3, 11.158-160. The Parque's serpent/monstre combines the characteristics of the sea monster, monstre furieux and of Phèdre; its long tail, traîne, is a repli de désirs (1.38), and possesses détours (1.78), anneaux (1.88). Further, it is described as a mélange de noeuds (1.52), tresse (1.65). The Parque herself also combines these features. She is sinueuse (1.35) and has been coiled upon herself, "... nouée à moi-même au creux de mes cheveux ..." (1.435).

The same analogies are apparent in the physical descriptions of the serpent/monstre in Charmes. The coils reappear in La Pythie, and here, although it is apparent that the reference is to the common mythological attribute of the Medusa, the serpent hair (the Pythie's ressort de frissons (1.72)), yet there may well be a reminiscence

of Hermione also, in her character of a Fury, with her own serpent locks.¹⁹

Again, we find the characteristic coils of the serpent, Racine's replis tortueux, in Ebauche d'un Serpent, replis dont je m'encombre (1.238) (an idea repeated in lines 44 and 49) and the same word is used in the Narcisse, the monstre de s'aimer (1.84), as the moonlight lays bare his innermost being, "Jusque dans le repli de l'amour de soi-même ..." (I, 1.41).

Again, the hydre of Le Cimetière Marin is coiled upon itself, "Hydre absolue [...] / qui te remords l'étincelante queue" (II.136-137).

This last example brings us to a second aspect of the decorative serpent/monstre, one which may be seen as derived from the scales of Racine's monster: "Tout son corps est couvert d'écailles jaunissantes ..." (V, 6, 1.1518), a decorative aspect, moreover, equally applicable to the human monstre, Phèdre herself, as to others in the later Esther and Athalie, has her vains ornements (I, 3, 1.158). Thérémène's jaunissantes, though derogatory, nevertheless conveys the idea of gold, with its connotations of glitter and riches. We find this shining raiment worn by the renegade impie (in the context, the priest Aman), of whom Esther declares, "L'or éclate dans ses vêtements ..." (Esther, II, 9, 1.781). Eliacin has his robe éclatante (Athalie, II, 5, 1.508), later the long garment, habit de lin (ibid., II, 2, 1.390). This glitter is to be found in Valéry's serpent, désordre de trésors (L J P, 11.38-39), the bras de pierreries (1.58), while the Parque herself glitters: Je scintille (1.16), is crowned with a diadème (1.182) and is clothed in white (1.124).

In Charmes, the Pythie has her ornements vipérins (1.117); the image of the Narcissus has its éclat (I, 1.72); the disguise

of the serpent is associated with jewels, émeraude (Eb. d'un S, I, 6), and béryl (1.239); the hydre of the Cimetière Marin (which is also the Grande mer of 1.133) is not only given the garment reflecting the sun, the chlamyde trouée / De mille et mille idoles du soleil (11.134-135), but the comble d'or aux mille tuiles (1.18), and the scintillations (ibid., 1.23) which all could recall the scales of the monstre. The glitter of Valéry's other Hydre, of Ode Secrète, is, however, linked with the stars (as was the Parque and the bras de pierreries) — manifesting itself as the constellation Hydra — the first of its metamorphoses into one of the Monstres et les Dieux (1.22); the first of the various constellations éployée à l'infini (1.16).

The aspect of brilliance which we have noted in Racine's serpent scales, the écailles, may well have lent itself also to another parallel, through which Valéry was able to increase the semantic riches of the single word. The clothing of the serpent, the scales, offered a parallel to bark or leaves of a tree, "Les arbres regonflés et recouverts d'écailles ..." (LJP, 1.230).

The serpent leaves behind it a reminiscence of its presence,

Quel frémissement d'une feuille effacée
Persiste parmi vous, îles de mon sein nu? . .

(11.14-15) (my italics)

and reminds us that the Parque herself is seen as a tige (1.214).

We have now seen how the coils of Valéry's serpents could have related to the replis of Racine's dragon, and how Valéry may well have enriched his imagery with the suggestion of Phèdre's coiled locks and Hermione's serpent hair. Then, too, the metallic scales of Racine's monstre, Phèdre's ornements and the gold embroidered robes of the priests — even the shining vestment of the acolytes — could

have added further connotations of brilliance to the accoutrements of the Parque as a serpent-woman, and to the attributes of the other serpents on which Valéry dwells. In addition, we can see how the dragon scales not only enrich this context of ornamental clothing, but also permit the suggestions of the tree with its bark and leaves — just the kind of superposition which Valéry sought, allowing the modulation from one image to another ..

We must now turn to the more sinister aspect of Racine's monstre, however, in discussing Valéry's possible use of its weapons, the horns. Though these are not the weapons it finally uses, Racine devotes a line to their threatening aspect: "Son front large est orné de cornes menaçantes," (Phèdre, V, 6, l.1517). Racine's human monsters are armed variously with piercing weapons; Hermione with a poignard, Hippolyte with épée (Phèdre, II, 5, l.710), fer (IV, 1, l.1009) and the javelots, the dard of Act V, scene 6 (ll.1528 and 1529); the child Eliacin, as Athalie sees him in her dream, uses a dagger, homicide acier.

We can connect Valéry's serpent with the stars through the bras de pierreries which is the Parque's own arm, binding her to the immense grappe. Thus it too possesses piercing weapons, armes (l.22) which are aimed as is Hippolyte's javelin lancé d'une main sûre (Phèdre, V, 6, l.1529). There are echoes too of the homicide acier directed against the traitor (Athalie, II, 5, ll.513-514) in the lines

Vous qui dans les mortelles plongez jusqu'aux larmes
Ces souverains éclats, ces invincibles armes

(ll.21-22)

Here the conjunction of plongez, larmes suggests a link with Athalie's exclamation "... Je serais sensible à la pitié?..."²⁰

In Racine's plays, the more conventional weapons of tragedy may be replaced by the hand and arm. By virtue of this poetic compression and ellipsis, these can take on the connotations of an instrument of destruction. We find such a fusion of agent and weapon in Phèdre. The monstrous queen, exhorting that other monster, Hippolyte, seeks the destruction her monstrous parallel will find (Phèdre, V, 6, l.1530)

Voilà mon coeur. C'est là que ton main doit frapper.
Impatient déjà d'expier son offense,
Au-devant de ton bras je le sens qui s'avance.

(Phèdre, ll.704-706)

There is a significant resemblance between the triangular shapes of Racine's cornes menaçantes and the shape of the sword, the dagger, or the extended arm with the hand, and the shape of Valéry's snake, with tongue extended for striking. The serpent of La Jeune Parque is seen as the arm, which threatens, and which has apparently wounded the Parque (blessée, l.42, plaie, l.48).

... ce bras de pierreries
Qui menace d'amour mon sort spirituel ...

(LJP, ll.58-59)

This concept of a serpent armed with its own weapon is apparent in La Pythie, whose tongue and speech (langue in both its meanings) are brandished, sword-like:

... Et qui, de ces mots écumants,
Dont les éclats hachent ma langue,
La fait brandir une harangue ...

(ll.44-46)

The Pythie, in her frenzied state, is both weapon and victim, the serpent turned on itself — bouche qui veut se mordre (l.49). Again, the serpent of the Ebauche d'un Serpent possesses the shape, triangle (l.6), and the piercing qualities of the weapon. This bête aiguë (l.8)

appears outlined against the sky:

La splendeur de l'azur aiguise
Cette guivre qui me déguise ...

(11.15-16)

Here too, as with the Pythie, the tongue is the weapon, the dent concealed behind the serpent's smile (11.3-5). Above all, it poses a threat:

Tremblez, mortels! Je suis bien fort
Quand jamais à ma suffisance
Je baille à briser le ressort . .

(11.12-14)

It is a cutting weapon (again langue is tongue and speech) — mille silences ciselés (1.184) — intended for Eve's destruction (nuise, 1.185). The worm of the Cimetière Marin, because of its resemblance to a snake, and because it possesses the poet, may be quoted here. It has its weapon, the dent secrète.

As we have observed, Racine's monster, however well armed with horns, does not, in the end, make use of them. It possesses another, more deadly weapon, the poison with which it infects its surroundings, and this, again, whether Racine describes Théràmène's monster or its human incarnations. In the case of the monster we must not overlook the poison it spread:

La terre s'en émeut, l'air est infecté ...

(Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1523)

This poison is also associated with the human monstres. Phèdre is, of course, the obvious example. It is her presence which has poisoned the atmosphere of Trézène and made of it

... un lieu funeste et profané
Où la vertu respire un air empoisonné ...

(Phèdre, V, 1, 11.1359-1360)

Her alter ego, Oenone, has the same power, as Phèdre's question reveals:

Ainsi donc jusqu'au bout tu veux m'empoisonner? ...

(Ibid., 1.1308)

Oreste, Néron, Mathan too are associated with poison. At times this is self-generated, like Oreste's, or administered through their agency, as with the double Néron/Narcisse, or again spread by them, as with Mathan.²¹

Turning now to Valéry's *Parque*, we see that she has her own poison (1.44) which can be seen as self-generated if we regard it as associated with the hand and the mouth:

Je baisais sur ma main cette morsure fine ...

(1.98)

The Pythie too has the poison which is directed against herself — bouche qui veut se mordre (1.49). The serpent of the Ebauche is a venomous beast whose venom is as effective as Néron's

De qui le venin, quoique vil.
Laisse loin la sage ciguë!...

(11.9-10)

The poison of desire, the poison of calumny, are commonplaces. So too is the fire-breathing dragon. Yet, as we consider the possible extensions of meaning made available to Valéry by Racine's use of the first two we have mentioned, we note also a possible extension of the third. Racine's fiery-throated monstre (gueule enflammée, 1.1533) breathes forth fire and smoke upon Hippolyte's horses: "Qui les couvre de feu, de sang, et de fumée ..." (Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1534).

Here, of course, we have another commonplace, the fire of wounded desire (in this case, *Phèdre*'s) treated symbolically. It is interesting, however, to meet with similar associations in Valéry's use of the word monstre in La Jeune Parque (1.75) and La Pythie (1.55). We meet the flaming tongue in the fiery mouth (the word tord giving

us the flicker of the flame) in the Parque's monstre:

Qui se tord sur le pas d'une porte de feu ...

(1.76)

and we find a similar, fire-breathing monstre in La Pythie, exhalant la flamme (1.1), and one whose tongue can also be likened to a flame — brandir (1.46) can suggest a flame as well as a weapon.

Our count of possible links between Racine's serpent/monstres and those of Valéry has been slowly mounting. None taken alone can be conclusive, but as we find a nexus being created around Racine's vocabulary, continually giving Valéry opportunities of extending his rich amalgam of connotations, we feel that each addition to the list must increase the probability that here again Racine had his part to play in generating the monsters of La Jeune Parque and Charmes. It is therefore encouraging to find that further resemblances do indeed exist, and exist in connection with one of the elements to which Valéry attached great importance, namely water in general and the sea in particular.

Nowhere in Théramène's speech is it stated that the monster is the sea itself. Yet, brought by a wave, it is so closely linked with the sea from which it emerges and which, as it were, clothes it, that it is not difficult to identify the two. Have we here a means which Valéry could have found useful in describing some of the metamorphoses of his monsters? There is a strong case for regarding wave and monster as identical at the end of La Jeune Parque, for one monster, at least,

the hydre of Le Cimetière Marin, is quite clearly the sea itself (1.134).

Let us then examine this possibility. In so doing, we shall find that some of the words used in the description of Racine's monstre gave Valéry the power to extend the description of the movement of the sea into the movement of water in general.

Some of the elements in the description of Racine's monster detach themselves from the context in which they have been considered (as coils of hair, ornaments, weapons) to take their place in another, that of the body of water and its single wave — or rather, they add this context to those already discussed. We repeat the relevant lines,

L'onde cependant sur le dos de la plaine liquide
S'élève à gros bouillons une montagne humide:
L'onde approche, se brise, et vomit à nos yeux,
Parmi des flots d'écume, un monstre furieux ...

(Phèdre, V, 6, ll.1513-1516)

In this section of Thérémène's speech we find, it may well be, the ondes, the remous, of the serpent of La Jeune Parque (ll.61-62), while Racine's flots d'écume could have lent their whiteness to the Parque's monstre de candeur (l.503). The spray from his breaking wave, l'onde [...] se brise, reappears perhaps in the éblouissement d'étincelles glacées (l.506) and lends its glitter to her serpent's train, désordre / De trésors (ll.38-39), and to the Parque's own shimmering garment, Je scintille (l.16). In Charmes, the Narcissus is one with the fountain, the Eaux planes (I, l.29), for he goes to meet himself when he approaches its banks (ibid., ll.32-33). His image, the monstre de s'aimer (ibid., l.86), is, in part, its creation: "Je vous salue, enfant de mon âme et de l'onde" (II, l.97).

The serpent of the Ebauche has its coils, replis, which move in waves:

Ils roulaient depuis le béryl
De ma crête ...

(11,238-240)

The head is a triangle d'émeraude (1.6) — the wave itself.

The jewels suggest both the colour of the wave and the gleam as it breaks (péril, 1.240), and the foam is there in the éblouissante bave (1.171). The hydre of the Cimetière Marin is both sea and wave, onde (1.132), and has its glitter, l'étincelante queue (1.137), and the "Maint diamant d'imperceptible écume ..." (1.8).

Before continuing with our next exploration of Valéry's exploitation of Racine's treasury, it will be useful to note that we observed that, in Thérèse's speech, the monster is shown as emerging from the sea. It can therefore also be seen as a denizen of the sea, and, by extension, of water in general (Racine's onde). However, this is not its only habitation. Racine's monstres, fabulous and human, were creatures of the depths. He, of course, was largely drawing on Greek mythology and Biblical history — a treasury accessible to all poets — but it is arguable that his particular resonances, and especially his generalised terms, may well have lent themselves to Valéry's own exploitation of myth and fable, particularly in La Jeune Parque and in its masculine counterpart, Le Cimetière Marin. With this in mind, we can note Racine's use of mythology in Phèdre, where we have the Cerberus monsters duped by Thésée,²² and the human monsters — Phèdre dwells in the depths of the palace vaults, as the Minotaur in the Labyrinth (Phèdre, III, 3, 1.854). Oreste and Hermione inhabit Epirus, antechamber to Hades.²³ Astyanax-Hector has links with the tomb, the

ashes of the dead (Andromaque, III, 8, 1.1045), while the child Eliacin, "phantom," rises metaphorically from the tomb, films ressuscité (Athalie, V, 6, 1.1765).

Valéry's serpent/woman and her serpent are denizens of just such underground places (thus combining mythology and natural history). The Parque refers more than once to her living tomb (11.93, 468, 721) whose walls recall Phèdre's dwelling, les murs de son morne tombeau (1.72). Moreover, her descent into darkness, with its connotations of death (cendre, 1.453) and perhaps too of the labyrinth:²⁴ "Abandonne-toi vive aux serpents, ..." (1.459), evokes Thésée's descent into Hades, where monsters are fed on the living flesh. Many such similar suggestions emerge from Charmes, but we will single out one only from Le Cimetière Marin and one from Le Rameur. In the former, the hydre/sea, asleep on the tombs (1.6), gives us the further association Chienne/guardian of the dead (1.61); and the serpent-like ver (1.112), together with larve (1.90) (in its connotation of ghost), an association with devourers of the dead (and in the case of the ver, of the living).

Such melancholy overtones are not absent from Racine's description of the places inhabited by his monstres. When not actually inhabiting the underworld, his monsters live on its shores, or at least on the boundary between one world and the next, symbolised by the shore, barrier between sea and land. Phèdre, again, will serve as example,²⁵ the perilous shores of Trézène, bords dangereux (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.268), into which Phèdre has transformed Hippolyte's happy shores, bords heureux (ibid., I, 5, 1.358). Similar connotations are to be found in rivage, forever associated with the monster in Phèdre, "Ses longs mugissements font trembler le rivage ..." (Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1521), as is rive with the death of Eriphile

(Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1750). Hippolyte in life too, as well as death, was linked with the shore, un char sur le rivage (Phèdre, I, 1, 1.130). Thus bord, rivage, rive, can all stand for the edge of the world.

Since Valéry's Parque was also a Stygian goddess, ma déesse du Styx, it is not surprising to find her inhabiting the edge of the world too, bords dorés de l'univers (1.164), on the hither side of death, "Mon oeil noir est le seuil d'infemales demeures! ..." (1.161). She stands on the reef, écueil (1.25), and sees herself as on the shore, plages (1.174), and as Phèdre comes to the seashore (III, 5, 1.929), the Parque, too, is led there, cette rive (1.418), sur ce bord (1.497). The Pythie remembers how she stood overlooking the sea (11.95-96) and hearing its waves (1.184). Both Narcissus, au bord même des eaux (I, 1.4), and his image, are at the edge of two worlds, for the image is described as being so, "Cher trésor d'un miroir qui partage le monde ..." (II, 1.98). The lovers 'perish' on the sand (III, 1.38), and return to the edge of the water which mirrored their love (II, 1.53).

From sand, we slip easily to desert in considering the haunts of Racine's monstres, whether it is the physical desert in which Josabet wishes to hide Eliacin²⁶

De Cédron avec lui traversant le torrent
J'irai dans le désert ...

(Athalie, III, 6, 11.1061-1062)

or Phèdre's barren world, J'ai languie, j'ai séché (Phèdre, II, 5, 1.690). This evocation of the desert is recalled by the Parque, whose deserts, like those of Phèdre, are mental, and who associates them with the serpent (tresse):

Je n'attendais pas moins de mes riches déserts
Qu'un tel enfantement de fureur et de trésse:
Leurs fonds passionnés brillent de sécheresse
Si loin que je m'avance et m'altère ... [my italics]

(11.64-67)

This aridity is repeated in the Fragments du Narcisse, ma soif (I, 1.4), yeux secs (II, 1.77), and in the Ebauche, soleils secs (1.296), in Le Cimetière Marin, sécheresse, brûlé, défait (11.69-70); yet the serpent/monstre is also an inhabitant of the cool and well-watered forests, at least insofar as Hippolyte is concerned. This is a new departure for Racine, for it is not until Phèdre that we find a forest setting²⁷ (though Eriphile, in the camp of Agamemnon, must be associated with the woods where it stands (Iphigénie, I, 4, 1.342)). However, there is an insistence in Phèdre on both woods and forests, not merely as décor, "Mes seuls gémissements font retentir les bois, ..." (Phèdre, II, 2, 1.551), but as an essential element in the nature of Hippolyte (ibid., III, 1, 1.782), and as the place natural to him, where he hunts (ibid., I, 2, 1.133) or takes refuge (ibid., II, 2, 1.543). This reminds us that the Parque and her serpent are both associated with the forest, into which the serpent disappears (11.36-37), and that the forest, indeed, plays a large part in the Fragments du Narcisse. Both the Narcissus and his image are forest creatures (II, 1.90). The lovers too emerge from the foliage (ibid., 11.23-24). This importance of trees continues in Le Cimetière Marin. The sea-hydre is seen amid trees and foliage, entre les pins (1.2), fausse captive de feuillages (1.49). Like the dog, and the worm, the monster haunts the graveyard, composé ... d'arbres sombres (1.58).

So far, we have been dealing mainly with natural settings in our search for the homes of Racine's monstres — with water, the shores of seas or rivers, underground caverns, deserts and forests.

We turn now to those places in which it seems more natural to find Racine's characters — the traditional buildings associated with royalty or priesthood. We have already commented on the labyrinth, the palace, of Phèdre. It is hard not to see the other enclosures, the palace of Néron, the temple of Eliacin, as partaking of the same qualities of prison, or labyrinth. Pylade, in fact, speaks of the winding passages, détours obscurs, of Pyrrhus' stronghold; the holy of holies where Eliacin is to be found, is terrible: redoutable sanctuaire (Athalie, IV, 6, 1.1509). Their inhabitants are dangerous, "Quelque monstre naissant dans ce temple s'élève ..." (Athalie, II, 6, 1.603), even when, as in Athalie, their retreat is a refuge.

The Parque has her appartements (1.468) and aspires to her temple (here, the space in the heavens which her constellation will occupy). The priestess in La Pythie has her temple (1.105) and here it is plain that the temple is the body, as is the case in the Fragments du Narcisse, where the temple is a defence against death, ... temple qui me sépare / De ma divinité (III, 11.29-30). We find the same comparison, more cryptically expressed, in the Cimetière Marin, where the poet, and his total perception (regard marin) (1.21), are contained in the single moment, Temple du temps (1.19). The graveyard, where we find both the other monsters, Chienne and ver, has the quality of a temple (sacré, 1.55), for its description of the actual cypresses of the graveyard in Sète evokes the temple of Sion, Cèdres, jetez des flammes (Athalie, III, 7, 1.1152). Valéry's cypresses are flame-like, flambeaux, arbres sombres (11.157-158).

We noted above that for Valéry, the temple is associated with the body. Within this particular temple, the smallest and most

intimate enclosure inhabited by the serpent, is, of course, the breast, or the heart within the breast. This applies to Astyanax (Andromaque, I, 2, 1.167), to Eriphile (Iphigénie, V, 4, 11.1675-1676), to Hippolyte (Phèdre, IV, 2, 1.1101), and the monstrous desire he has aroused has been nourished in Phèdre's breast, "Le ciel mit dans mon sein une flamme funeste ..." (Phèdre, V, 7, 1.1625).

It can be seen from the above that there is a general association of breast, heart, and womb in the term sein, and Valéry's serpent/monstre inhabits all three. Its trace, feuille effacée (LJP, 1.14), is found between the Parque's breasts (1.15), and it is linked with the heart, Couve [...] coeurs (1.87). The image of Narcissus is born of the light of the dying day (F du N, I, 1.55) — a light found in the heart of the sky, sein des cieux (ibid., III, 11.17, 20). The snake coils, ornements vipérins, are found on the Pythie's breast, gorge (11.116-117). The heart and the breast are the haunt of the serpent in the Ebauche:

Je disparaiss dans un coeur pur!
Fut-il jamais de sein si dur
Qu'on n'y puisse loger un songe? ...

(Eb d'un S, 11.112-114)

We have seen, then, how the appearance, the nature, and the haunts of Racine's monstres could have lent themselves to Valéry's system of transformations, his metamorphoses of a single being into multiple forms. Can we go further? Can we also relate the scheme of action Valéry laid down for his poem to the pattern of action of Racine's monstres?

We have already seen that Valéry's scheme of action corresponds markedly to that of a Racinian tragedy, where the action springs from the effect of the characters' passion for domination and absorption of the desired being. It is indeed the intensity of this desire which makes the lover or the ruler into a monster. It would not be surprising then, if the pattern of their actions, and Racine's use of the blend of mythology and Biblical imagery, which already had gathered around the natural history of the serpent (dragon, Pytho, Satan, etc.,) had been seized upon by Valéry for his own purposes and added to his own translation of the monstrous.

What are the main outlines of the schema of actions we can trace in Racine's monstres? It would require another thesis to trace them in detail, even as they appear in the great plays of Racine referred to by Valéry. Here we must confine ourselves to a few examples, followed by instances from La Jeune Parque and Charmes which show Valéry tracing a similar pattern in a very Racinian atmosphere — an atmosphere again, which emanates from his use of Racine's vocabulary.²⁸

Briefly, the action unfolds in a series of stages, from the shock produced as the monstre reveals itself, à la lueur du choc de l'événement (C 24, p.401), is how Valéry puts it with reference to Phèdre. Shock is followed by an immediate suspension of movement. Next, the monster, after hypnotising the prey, draws the victim into its orbit, and the prey thus fascinated, is encircled, stifled, or poisoned by the serpent's bite, and finally, can be devoured.

None of this, it will be observed, is inconsistent with natural history. However, Racine's monstres move in a different atmosphere as he translates the effects of shock into his poetic vocabulary.

Again we turn to Théràmène:

Jusqu'au fond de nos coeurs notre sang s'est glacé.
Des coursiers attentifs le crin s'est hérissé ...²⁹

The victim, rendered immobile, 'freezes.' This is precisely the effect produced on the Parque by the apparition of the starry serpent: "Que fais-tu, hérissée, et cette main glacée ..." (1.13). The Pythie describes the effect which she, as the monstre of 1.55, will have

Que soit les humains faits statues,
Les coeurs figés, les âmes tues ...
(11.65-66)

by her gaze, glaces (1.67).³⁰

The serpent of the Ebauche immobilises its prey:

Je dominais furtivement
L'oeil dans l'or ardent de ta laine
Ta nuque énigmatique et pleine
Des secrets de ton mouvement ... [my italics]
(11.147-150)

The monstre hypnotises, then draws its prey into its orbit.

Hippolyte rushes on the monster, pousse au monstre, in Théràmène's récit, drawn by the desire for eternal fame its conquest promises; Hippolyte himself exercises a fascination upon Phèdre. "Par un charme fatal vous futes entraînée, ..." (Phèdre, IV, 6, 1.1298), is Oenone's excuse for her. The Parque too is drawn towards her serpent, following it with her gaze into her forests: "J'y suivais un serpent ..." (1.37), and describes its methods of fascination:

Tu regardais dormir ma belle négligence ...
Va chercher des yeux closes pour tes danses massives ...
(11.81, 85)

The Pythie herself becomes a charm, vivante amulette (1.115) and there is no doubt about the fascination his reflection exercises upon

Narcissus:

Tout m'appelle et m'enchaîne à la chair lumineuse
Que m'oppose des eaux la paix vertigineuse ...

(I, 11.70-71)

Nor is there any doubt about the seductive power of the serpent
on Eve:

Rien qui ne flatte, et ne l'induit
A se perdre dans mes desseins,
Docile ...

(Eb d'un S, 11.186-188)

The prey, once fascinated, is encircled, "... le monstre
bondissant [...] / Se roule ..." (Phèdre, V, 6, 11.1531-1533).

Néron, in Britannicus, explains the method: "J'embrasse mon rival,
mais c'est pour l'étouffer ..." (IV, 3, 1.1314). The desire to absorb
and dominate is common to lover and hater in Racine's plays. Oenone
loves Phèdre, sacrificing all for her, but her embrace is fatal.
"Par vos faibles genoux, que je tiens embrassés ..." (Phèdre, I, 3,
1.244). She weakens Phèdre's resistance. Valéry's serpent and its
prey, the Parque, demonstrate this mode of action. The monstre
encircles:

... dans les anneaux de ton rêve animal
Halète jusqu'au jour l'innocence anxieuse ...

(11.88-89)

The Parque has encircled herself also, "J'ai de mes bras épais
environné mes tempes ..." (1.30). La Pythie again, incorporates
the Apollo myth, as earlier that of Medusa, for the Pythie is seated
on a trépied qu'étrangle un serpent (1.24) while her snake-like
ornaments encircle her throat (11.117, 116). The hydre of

Au Platane encircles:

Pressens autour de toi d'autres vivants [the other trees], liés
Par l'hydre vénérable ...

(11.17-18)

In the Fragments du Narcisse the lovers are wound in a mutual embrace: "Couple aux pieds confus qui se mêle ..." (II, 1.35), and the serpent of the Ebauche twists itself, vient se tordre, around the branches of the tree it is attacking (1.297).

We have now seen the prey brought near enough to the monstre for the final attack. As we noted earlier (p.147), the flames darted forth from the fiery mouth suggest the parallel with the dart, sword or dagger, and we remember that Racine's human monstres were armed with these too. It seems possible that the pure Hippolyte, launching his weapon, dard, lancé d'une main sûre,³¹ and Eliacin, the brilliant child of Athalie's dream with his weapon,

... un homicide acier
Que le traître dans mon sein a plongé tout entier ...

(Athalie, II, 5 11.513-514)

could together have provided a model for the attack of the Parque's starry serpent, emanation from the gods:

Vous qui dans les mortels plongez jusqu'aux larmes
Les souverains éclats, ces invincibles armes,
Et les élancements de votre éternité, ...

(11.21-23)

and a model too perhaps for the serpent of the Ebauche (glisse, plonge, (1.111)). But this sudden attack could also have served Valéry as a model for the serpent's bite, where the tooth or tongue replaces the dagger or javelin as the offensive weapon, the Parque's mordre (1.37), the serpent/Pythie's bouche qui veut se mordre (1.49), and of course the tongue, langue à double fil, and tooth, dent, of the Ebauche (11. 7, 3), the dent secrète of the Cimetière Marin (1.116).

A further interesting possibility in this context of attack is supplied by Racine's Néron, whose treacherous kiss announces Britannicus' death (Britannicus, V, 5) by a poison as swift and

deadly as the knife (ibid., IV, 4, ll.1394-1398). We note that the Parque's kiss,³² too, is linked with the serpent's poisonous bite (1.98). The kiss of the lovers (Fragments du Narcisse, II, 1.82), the last kiss of the Narcisse are deadly too, while the Pythie, une bouche qui veut se mordre (ll.5,49), shows the characteristic symptoms of poisoning.³³

Racine's monstres and Valéry's, then, share a complex of words and ideas, involving flames, weapons and the poisoned bite or kiss. It may well be that they share another aspect, also generated by the récit de Théràmène, for the flames of this monstre could have suggested the weapons, the burning kisses; its smoke perhaps suggested the link between poison, incense and breath. All these can be analogies for the danger of poisoned speech as it proceeds from the mouth of the attacker, as we see by Phèdre's denunciation of Oenone, bouche impie (Phèdre, IV, 6, 1.1313). Mathan too breathes forth the poison of lies, his incense is corrupt, souillé (Athalie, III, 7, 1.1147). The Parque's serpent has his corrupt emanation, parfums de caverne (1.424), and though the Parque's own incense, her breath, is sweeter (ll.403, 421, 422), it can be deceptive (1.419). The balance is redressed in La Pythie, surrounded by smoke (like Mathan, perhaps, assis dans la chaire empestée (Athalie, III, 4, 1.1016)) and by the serpent of the Ebauche, présent comme une odeur (1.151), whose speech, gaze³⁴ (1.180), is blasphemous (ll.201-202).

It is this same serpent of the Ebauche who gives us a clue as to the final, and most complete, method of destruction common to the monstres of Racine and Valéry. The comparison of the serpent as the generator of vampires is more, it seems to us, than an amusing parody of Bossuet. The vampire feeds itself on living flesh, as

Hermione, in the role of Fury, will devour Oreste's, "Et je lui [Hermione] porte enfin mon coeur à dévorer ..." (Andromaque, V, 5, 1.1644), while at the other end of Racine's productive life he pictures the man-eating monsters of Hades (Phèdre, III, 5, 11.963-964) who devour the love-obsessed Pirithous (ibid., 1.962).

Sometimes the need to obtain nourishment is translated into the satisfaction of thirst — but it is still the living substance which is absorbed; the serpent of the Ebauche remarks of his prey, "Je te buvais, ô belle sourde ..." (1.145). Narcissus suffers because he cannot do so,

Je suis si près de toi que je pourrais te boire,
O visage! ... Ma soif est un esclave nu ...

(I, 11.134-135)

but it is clear that the fountain, which is one with Narcissus, and which is described as vivant de tout qui s'approche (II, 1.13), will absorb both Narcissus and his image. (Cf. Valéry's description of the projected close of the poem (OCV, I, Notes to p.1672). Valéry's monstres also display this characteristic. The Parque adjures herself: "Abandonne-toi vive aux serpents ..." (1.459), while in Charmes, the mouth which kisses or bites also devours, as in La Pythie: mâche (1.48). The hydre of the Cimetière Marin is also the golfe mangeur (1.50), the ver the vrai rongeur (1.112), and it is to be noted that it too feeds on the living (11.114, 119).

It is in La Jeune Parque, the parent poem, that we first find a final characteristic common to the attacks mounted by Racine's monstres and those of Valéry. They absorb not only the substance of their prey, but their own, turning the attack on themselves. This is most clearly seen in Phèdre, whose eponymous heroine is consumed by self-administered venom.³⁵ This is the case too with the Parque,

who, penetrated by her own poison (1.44), feeds her soul on the lait des rêveries drawn from her own breast (11.55-57). The Pythie too nourishes her darker side, merveilles du mal, troupeau des épouvantes (11.134, 203), with the shadowy food of dreams, fabuleuse foison (1.207) and the hydre of Le Cimetière Marin devours itself, "Qui te remords l'étincelante queue ..." (1.137).

Much space has now been devoted to the way in which Racine's monstres, and Valéry's, attack their prey. A basic pattern of resemblance, traceable through the Racinian vocabulary in which Valéry clothed the activities of his serpent, has emerged, and this perhaps entitles us to ask our final question as to the resemblance between Racine's monstres and Valéry's. To what end do the creatures attack, and, finally, perish? What, in short, is their function in Racine's poetic drama and in Valéry's dramatic poetry?

Racine's monstre arouses Hippolyte from a trance of inaction and of silence (Phèdre, V, 6, 11.1499-1502), just as Phèdre's arrival had spurred him to the resolve to leave Trézène (ibid., I, 1, 11.1-2), scene of his idle youth (ibid., III, 5, 1.933). This is the function of Valéry's monstres also. The Parque's serpent arouses her: "Moi, je veille. Je sors, pâle et prodigieuse ..." (LJP, 1.90). The Pythie is forced into creation and parturition; the image of Narcissus arouses him to self-knowledge — "Jusqu'à ce temps charmant je m'étais inconnu ..." (I, 1.136) (the time before his first sight of the reflection); the vision leads to an attempt at fulfilment, me joindre (ibid., 1.137). The serpent of the Ebauche initiates Eve's first movement:

A la fin, les temps sont venus,
Qu'un pas vers la neuve Science
Va donc jaillir de ces pieds nus ...

(11.241-244)

The poet of Le Cimetière Marin is roused to action not only by the bite of the ver (il touche!, 1.118; Non, non, debout!, 1.127), but by the touch of the hydre/sea, "Courons à l'onde en rejaillir vivant! ..." (1.133). Thereafter, the poison ingested generates illusions, dreams, madness — the pattern, in fact, described at the beginning of this section. The close of the action, the end result of the initial attack of the monstre, is self-recognition, for Racine's monstres, from Oreste's catalogue of Act V, scene 4 in Andromaque, to the prophecy of Athalie in her dying speech (Athalie, V, 7, ll. 1785-1790), and which is most fully expressed in Phèdre. However, during the process, something else has been produced; the play, or the poem, a 'lie', as in La Jeune Parque, Mens! / Mais sache ... (11.419-420), and the voice which makes music from the recognition of the monstrous self, as in Phèdre and La Pythie, cette auguste Voix (1.227).

Having said so much, perhaps we may allow ourselves one final question. What is the identity of Valéry's monstre, one with its human host, dieu dans la chair égaré, clad in so many of Racine's trappings? Let us recapitulate the salient points in the pattern which can help us to answer this question.

Racine's monstres are double; fabulous/symbolic, with animal characteristics — the monstre of the récit de Thérémène, the Minotaure, the monstres of Hades (Cerberus), and the Furies; and human — Phèdre, Oenone, Hippolyte, earlier Oreste and Hermione, Eriphile; later Aman, Mathan and Eliacin. Valéry's monstres are also fabulous/symbolic, with the characteristics of animals — the serpent/monstre of La Jeune Parque, the vipère/hydre into which the Pythie has been transformed, and the serpent-guivre of the Ebauche, the hydre-chienne and ver of the Cimetière, and the hydres of Au Platane

and Ode Secrète; his human monstres are the Parque, the Pythie and Narcissus. The animal characteristics of Racine's monstres are those of the bull, the serpent and the dog; those of Valéry's of the serpent, the horse and the dog. Racine's human monstres are, by turns, lover, mother, child, priest and idol; this is equally true of Valéry's, if we substitute priestess for priest. In addition, Valéry, if the above is valid, has drawn extensively on Racine for many features of the appearance, the attributes, the metamorphoses and nature of his monstres. Thus the composite monstre of Racine possesses coils, scales, horns and fire-darting mouth; the human, long tresses, jewelled ornaments, long (shining) robes, and is armed. This is also the case with Valéry's. It is possible to prove that Racine's human monstres and Valéry's are further seen as star, flower, or component parts of a tree-root, twig, flower or fruit; as carnivores, tiger or leopard; or as dream, phantom. Again this is so for Valéry's monstres. Considerations of space, however, have led to the omission of this proof here. Equally, both Racine's and Valéry's human monsters have a double nature, furious, dangerous, cruel, deceitful and idolatrous — or charming, innocent and pure, instinct with reason. Both Racine's monsters and Valéry's inhabit certain places; the sea or other waters, the cave or labyrinth, the tomb, the nether regions, as well as various boundaries — between this world and the next — the seashore, the desert, the forest, the palace or temple; the human heart, and the dream or vision. They share similar methods of attack — they hypnotise, chill, fascinate, encircle, stab (if human), bite (if animal) and devour their prey; they also turn their weapons on themselves.

These repeated coincidences in pattern, in atmosphere, and above

all in vocabulary, give us, to say the least, a strong probability that Valéry found, in Racine's translations of myth into the terms of the langue noble, a treasury of expression to aid him in elevating his own portrait of the monstre to the level of myth.

Here, indeed, is the serpent ... décoratif to which he refers.

And, if we repeat our question as to the identity of Valéry's monstre, asking what myth did Racine help Valéry to embody, we have not far to seek ...

In the serpent/monstre, as it takes shape under Valéry's hands, we have a creature of enormous power and cruelty, but one, in its human shapes, of extraordinary beauty and purity — a being with supernatural powers, but not immortal. A demi-god therefore, and one whose attributes, as noted by Racine himself,³⁶ are those of the monster of the récit de Théràmène. This demi-god, the details of whose description Racine noted during his Greek studies, had bull's horns and serpent locks, "des cornes de taureau et était couronné de dragons," and his followers were similarly crowned. His human shape was that of a young man, with the beauty of a goddess, "un jeune homme enchanteur, beau, et ayant toutes les grâces de Vénus dans les yeux" (which, Racine comments, were black); he carries a torch, "un flambeau allumé [...] abandonnant ses cheveux à la vent [...]" partout où il va, l'encens fume," and he is armed with the Thyrses, "javelot fait de bois de lierre." His qualities are those of the soothsayer, of the warrior, Devin, guerrier, and, Racine notes, of the madman, furieux. A god, we may perhaps add, of trance and dreams as well as of madness, whose symbol is the serpent — a god of the sea, of the forest, who haunts tombs, and whose followers feast on living flesh — yet one whose successor, Orpheus, has been identified

with Christ. He is a god, too, of double aspect, a god of fertility, but also of winter darkness, a god who was sacrifice as well as dedicatee. Dark double of Apollo, he too was inspirer of poets, and the first god of the theatre — Dionysos himself.

Le Serpent ... Décoratif

Notes

1. See C 9, 671, for a dream of dead serpents and a living viper, in a garden "assez semblable à celui de la Graulet" (Catherine Piozzi's property in the Dordogne).
2. Letter to Gide (C G V, p.448).
3. O C V, I, Notes, p.1623.
4. C G V, p.448.
5. Ibid.
6. C 6, 437-438.
7. O C V, I, p.96.
8. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.13.
9. See Maurice Bémol, La Parque et le Serpent. He refers to Maurice Guérin's La Bacchante.
10. J. M. Cocking, Towards L'Ebauche d'un Serpent : Valéry and Ouroboros, Australian Journal of French Studies (hereafter A J F S) VI, nos.2-3, 1969, p.187.
11. Le Thème de la Pythie chez Paul Valéry.
12. Octave Nadal, E C.
13. Op. cit., p.191.
14. Nadal, op. cit., p.195.
15. O C R, I, p.
16. Astyanax is seen as a reincarnation of Hector by Oreste (Andromaque, I, 2, ll.162-164, 224) and by Andromaque: "C'est Hector, disait-elle en l'embrassant toujours ..." (Andromaque, II, 5, l.252); "C'est lui-même, c'est toi, cher epoux que j'embrasse ..." (ibid., l.254). Similarly, Athalie recognises the dead Okosias in Eliacin/Joas : "Je vois d'Okosias le port et le geste / Tout me retrace enfin un sang que je déteste ..." (Athalie, V, 6, ll.1771-1772).
17. Mathan considers himself the equal of Joad, the priest of Jehovah (and hence of God himself by whom Joad is possessed), and far above Baal. See Athalie, III, 3, ll.919-921, 954.
18. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.13.

19. We refer, of course, to the well-known line in Andromaque, V, 5 : "Pour qui sont ces serpents qui sifflent sur vos têtes? ..." (1.1638).
There is certainly also an aspect of the demonic in Oreste's vision of Hermione as a leader of the Furies (ibid., 1.1636).
20. Athalie, II, 7, 1.654. See also the lines : "A moins que la pitié qui semble vous troubler / Ne soit ce coup fatal qui vous faisait trembler? ..." (Ibid., 11.657-658).
21. "Vous, malheureux, assis dans la chaire empestée / Où le mensonge règne et répand son poison; ..." (Athalie, III, 4, 11.1016-1017).
22. Another of Racine's poetic decorations. The King of the Epirus caused Pirithous to be devoured by his dog, Cerberus. Thésée describes the monstres cruels (Phèdre, III, 5, 11.961-964) and remarks of himself : "J'ai su tromper les yeux de qui j'étais gardé," (Ibid., 1.968).
The whole of Thésée's description of his captivity is pervaded by the overtones of his mythological descent into Hades.
23. Epirus is the country through which the Acheron, the legendary Styx, flows. See Théramène's speech (Phèdre, I, 1, 11.11-12).
24. The Minotaur's détours, détours de sa vaste retraite (Phèdre, II, 5, 1.650), and the détours of the Parque's serpent (1.78), suggest this analogy, strengthened by the Parque's own retour (1.423) and fil (1.416).
25. All the connotations of the word bord(s) in Phèdre, with the single exception of Oenone's bords heureux are dark, but the same connotations of death and disaster abound in Iphigénie, and are to be found also in Andromaque and Athalie.
26. When she wishes to save him from Athalie's wrath. The lines parallel Andromaque's plea for Astyanax : "Laissez-moi le cacher en quelque île déserte," (Andromaque, III, 4, 1.578).
27. A fact commented upon by Alain Seznec, whose computer research underlined it. See his notes on the concordance of Racine by Freeman and Batson, Journal of French Studies (hereafter J F S), XXVI, Jan. 1972, p.9.
28. See the chapter on vocabulary for a more detailed treatment of Valéry's debt to the langue noble.
29. Phèdre, V, 6, 11.1511-1512. The first of these two lines, describing the first effect of the monster upon its prey in Phèdre, is one of several very similar lines Racine uses to describe the effects of shock, and which are associated with the revelation of other monsters. In Phèdre, besides the lines already quoted, we have Oenone's exclamation when Phèdre's unnatural passion for Hippolyte is revealed to her : "Juste ciel,

29. (cont.)

tout mon sang dans mes veines se glace! ..." (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.265). The same line is repeated in Esther, when the horrors Aman is preparing are disclosed (I, 3, 1.165). The effect of Eliacin on Athalie is equally chilling, and inhibiting: "J'ignore si de Dieu l'ange se dévoilant / Est venu lui montrer le glaive étincelant; / Mais sa langue dans sa bouche à l'instant s'est glacé ..." (Athalie, II, 2, 11.409-411).

30. Here, of course, we see how well Racine's pattern lends itself to the myth of Medusa, and to Valéry's mythologising of his passion for La Méduse (Mme de Rovira).
31. Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1529. Hippolyte too is a monstre, and as such, an aggressor.
32. Could there be a link here with the nurse's kiss in Hérodiade? It was strictly forbidden (no-one was permitted to touch Hérodiade) and therefore was guilty. It implies danger for Hérodiade (11.53-61).
33. The Pythia's symptoms are consistent with those of poisoning: lividity (1.5), discolouration (11.111-112), convulsions (1.20).
34. This word could apply to a vapour, as well as to the material, the gauze which fits the garment content of the lines.
35. Phèdre, V, , 11.1637-1638. Oreste too is a prey to his own venom: "Seigneur, je le vois bien, votre âme prévenue / Répand sur mes discours le venin qui la tue ..." (Andromaque, II, 2, 11.577-578).
Hermione also turns her attack upon herself, as does Eriphile.
36. In his notes on the Bacchae of Euripides (Oeuvres Complètes de Racine, la Pléiade, Tome II (hereafter O C R, II), pp.874-875). The feminine attire and effeminate beauty of Bacchus/Dionysos were celebrated in art and poetry alike, and another form of the thyrsos was a rod topped by a pine cone, the phallic symbol. I am indebted to Dr Lowe for first drawing my attention to the pampres of La Jeune Parque (1.206) and the grappe (1.17), as possibly having more significance than a reference to Mallarmé's Faune.

CHAPTER V

UNE SORTIE DE SYMBOLISME

Une Sorte de Symbolisme

In 1916 we find in the Cahiers a cryptic remark relating to what Valéry describes as Racine's symbolism and which he defines as follows: "Une sorte de symbolisme infiniment habile, chaque vers étant doucement universel."¹ Just what did Valéry mean by this statement and wherein lay the value of such a symbolism for what he himself was trying to achieve in his own poetry?

The following very important passage, written a year later, may help us to establish the relationship between Racine's symbolism and Valéry's own conception of poetry:

La poésie toute nue n'est autre chose que le sentiment se démontrant à soi-même — de se posséder en toute lucidité mais en toute variété. Le simple image le fait voir, qui est d'une part une transformation et de l'autre, la connaissance que cette transformation n'est ni une erreur, ni une vérité, mais une propriété singulière et native de notre système profond. Toutes les représentations et toutes les relations qui sont possibles entr'elles sont comme supposées simultanément présentées.

Le poète est-il un vivant groupe de transformations? Je rappelle que celui-ci est le poète à l'état pur tel que l'on ne doit l'obtenir et le considérer que dans un laboratoire. Le poète réel, utilisable, doit comporter un artiste, et le langage est son théâtre.²

Here we have, perhaps, one of those observations arising directly from Valéry's own experience as he was composing La Jeune Parque and which, he would have us believe, were of more value to him than the poem itself.³ The confident tone of the passage, taken together with its date, suggests that Valéry knew he had found a solution to one of the problems posed by the content of La Jeune Parque, and which he describes as follows:

Les noms des choses de l'esprit sont impossibles. Et c'est cela que j'aurais voulu "chanter." J'ai eu grand mal à en introduire quelques unes dans les vers.⁴

Language had posed the problem, but language, too, could solve it:

Le langage joue dans la machine humaine le rôle de transformateur extraordinaire.⁵

The solution then, as we have read, lay in the image, that is, in an image which can not only present the mind with a picture of itself and its workings, but which is also an essential quality of the workings of the mind ("une propriété [...] native de notre système profond"). This means, however, that such images have to be capable of the widest possible application: "Toutes les représentations et toutes les relations qui sont possibles entr'elles sont comme supposées simultanément présentées."

This view of the image brings us into the domain of symbolism, for the symbol, after all, is the ultimate in the use of the image, what Valéry calls "la métaphore complète."⁶ It is a view in line with his earlier conviction that the use of symbolism could solve any problem of representation:

Une chose de n'importe quelle nature peut être symbolisée par une autre de n'importe quelle nature.⁷

Moreover, symbolism lent itself to the portrayal of mental operations; Le monde mental est celui où on peut symboliser.⁸ If, therefore, this solution to the problems posed by language was so readily available, why was the composition of La Jeune Parque so difficult?

The difficulties on which Valéry lays so much stress lay, perhaps, in the choice of the appropriate imagery, of the metaphors which could lend themselves to the sort of manipulation Valéry had in mind, metaphors capable of reducing language to a form as near abstract as possible:

Mon goût du net, du pur, du complet, du suffisant, conduit à un système de substitutions — que reprend comme en manoeuvre le langage — le remplace par une sorte d'algèbre —

et aux images essaie de substituer des figures
réduites à leurs propriétés utiles.

Par là se fait automatiquement une unification du
monde physiquement au psychique.¹⁰

Valéry was searching, that is, for symbols, valid for different contexts, as the algebraic x can stand for any number of different objects.

Now, as an admirer of Mallarmé, Valéry, who studied the latter's vocabulary intensively, must also have studied his imagery and symbols. Traces of this are evident in La Jeune Parque and Charmes. But it may be that Valéry needed an imagery with a different colouring, stemming from another type of vocabulary:

... La valeur et la nuance de l'écrivain tiennent beaucoup à la manière dont chacun perçoit les mots, quel retentissement, quelle pénombre, motrice — musicale — morphique? ...¹¹

Certainly, much of the imagery which had contented the poet of the Vers Anciens, with their specifically Mallarmean vocabulary, disappears from La Jeune Parque,¹² as Guiraud notes, giving as examples the virtual disappearance of ange, cygne, flûte, lac, sépulcre. We may note for ourselves the significant replacement of lune by soleil, and the far wider field of application in the arbre, forêt, onde, mer, vent, which replace the lacs, lunes, roseaux.¹³ There is thus a marked divergence from the Mallarmean treasury, and a movement from the specific to the generalised term.

When we consider this striking change in Valéry's poetic vocabulary (and vocabulary is the source of all poetic imagery), together with his research into the work of the older poets,¹⁴ we must ask ourselves if there is anything to indicate which of these were contributing their colouring to Valéry's choice of images, and helping to enrich their significance by widening the field of their

application.

In 1916 Valéry remarks:

On peut considérer les types de notre poésie, Racine Hugo Baudelaire etc comme les instruments chacun plus approprié à tels effets et plus adapté par sa langue choisie, ses rythmes, ses images à telles et telles nécessités ...¹⁵

Another passage, in 1918, suggests why his choice of "instrument" should have fallen on Racine:

... Quel savant prend ses observations au hasard? La règle est de bien choisir. Ce qui simplifie — ce qui est très net — etc. Ce qui parle. Dans l'art, il y a aussi une règle de choix — et de plus une règle de transformations.

Il y a 2 esthétiques — l'une qui veut qu'on donne l'impression de la vie; l'autre qui préfère reconstituer, reconstruire la vie.

Les seconds sont du type Descartes Racine ...¹⁶

This, though in general terms, could well apply to the process he himself was trying to 'reconstitute,' the process of thought in the living being. For Valéry, Racine was incomparable in his powers of translating ideas, and action, into poetry. This judgement emerges clearly from his unpublished notes for a speech for the Racine celebrations. If, as he states, tragedy consists of a series of transformations,¹⁷ then Racine was a brilliant translator:

(Langage de Racine)

Nous avons coutûme de séparer ce que nous entendons de ce que nous comprenons, de passer de l'oreille aux idées et nous divisons les pensées de Phèdre de sa voix. Mais en matière de poésie, il y a équivalence, ou bien l'oeuvre est prose.

Mais en poésie dramatique le problème est compliqué — il faut agir et se mouvoir dans l'ordre de la prose, puisque l'action réelle se joue, mais parler un langage qui obéit à des conditions sensibles particulières —

Tel est le [problème?] de Racine

Il semble qu'il l'ait résolu sans effort.
C'est une véritable traduction qu'il a dû faire.¹⁸

As we note, the successful translation of reality into poetry

was accomplished through language. For Valéry, Racine's language was especially suited to the translation of the process of thought, for in spite of its imagery, it contained nothing foreign to the natural process of thinking: "Pas de termes qui ne soient de ceux qui figurent naturellement dans la pensée."¹⁹

It may be that here Valéry was noting the absence of the artificial reifications of the philosophers, the abstract 'Beauty' separated from the beautiful thing or person. However that may be, his own test of words which he considered suitable as symbols must strike a reader of Racine. In 1915 he wrote thus:

... Il y a une foule de mots qui, situés entre le concret et l'abstrait sont des noms des symboles [,] géométries, mécaniques Exemples: un regard, une tendance, un noeud, un but, un fond, une dent.

Couronne

Noms de formes de mouvements — ou de termes appropriés à des actes 20

It would be difficult to find a word more important in the Racinian universe than Valéry's first word, regard (emphasised by his italics). It is an instrument of destiny in Phèdre, and is equally important in Britannicus, where we see just what Valéry meant by his formes de mouvements and the entre le concret et l'abstrait:

D'un regard enchanteur connaît-il le poison?

(Britannicus, 1.429)

The movement implied by the regard, from Junie to Néron, is just as fatal as would be an arrow charged with venom. The same applies to the noeuds of Atalide's lines, as she speaks of Bajazet:

Moi seule, j'ai tissu le lien malheureux
Dont tu viens d'éprouver les détestables noeuds

(Bajazet, 11.1731-1732)

for her plotting has led to Bajazet's death, strangled, Turkish-fashion. Couronne, again, as a favourite rhetorical symbol for

kingship, or victory, connects the idea of the power they imply or acts by which they are achieved with the concrete object.

All these words are, of course, common currency with poets but they bring with them from Racine the colour and intensity with which he has endowed them — a colouring which pervades La Jeune Parque and Charmes.

In view then of Valéry's own statements, it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of imagery to him as he translated the interaction of thought and physical reality in the living being, and in view of his own judgement of Racine, we must ask ourselves what traces of Racine's imagery are to be found in Valéry's work.

Valéry's use of metaphor and symbol has been discussed at length by those who have studied his poetry. As is natural, his inheritance from the symbolists, and from Mallarmé in particular, has been given great prominence — and Mallarmé's coinage is indeed an integral part of Valéry's currency.²¹ But in commenting on Valéry's picture of the natural world, a domain which has been deeply and thoroughly discussed, under certain of its aspects,²² we find little or nothing with reference to Racine. This seemed to us strange, in view of Valéry's stress on the value of Racine in all the aspects of poetic technique, including, as we have seen, symbolism and imagery. In the following pages, therefore, we shall examine nature imagery. Since the rôle of the sun is of such importance in Phèdre, a play so important, as we have seen, to Valéry, let us begin with a study of imagery related to the sun.

We find the sun in many of Racine's plays and poems, where it is referred to under varying names — soleil,²³ astre,²⁴ flambeau.²⁵ As a natural phenomenon, it is to be found in all the plays, and in a wide range of the poems, in contexts which connect it not only with light,²⁶ but with the passage of time.²⁷ In its figurative sense, and as soleil, astre, the sun is linked with the torch,²⁸ with a child,²⁹ with royalty,³⁰ with Christ,³¹ with God,³² with immortality³³ and with justice,³⁴ and in a final and most interesting comparison, with the divine Word, as well as with God himself as the source of all light:

Source ineffable de lumière,
Verbe en qui l'éternel contemple sa beauté,
Astre dont le soleil n'est que l'ombre grossière,
Sacré jour, dont le jour emprunte sa clarté;

Lève-toi, soleil adorable ...

(Hymne, lundi, Laudes, 11.1-5)³⁵

With the exception of La Thébaïde and Mithridate, all the plays mentioned in our references are those in which, as we have seen, Valéry showed a special interest. The plays where we have the sun connected with godhead (that is, Phèdre, Esther and Athalie) are those to which Valéry attached a particular importance, as the Cahiers and the unpublished work show. We note too that the sun as a source of poetic imagery is treated with great richness and freedom in the lyrical sections of Esther and Athalie, particularly in the latter play, "où les mots prennent des valeurs uniques."³⁶ Again, both the connection of the sun with godhead, and the richness of imagery, are to be found in the sacred poems. We know that Valéry was interested in these, especially in Cantique 4, for it is from this Cantique that he taught his small daughter a stanza as a pendant to the Songe d'Athalie (which he also taught her).³⁷ A strange choice, we

might think, unless both had an especial importance to him. It seems more than probable that he studied the translations from the Latin breviary at the same time, when we consider that value he set on all types of poetic translation.³⁸ And, if Valéry did indeed study these translations, the skill with which Racine embroiders on the Latin original,³⁹ his technique of translating the basic content in three different ways,⁴⁰ cannot but have appealed to a man who saw all poetry as a translation of the same themes, and the art of poetry as the art of translation — a man who had earlier toyed with the idea of a Racine writing and re-writing his most famous play.⁴¹

Here, in the plays and poems of Racine, was a rich source of malleable imagery. Can we therefore find any evidence that Racine's imagery made its way into Valéry's poetry?

Remembering that the use of sun imagery is common to many poets, particularly those of the Mediterranean basin, and that it must have been frequent at the court of Louis XIV, we must concentrate on a search for a nexus common to both Racine and Valéry in their use of such imagery, a persistence of the same set of analogies. Remembering too that we are looking for translations of ideas, it will be helpful to begin with the sun as an image of godhead, the idea of the Divine, whether pagan, Hebrew, or Christian. Here it is instructive to compare the properties and functions of Racine's composite sun/God with those of Valéry's.

We have already discussed the overall importance of the solar myth in Phèdre for the construction of La Jeune Parque, together with Racine's borrowings from Greek solar mythology.⁴² However, the imagery attached to the sun/God of the Biblical plays and of the poems, in relation to La Jeune Parque and Charmes, remains to be

explored.

The terms in which Racine's choruses in the Biblical plays are made to describe their God, or those in which He is referred to in the poems, give us a central image of the Deity as a sun:

O mont de Sinaï, conserve la mémoire
De ce jour à jamais auguste et renommé,
Quand, sur ton sommet enflammé,
Dans un nuage épais le Seigneur enfermé
Fit luire aux mortels un rayon de sa gloire.
Dis-nous pourquoi ces feux et ces éclairs,
Ces torrents de fumée, et ce bruit dans les airs
Ces trompettes et ce tonnerre? ...

(Athalie, I, 4, ll.332-339)

Here is the soleil adorable of the poems (HLL, 1.5). His attributes, however, are not only those proper to the sun (rayon) but lend themselves to the nexus sun/God/torch, with its flames and smoke. Even the sparks are supplied by the sun of the poems, astre étincelant,⁴³ and by Esther's God,

Ainsi du Dieu vivant la colère étincelle
(Esther, II, 7, l.653)

The sun/God is armed, as we see from the passage quoted above (feux, éclairs, tonnerre). He has at his disposal other weapons, the sword of his anger,⁴⁴ Eliacin's dagger,⁴⁵ and the spears and swords of the Levites.⁴⁶ Again, He possesses vast treasures, as Athalie tells us,

Tantôt m'éblouissant de tes riches trésors,
(Athalie, V, 6, l.1778)

and, more specifically, gold, tout l'or de David (Ibid., V, 2, l.1589).

Turning from the attributes of this sun/God to his functions, we note one already referred to in Phèdre. He is a progenitor, who engenders mortals and gods.⁴⁷ The Hebrew God of Athalie is a giver of life and fruitfulness:

Il commande au soleil d'animer la nature, ...
Il donne aux fleurs leur aimable peinture:
 Il fait naître et mûrir les fruits;
 Il leur dispense avec mesure
Et la chaleur des jours et la fraîcheur des nuits;
Le champ qui les reçut les rend avec usure.

(Athalie, I, 4, l.328, 323-327)

This function is also illustrated in the poems:

Seigneur, tant d'animaux par toi des eaux fécondes
 Sont produits à ton choix
Que leur nombre infini peuple où les mers profondes,
 Où les airs et les bois ...

(HJV, 11.1-4)

The distributor of many gifts, his supreme function is to give light,
... la lumière est un don de ses mains ...

(Athalie, I, 4, l.329)

physical light, naturally, but also the light of inspired revelation,
as we see when Joad, answering his own question, "Est-ce l'Esprit
divin qui s'empare de moi? ...", exclaims, "C'est lui. Il m'échauffe.
Il parle. Mes yeux s'ouvrent / Et les siècles obscurs devant moi se
découvrent ..." (Athalie, III, 7, ll.1130, 1131-1132); and, even more
important, the light of reason, of justice and law, as on Sinai, or
at the Creation:

O sagesse, ta parole
Fit éclore l'univers ...

(Cant.5.4, 11.31-32)

This rôle of the solar deity as a bringer of reason and judgement has
already been discussed in Chapter II. We find it again in the two
Biblical plays and the poems. Reason and judgement, Racine infers,
are the real riches given by God: "Mais sa loi sainte, sa loi pure, /
Est le plus riche don qu'il ait fait aux humains ..." (Athalie, I, 4,
11.330-331). For the price of all this, Racine's sun-deity, soleil
adorable, exacts only adoration, love and obedience, easy coin,

"Il venait à ce peuple heureux / Ordonner de l'aimer d'une amour éternelle ..." (Athalie, I, 4, ll.345-346), and one which can be offered even by a sinner:

Quand pourrais-je t'offrir, ô Charité suprême,
Au sein de la lumière même
Le cantique de mes soupirs; ...

(Cant. I, ll.73-75)

Naturally, in the Biblical plays and even more in the poems, Racine wishes us to see his deity as wholly benign and without taint.⁴⁸

In spite of this, however, we are forced to note less fortunate consequences of light and revelation. Racine's sun/God can blind by the light he gives forth. The perception he brings can be misused, and he can kill. We have already seen this aspect in our study of Phèdre and La Jeune Parque, and the God who acts through Joad and Eliacin is no less guilty of deception and cruelty. Valéry himself remarked upon this in his comment on the two priests in Athalie:

On n'a pas assez remarqué dans Athalie l'égale cruauté
et fourberie des deux prêtres — opposés — et le "bon"
pire que le mauvais. — Guet-apens ...

(C 25, p.446)

He is referring, of course, to the stratagem of Joad which lures Athalie to the temple where the Levites wait in ambush to kill her.⁴⁹ Athalie herself accuses the deity, with reason, of deceit and cruelty:

Impitoyable Dieu, toi seul as tout conduit ...
Tantôt m'éblouissant de tes riches trésors ...

(Athalie, V, 6, ll.1774, 1778)

Both pagan and Hebrew deities call up the monster which kills, Thésée, by the prayer to Neptune; the God of Athalie, by sending the dream in which Eliacin, monstre naissant, inspires Athalie with the desire which eventually brings her to the temple and death.

Nor is the Deity's desire to be loved and worshipped without

its sinister aspect. Racine's beneficent God needs sacrifices, even human sacrifices,

Quel fruit me revient-il de tout vos sacrifices? ...

Du milieu du peuple exterminiez les crimes,
Et vous viendrez alors m'immoler des victimes ...

(Athalie, I, 1, ll.87, 91-92)

If they are not offered, He will take them — the list of His achievements in Act I, scene 1 of Athalie is at least as destructive as Thésée's exploits in Phèdre (I, 1, ll.79-82). The mainspring of His actions here shows itself to be less love than jealousy, and the desire to dazzle:

Il sait, quand il lui plaît, faire éclater sa gloire ..."

(Athalie, I, 1, l.127)

To sum up, Racine's sun/God is a supernatural being, a double deity, both creator and destroyer. Let us turn now to Valéry's Soleil.

The importance of the sun as an image in La Jeune Parque and Charmes can scarcely be exaggerated. Its presence pervades long passages of La Jeune Parque and infuses the whole of Le Cimetière Marin and the exquisite Colonnes. Its fading light is reflected from the surface of the Narcissus' fountain, its brilliance from the river of Le Rameur. Again, the roses of the setting sun colour the skies in the Fragments du Narcisse and in the Ode Secrète and La Ceinture. It is a major character in Ebauche d'un Serpent and its influence presides over the poems which begin and end Charmes, the two pictures of the inception and fruition of a work of art, Aurore and Palme.

If we examine this poetic output, we can certainly establish that the sun, for Valéry as for Racine, is the major source of physical light.⁵⁰ As such, we find it as soleil⁵¹ with variants

such as jour,⁵² solstice.⁵³ We are in the twentieth century, and the sun can be simply the nearest of all the fixed stars, Racine's astre du jour. But, for Valéry as for Racine, the sun is more than this. The sun as a deity in La Jeune Parque has already been discussed at length in Chapter II. We need only note here that, as also in Charmes, it is occasionally granted the dignity of a capital letter,⁵⁴ as is jour.⁵⁵ — a dignity always given by Racine to his deities.

From internal evidence, we may perhaps be allowed to see a divinity in the sun of Charmes, le Jour, dieu couleur de miel of Colonnes (11.52, 53), the Grand Soleil of the Ebauche d'un Serpent (1.31), who merges into the Creator of light, "Celui qui règne dans les cieux," (1.52). A divinity too is perceptible in the ruler of the Cimetière Marin, "Midi là-haut, Midi sans mouvement ..." (1.75), "Tête complète et parfait diadème ..." (1.77), while in Palme, the tree, as mediatrix between the powers of the sun and the earth, recalls the oracle inspired by divinity:

Ce bel arbitre mobile
Entre l'ombre et le soleil
Simule d'une sibylle
La sagesse et le sommeil.

(11.21-24)

Again, while there is no mention of the sun by name in Ode Secrète, the death of a solar hero is evoked (11.9-12) in the sunset of the masse de roses (1.12).

Now, it is part of the inheritance of poetry from mythology (and especially from the mythology of the Mediterranean world) to see the sun as a god. What is important to us as students of Racine and Valéry is the affinity between the attributes and functions of Racine's sun/God and Valéry's. Racine himself was a borrower, but

the use he made of his borrowings was individual, his colouring unmistakable. Can we find traces of this colouring in the use Valéry made of sun imagery?

Clearly, we may expect to find our most convincing evidence in those poems of Valéry where the sun is of outstanding importance — that is, in La Jeune Parque, in Ebauche d'un Serpent, and in Le Cimetière Marin. And indeed, it is in these poems that we find that Valéry's deity does possess the attributes of Racine's sun/God.

We find the flames in abundance: flamme première, flamme, feu (LJP, 11.350, 489, 353); feux, flamme (Eb. d'un S., 11.32, 40); feu (le R, 1.8). The torches too make their appearance, torches du solstice, flambeaux (CM, 11.37, 57); and the sparks thrown off by the sun/torch are seen in the Ebauche d'un Serpent, as the deity dissipates his divinity into the separate stars (11.63-64). Again, the presence of the sun is manifested by its effect on the sea, éblouissement d'étincelles (LJP, 1.506), and the scintillation sereine (CM, 1.23). The lightning too is to be found in the Cimetière Marin, fins éclairs (1.7), the thunder at the end of La Jeune Parque, étonnements (1.487), tonne (1.503) — even, perhaps, in the noise of the waves at the end of Le Cimetière Marin (1.138). We may also note the éclair, étincelles, manifestations of the Pythie's deity (11.152, 163), for although the sun is not mentioned, her god must be Apollo.

The weapons of Valéry's sun/God are as formidable as those of Racine's. We find them in La Jeune Parque, point (1.252), and in the Cimetière Marin, armes sans pitié (1.39), although Valéry dwells much more on the riches. The sun's gold is displayed in the lines describing the Parque's promenade in His light, dorée (1.110),

nuit de trésor (1.111), ténèbres d'or (1.112) (sunlight on her closed lids), caprices d'or (1.159), and the final espèces d'or (1.512). It is implicit in the golden sunlight of Au Platane (1.42) and in the sang qui dore (F du N, II, 1.33) — again, sun on closed eyes — and in the or, Toison, of La Pythie (1.210). We find this treasure too in l'or rougi (La P, 1.214) and in Ebauche d'un Serpent, or très pur, or oisif (ll.288, 296). In the Cimetière Marin, where the sun gilds the graveyard, composé d'or (1.58), it is itself again gold, l'onde et l'or, sea and sun (1.99). In this poem, too, the sun is a diamond (1.81) and perhaps a jewelled crown, "Tête complète et parfait diadème,"⁵⁶ (1.77).

If we can accept that Racine's sun and Valéry's have similar attributes, can we establish that they have similar double functions?

We have seen that Racine's sun is a divine progenitor, and that both the pagan and Biblical sun-deities rule life and death. Valéry shows us this combination of functions with particular clarity in La Jeune Parque, Ebauche d'un Serpent and Le Cimetière Marin. We have the sun which ripens, mûrir (1.116), gives life, Cimes qu'un feu féconde (1.353), and in Ebauche d'un Serpent, the serpent's description of the flowery meadows that his sun-God has created (ll.22-24, 33-34), the children He generates (ll.81-82); He is the fou créateur (1.67). In Le Cimetière Marin, the sun has created the sea, "compose de feux / La mer" (ll.3-4), has made the world visible (1.99), and in Valéry's song of triumph, Palme, has developed the fruit of the tree,

Chaque jour qui luit encore
Lui compose un peu de miel ...

(Palme, ll.43-44)

The sun-deity is thus a life-giver, donor of innumerable births,

délice de naître (LJP, 1.510), and of the fertility of the earth, sol plein (ibid., 1.123). His second function, that of inspirations, also is demonstrated in Valéry's poem. His light inspires the Parque,

Puis dans le dieu brillant, captive vagabonde
Je m'ébranlais brulante ...

(11.122-123)

the "rose / Apparence" (11.3-4) of Aurore heralds the psalm, première oraison (1.7). The sun arouses, "sonnes l'éveil / A l'être," (Eb d'un S, 11.31-32), and under the influence of its heat the devotee is inspired (fureur) to the point of the final revelation:

Verse-moi ta brute chaleur ...
Ma fureur, ici, se fait mûre; ...
Je m'écoute, et dans mes circuits
Ma méditation murmure ...

O Vanité! Cause première ...

(11. 41, 47, 49-51)

Here we are reminded of Racine's Joad, inspired by the Lord to a frenzy of revelation:

... Il m'échauffe. Il parle. Mes yeux s'ouvrent,
Et les siècles obscurs devant moi se découvrent ...

(Athalie, III, 7, 11.1131-1132)

However, the light of Valéry's sun brings not merely inspiration and frenzy, but illumination, the light of reason and judgement. Like Racine's, it reveals a law which, when followed, brings intellectual delight. This is shown in La Jeune Parque, where the sun elicits not only life, but ordered music:

Bois qui bourdonnez de bêtes et d'idées,
Hymnes des hommes comblés des dons du juste éther ...

(11.354-355)

In Aurore, too, the appearance of the sun heralds the awakening of

reason:

... fières des finesses
Qui naissent par les nombres!

Filles des nombres d'or,
Fortes des lois du ciel ...

(11.47-50)

Even the Pythie is at last forced into producing the voice of purity and wisdom, "Illumination / [...] Sagesse," (11.225-226), and the gifts with which the palm-tree is dowered and which it scatters are the gifts of a thinker:

Pareille à celui qui pense
Et dont l'âme se dépense, ...

(11.88-89)

Valéry's sun/God, then, like Racine's, generates inspiration and gives the power of reasoning. In so doing, it wakens man to reality and initiates a process of self-judgement. Enough has been said of this in relation to Phèdre and La Jeune Parque in Chapter II, but we find the same effect in Le Cimetière Marin, in the poet's recognition of the false promises of immortality (stanza 18), and in Ebauche d'un Serpent, as the serpent confesses his own inadequacy (11.295-296).

There is a yet further resemblance between Racine's sun-deity and Valéry's. It lies in the tribute each exacts, or attempts to exact, in return for their gifts — an offering of love and admiration, an offering of the self, recognition of the deity as absolute. This idea of continual tribute to the god is shown by the Parque's constant references to sacrifice (for example, sacrifiais, 1.118, hostie, 1.338) and in the final lines celebrating her gratitude and recognition of the power of the god with whom she is re-united:

Alors, malgré moi-même, il le faut, ô Soleil
Que j'adore mon coeur où tu te viens connaître
Doux et puissant retour du délice de naître,
Feu vers qui se soulève une vierge de sang
Sous les espèces d'or d'un sein reconnaissant!

(11.508-512)

We have the same reference to a continual offering of praise in
the attempts of the serpent's God to exact tribute from His creations:

Qui tout le jour vous fissent louange!

(1.84)

This tribute he finally receives from the serpent itself:

Je siffle, avec délicatesse,
Offrant à la gloire de Dieu
Le triomphe de ma tristesse ...

(11.302-304)

The parallel functions of Racine's sun-deity, accomplished
through his various gifts and menaces, are clearly discernible in
Valéry's Soleil. We have already seen his alliance with death, as
it is demonstrated in La Jeune Parque, and would here only remark
on his power to blind, "Quel éclat sur mes cils aveuglément dorée ..."
(1.110), his revelation of death in the shadow, légère mort (1.144),
and his conjuring up of the monster (again, through the shadow-serpent
which, if our earlier argument is acceptable, is indeed a monstre
naissant, which develops immeasurably in the Parque's long night).
In the Ebauche d'un Serpent, it is precisely the powers of deception
and death which are insisted upon, as they accompany the sun's power
of creation. The sun is an accomplice (1.26), a trap, piège (1.27),
and a being who leads to death:

Toi qui masques la mort, Soleil
Sous l'azur et l'or d'une tente
Où les fleurs tiennent leur conseil; ...

(11.22-24)

He is a liar (mensonge, 1.38) who creates illusions, dreams, in the

being he has also awakened,

Toi qui l'enfermes d'un sommeil
Trompeusement peint de campagnes,
Fauteur des fantômes joyeux ...

(11.33-35)

and He, too, gives birth to the monster, the Serpent (11.65-68).

Exactly the same sequence occurs in Le Cimetière Marin, indicated first by the alliance of sun and sea, "Quand sur l'abîme un soleil se repose ..." (1.10), where, under the deceptive calm, semble (1.9), the sun blinds, or slays, "Tant de sommeil sous un voile de flamme ..." (1.16), and the poet is conducted by the sun and his shadow (11.34-35) to a place of death.

The sun is the creator of illusions here too:

[...] ces couleurs de mensonge
Qu'aux yeux de chair l'onde et l'or font ici

(11.98-99)

In a sense, the sun can also be seen as the creator of the monster, the sea (cf "compose de feux / La mer", 11.3-4) for it is the sea which will later be seen as the serpent unleashed, hydre absolue (1.136).

As a pendant to Valéry's use of the sun image in the major poems we have mentioned, we would cite the connotations of the sun in Le Rameur. Here the sun is again a creator, making the world visible, "l'illustre monde / De feuilles et de feu," (11.7-8), and a creator of illusions, charmes du jour (1.13), as it paints the images on the water, Eau de ramages peinte (1.10). Although a creator of life, it yet leads to death:

Mais, comme les soleils m'ont tiré de l'enfance,
Je remonte à la source où cesse même un nom ...

(11.15-16)

The above examination of sun imagery has shown that there would appear to be evidence for a close relationship between Racine's use

of sun imagery and Valéry's. Was there anything in Racine's use, and Racine's vocabulary, which made it especially useful to Valéry?

There is in itself nothing surprising in a poet's choice of the sun to symbolise the fire of inspiration, the passion of love, the illumination of reason, the generative powers of nature — even the passage of time. But when we add to this list a symbolic presentation of scientific theory and the need to pay tribute to what earlier poets had done to enrich and beautify the French language — and further, the wish to present all these aspects simultaneously — the choice of a vocabulary and a pattern in which to use it becomes more difficult. The close correspondence between the appearance, attributes and functions of Racine's sun/God and Valéry's suggest that Valéry saw in Racine's sun imagery a solution to some of these problems.

The very simplicity and generalised nature of Racine's vocabulary, the or, trésor, astre, feu, armes, meant that each such term could simultaneously carry many different interpretations, and further, could be combined with the imagery of other poets. As an example of the usefulness of the attributes of Racine's sun/God to Valéry, we would cite the feux, flammes. These could lend themselves at one and the same time to the passion of desire (for a lover, or for the creation of a poem) — or to a picture of the generation of energy in scientific theory. Similarly, the éclair, tonnerre, étincelles of the God/torch of Athalie, the fureur of Joad's divine inspiration, were appropriate not only to the inspiration of passion, but to the Dionysiac and vatic element in poetic inspiration, as was the torch itself: the richest treasures of Athalie's God, tout l'or

de David,⁵⁷ in reality, the powers of light and law, "De ses préceptes saints la lumière immortelle" (I, 4, 1.344), were akin to the Apollonian powers of perception, intelligence and control, so necessary to the perfect work of art.

Finally, the generalised terms of the attributes of Racine's sun/God could combine with the imagery of other poets — for example, the or, astres, trésors with the Mallarmean gold, stars and jewels,⁵⁸ or with the stars of Hugo's picture of the Universe and its creation.⁵⁹

Valuable as the positive aspects of Racine's sun/God symbol were for the form taken by Valéry's portrayal of the pattern of life and thought in our universe, to the ideas of fertility, conception, ripening, illumination, common to Nature, to love and to poetic creation, it is the way in which the benign and dreadful are seen to inhabit the same Deity, this double function, which is of particular interest. Bringer of light and love, and of death, He illuminates, but is also a deceiver. It was perhaps these darker aspects of Racine's sun/God, underlying the glorious exterior, which allowed of an interpretation of the dual nature of life, and of poetic creation, and also permitted a full-scale poetic interpretation of the scientific theory of the creation and consequent dispersion of the Universe — and even of some of the details of that theory. We cannot but see in Racine's overwhelming Deity, who is also the sun/God of the Hymnes, a source for Valéry's picture of the Creation.⁶⁰

Here is Racine's:

Source ineffable de lumière
Verbe en qui l'Eternel contemple sa beauté
Astre dont le soleil n'est que l'ombre grossière

(HLL, 11.1-3)

and here Valéry's:

O Vanité! Cause première!
Celui qui règne dans les cieux
D'une voix qui fut la lumière
Ouvrit l'univers spacieux!

(Èb d'un S, 11.51-54)

Here too, perhaps, the contemple, the ombre grossière, of the Hymne are echoed by the serpent.

... votre image funèbre
Orgueil de mon sombre miroir

(Ibid., 11.76-77)

In the same poem, it is natural that the sun/God should be the source of heat (1.41) as of light, of perception and of life (11.31-32) but it may be that Valéry's poetic picture of the mechanics of light owes its imagery to the dual nature of Racine's sun/God. Racine's fertile fields, his flowers, owe their luxuriance and colour to this deity:

Il donne aux fleurs leur aimable peinture ...

(Athalie, I, 4, 1.323)

Add the recollection of his cruelty and deceit — the deceit Valéry insists on -

... Sommeil
Trompeusement peint de campagnes ...

(11.33-34)

and we have an imagery suited to the illusions of solidity and colour given by light to the sky and the fertile earth:

Toi qui masques la mort, Soleil,
Sous l'azur et l'or d'une tente
Où les fleurs tiennent leur conseil,

(11.22-24)

They are illusions which contain the truth of inevitable death, the death of any form of creation.

Enough has now perhaps been said to suggest how suitable Racine's sun imagery was to Valéry's multiple purposes. It is time to turn

to the sea imagery, which, we shall find, could be equally rich in possibilities.

The association between the sun and the sea is so integral in Phèdre and so important in the poetic world of La Jeune Parque and Charmes as to lead us to investigate Racine's sea imagery after studying his use of the sun. We shall again use a catalogue of terms — those under which the sea is referred to in Racine.

We find the sea referred to as mer, mers,⁶¹ fleuve,⁶² flots,⁶³ onde,⁶⁴ and eaux,⁶⁵ throughout Racine's work. It is worth mentioning that the number of references to the sea is highest in Phèdre, and that the only instance of fleuve, with reference to the sea, is to be found in that play.

When we turn to the examination of the contexts in which the sea occurs in the plays and in the poems, we find that the part it plays in the poems is minimal, as distinct from the river imagery attached to onde which is prominent in the Nymphe de la Seine à la Reine, and in the series of odes on the landscape of Port-Royal. But in the plays the sea imagery is important. We shall therefore turn first to the plays and especially to Iphigénie and Phèdre, for the attributes of Racine's sea.

As a natural phenomenon, Racine's sea has foam, écume,⁶⁶ and waves, onde.⁶⁷ The sound of the sea is referred to as lowing, or bellowing, mugissement,⁶⁸ and the surf moans on the shore, gémir.⁶⁹ It further possesses a supernatural voice:

Un effroyable cri, sorti du fond des flots

(Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1507)

We note too that the normal voice of the sea resembles that of the monster in the Récit de Théràmène (whose appearance is heralded by the supernatural voice), for Racine uses the same noun for both — mugissement.⁷⁰ And further, the sea in Iphigénie is associated with the thunder and lightning of a supernatural event.⁷¹

In the poems, where, as we noted above, the part the sea plays is minimal, the sea is associated above all with life and creation, as in the "eaux fécondes" of the office for Vespers (HJV, 1.1), and only in a very remote sense with separation, as in the separation of the heavens from the earth in the act of Creation (HMV, 11.3-4). In the plays, however, and again, especially in Phèdre, we find a double nexus clearly emerging; the presence of the sea in Racine's plays has twofold implications.

From Andromaque onwards, the sea is linked with the force of destruction — with rape, disorder and death, but also with the forces of regeneration — with life and rebirth. The physical rape and sack (the rape of Helen and the sack of Troy) which are the background to Andromaque and Iphigénie, the real and the imaginary rape of Phèdre, may be seen as no more than the physical symbols of the mental disorder, the rape of the mind, but in all the plays of Racine, we find the sea connected with the forces of disruption.

In Andromaque, we have Astyanax-Hector,

Tel qu'on a vu son père, embraser nos vaisseaux,
Et la flamme à la main, les suivre sur nos eaux ...

(Andromaque, I, 2, 11.163-164)

In Iphigénie, we have Achille, ravisher of Eriphile and of her Lesbos (I, 2, 1.233), whom Eriphile must follow by sea (II, 1, 1.403), and in Phèdre, the association is, of course, with Thésée (Phèdre, II, 1, 11.381-382).

It is the sea too which separates Oreste and Pylade after the sack of Troy,⁷² but it is in Iphigénie that the link of the sea with destruction and rape is most vivid. It is associated with the destruction of Lesbos

Troie en a vu la flamme; et jusque dans nos ports,
Les flots en ont poussé les débris et les morts,

(Iphigénie, I, 2, ll.235-236)

and the future destruction of Troy:

Voyez tout l'Hellespont blanchissant sous nos rames,
Et la perfide Troie abandonnée aux flammes ...

(Ibid., I, 5, ll.381-382)

The sea is linked not merely with general ruin, but with the disorder and destruction of the individual, as we see from the death of Hippolyte, where the sea brings his destroyer:

L'onde approche, se brise, et vomit à nos yeux
Parmi des flots d'écume, un monstre furieux ...

(Phèdre, V, 6, ll.1515-1516)

The importance of the sea in Esther and Athalie is minimal, but its fury is referred to: la fureur des flots (Athalie, I, 1, l.61).

The seaborne conqueror naturally brings grief in his train, but Racine uses the sea itself to emphasise the grief of separation or rejection; Oreste tells us of the sequel to his rejection by Hermione,

... tu m'as vu depuis
Traîner de mers en mers ma chaîne et mes ennuis, ...

(Andromaque, I, 1, ll.43-44)

Bérénice evokes the sea to describe the pain of parting:

Dans un mois, dans un an, comment souffririons-nous,
Seigneur, que tant de mers me séparent de vous? ...

(Bérénice, IV, 5, ll.1113-1114)

This suffering is only a foretaste of the suffering caused by the total absence, the desertion, of death, and the sea is no less

associated with death — the many deaths of the conquered, the death of the individual; Eriphile (Iphigénie, V, 6, ll.1778-1881), the mock death of Thésée (Phèdre, II, 1, l.382), the death of Oenone (Phèdre, V, 5, l.1466), and, of course, the death of Hippolyte through the agency of the sea at the command of its ruler,

Neptune, par le fleuve aux Dieux mêmes terrible ...

(Phèdre, IV, 3, l.1158)

Death linked with the sea can have connotations of sacrifice, and these are strongest in Iphigénie and Phèdre. Eriphile dies, in place of Iphigénie (Iphigénie, V, 6, ll.1749-1750), and Hippolyte too dies a sacrifice: "Il faut immoler tout, et même la vertu ..." (Phèdre, III, 3, l.908). He is a sacrifice to Phèdre's gloire and to the gloire of Thésée,⁷³ but, paradoxically, his death results in the defeat of gloire for all the characters of the play, and in a new beginning. For this is the other aspect under which Racine presents the sea to us. From Andromaque onwards the sea opens a way to the future. It offers a means of escape or clears the way for a marriage, a conquest. Since we are dealing with tragedy, the escape is not always accomplished. Pylade offers escape to Oreste, with his intended captive Hermione, by the sea which washes the walls of the palace (Andromaque, III, 1, ll.791-794), an escape offered to Atalide by Acomat in almost identical terms,

Et jusqu'au pied des murs que la mer vient laver,
Sur mes vaisseaux tout prêts je viens vous retrouver ...

(Bajazet, V, 2, ll.1713-1719)

Both escapes would have led to union (for Acomat was betrothed to Atalide), and to the prolongation of a royal line. And this too is the case, but triumphantly so, in Iphigénie. The sea which brings death for Eriphile unites Iphigénie and Achille, announcing the fall

of Troy,

La rive au loin gémit, blanchissant d'écume ...

(Iphigénie, V, 6, l.1781)

The contrast in feeling with the end of Phèdre, where the sea brings a triple death (to Hippolyte, Oenone and Phèdre herself) is perhaps even more striking than the resemblance of the sea imagery to that of the end of Phèdre, though that is marked enough.⁷⁴ Yet, although Hippolyte never achieves the escape by sea, an escape which would have led to the conquest of Athens and an empire for Aricie (Phèdre, II, 2), the end of Phèdre leaves a way open for the survivors (Phèdre V, 7, ll.1652-1654). Indeed, if we take Racine's preface into account (and we know that Valéry read it — see unpublished notes for a speech on Racine, p.18), there is even a transcendence of death, for Racine writes:

Virgile dit que Hippolyte l'épousa [Aricie] et en eut un fils, après qu'Esculape l'eut ressuscité.

(Phèdre, "Préface", OCR I, p.746)

When he writes of the sea, Valéry does not always confine himself to the Racinian simplicity of words such as mer(s),⁷⁵ large,⁷⁶ and once, as with Racine, Océan,⁷⁷ although these are frequent. He indicates the presence of the sea also by the use of an adjective, marin,⁷⁸ or by a turn of speech worthy of the ingenuity of a précieux — "l'immense et riante amertume" (LJP, 1.498), puissance salée (CM, 1.131). Again, he evokes the idea of the sea by compounds such as amer(e)(s), amèrement,⁷⁹ through the internal rhyme and the suggestion of the bitter quality of salt water. Finally, the sea is seen as a supernatural being, monstre (LJP, 1.503), merveille (ibid., 1.25), hydre (CM, 1.134) and, in one instance, as an animal, chienne (CM, 1.61).

The attributes of Valéry's sea, and of Racine's, are of course common to all the poets who have ever written of the sea. The significance of Valéry's choice to us lies in his use of certain key words, onde⁸⁰ in particular, which outnumbers the more specific vague,⁸¹ houle,⁸² remous,⁸³ reflux,⁸⁴ as a synonym for the wave itself and the movement of the wave.

The most frequently mentioned attributes of Valéry's sea, after the wave synonyms, are the foam of the breaking wave, écume (LJP, 1.341, CM, 1.8), monstre de candeur (LJP, 1.503), vague en poudre (CM, 1.141); and its sparkle, étincelles glacées (LJP, 1.506), scintillation (CM, 1.23), étincelante queue (ibid., 1.137).

As a final attribute, Valéry's sea has a voice. Sometimes it is plaintive, "la houle me murmure une ombre de reproche," (LJP, 19); "Une rumeur de plainte et de resserrement," (ibid., 1.12). Sometimes it is despairing, as we see from the desolate sobs of lines 314-320. Sometimes it foretells change, rumeurs des ondes (La P, 1.184), "le changements des rives en rumeur," (CM, 1.30). At other times the voice is a summons, un appel de la mer (LJP, 1.500), a trumpet-call, "Mes secrets sonnent leurs aurores," (La P, 1.185), and it mounts to a climax of sound in La Jeune Parque, tonne (1.503) and Le Cimetière Marin, tumulte (CM, 1.138).

It will be seen from the above that the sea appears with considerable frequency in La Jeune Parque and Charmes and that it is of major importance in two poems, La Jeune Parque and Le Cimetière Marin. If Valéry really used the attributes and connotations of the sea as did Racine, we may expect to find an overall set of associations in his poems similar to that of Racine's in the plays (for, as we said above, the sea has little importance in the poems).

We found that in Racine, the sea and its attributes were associated with the idea of disorder (rape, death and the mental disorder brought by passion, especially in Phèdre), and with the forces of disorder, the invading fleets with their fierce and glittering commanders⁸⁵ — Pyrrhus and Achille, or the effulgent Thésée. This too is the case in La Jeune Parque and Charmes.

If we begin with the idea of an act of violence, we find that the brilliant serpent of La Jeune Parque (bras de pierreries, 1.58), connected with the sea by the Racinian onde (1.61) and by its affinities with the Racinian monstre,⁸⁶ is associated with the violence and cruelty of love, menace d'amour (1.59), cruel (1.60). The connection of the sea with an act of violence, a rape, is less obvious in La Pythie. Nevertheless, once we are alerted to the presence of the sea by the Racinian onde(s), fleuve(s) (11.184, 181), we note that the priestess describes her crisis in terms which strongly suggest the movement of the waves:

Entends, mon âme, entends ces fleuves!
Quelles cavernes sont ici?
Est-ce mon sang? ... Sont-ce les neuves
Rumeurs des ondes sans merci? ...

O formidablement gravie
Et sur d'effrayants échelons,
Je sens dans l'arbre de ma vie
La mort monter de mes talons!
Le doigt mouillé de la fileuse
Trace une atroce volonté!
Et par sanglots grimpe la crise
Jusque dans ma nuque où se brise
Une cime de volupté!

(11.181-184, 191-200)⁸⁷

The waves mount (gravie, monter, grimpe) and finally break (se brise / Une cime), overwhelming the priestess (jusque dans ma nuque). The waves have announced the cruelty of what is to come (ondes sans merci, rumeurs), and what is to come is an act of violence (atroce volonté, brise). We may too, if we wish, see the brilliance in the next stanza,

étincellements (l.204), but in any case we remember that the invader is the brilliant god of light, Apollo.

The colouring is different in Le Cimetière Marin, but we are still presented with the salient points of an act of violence associated with the sea, and brilliance. The act of (joyful) violence sought for by the poet at the end of the poem is associated with the sea, and with the sails it carries:

Rompez, vagues! Rompez d'eaux réjouies
Ce toit tranquille où picoraient des focs!

(ll.143-144)

The surface of the sea itself is identified with the glittering scales of the monster, Hydre, étincelante queue, (ll.136-137), and the flames of which the sea is composed (ll.3-4) reappear on its surface at the end, not only in the reflected sunlight (idoles du soleil, l.135), but in the sails (focs, l.144).⁸⁸

Other forms of disorder and destruction are also associated with the sea in La Jeune Parque and Charmes. In the former, we have the Parque's tossing wreckage, "Mélange de [...] lame, et de rame," (l.318), reinforced by the heurtés (l.319), brisés (l.320), éperdument (l.321). Again, in the Fragments du Narcisse, the physical and mental disorder of the lovers, "... couple aux pieds confus qui se mêle, et se ment." (II, l.35), is linked with the sea, not only by line 59, but by the earlier complex of vierge sable, monstre, rumeur (II, ll.39-40), with its reminder of the seas of Iphigénie and Phèdre.

The Pythie, it is true, exhibits a mental disorder throughout the poem,⁸⁹ but if our earlier argument is accepted, the acme of her disorder follows immediately on the onset of the waves. It seems to us also that there is sea imagery enriching, not conflicting with, the Cumaean foam of lines 44 - 48:

Et qui, de ces mots écumants,
Dont les éclats hachent ma langue,
La fait brandir une harangue
Brisant la bave ...

The écumants, brandir, brisant and bave lend themselves to the picture of the wave breaking and withdrawing. Thus the foam of line 44 would precede and announce the destructive violence of lines 45 - 48. Further, it is noteworthy that it is the sea which is to be calmed by the Pythie's death, its waves frozen:

... l'eau des mers surprise, et l'onde
Astreinte à d'éternels sommets!

(11.63-64)

Again, we find the sea linked with disorder in Le Cimetière Marin (although, as with the violence, in a different colouration). The sea at the end of this poem is a wild creature let loose, hydre absolue, ivre (1.136). Its garment is riddled with holes, chlamyde trouée (1.134); and the wave is reduced to particles, poudre (1.141), the book's pages scattered(1.142).

We wrote earlier of the grief attached to the acts of invasion and rape in Racine's sea imagery, the tears of the defeated or the deserted. Valéry's sea is linked to the tear by its most distinctive characteristic — its salt and bitterness. It is true that in the poem Le Cimetière Marin, which we have just been discussing, this bitterness, puissance salée (1.131), is rather life-giving than mortal (1.132), but elsewhere in Valéry's poems the bitterness links the sea with grief — the grief of the deserted or grief for loss. Sometimes this association is direct, as in La Jeune Parque, where we find honte, reproche (1.9) associated with déçue, amèrement (1.11), or in the Fragments du Narcisse, where the parted lovers connect mourning, bitterness and the sea (II, 11.59-61). Sometimes the link

is merely adumbrated as in La Jeune Parque, where the Parque is meditating on death (ll.161-166) and in the passage on the tear. In the first, we have the arbustes amers (l.163), and in the second, the sel mystérieux (l.291), drawn from the shadow, ombre amère (l.293). Another aspect of this grief for loss is shown in the millions amers (l.268), denied life. And even in the different atmosphere of Le Cimetière Marin, the poet links bitterness with the absence of life:

La vie est vaste, étant ivre d'absence
Et l'amertume est douce, et l'esprit clair
(ll.71-72)

It is only a step from lamenting loss and desertion to lamenting the absolute of desertion that is death. We have mentioned Thésée's desertion, disguised as death (the rumours of death brought by the sea).⁹⁰ It is described in terms which suggest a blotting-out, an all-drowning oblivion, both in Ismène's description,

Les flots ont englouti cet époux infidèle
(II, 1, l.382)

and in Phèdre's:

Et l'avare Achéron ne lâche point sa proie
(II, 5, l.626)

On turning to La Jeune Parque and Charmes, we find the Parque's mimic death, sleep, is also associated with death by drowning (ll.465-480) and with tears (l.477). This has been discussed in Chapter II, but we would again emphasise the idea of the movement of the sea suggested by the Couche [...] / Qui respire (l.469), the retours (l.472). A similar evocation occurs in La Dormeuse:

Quand de ce plein sommeil l'onde grave et l'ampleur
Conspirent ...
(ll.7-8)

Again, the devouring sea, golfe mangeur (l.50), in Le Cimetière Marin

is more than once connected with sleep. Its calm is emphasised (11.6, 9, 14, 23) and it is the sleeping eye:

... Oeil qui gardes en toi
Tant de sommeil sous un voile de flamme,
(11.15-16)

The sleeping beast too:

La mer fidèle y dort sur mes tombeaux!
(1.60)

But Valéry's sea, like Racine's, is linked with real death as well as with the mimic death of sleep, as we must have already suspected from its connection with the loss of immortality. The shipwreck passage from La Jeune Parque cannot but evoke the despairing efforts of the swimmer, doomed to the final oblivion of death:

... Et le vent semble à travers d'un linceul
Ourdir de bruits marins une confuse trame,
Mélange de la lame en ruine, et de rame ...
Tant de hoquets longtemps, et de râles heurtés,
Brisés, repris au large ... et tous les sorts jetés
Eperdument divers roulant l'oubli vorace —
(11.314-321)

In the same poem too, we find the chill of death suggested by the description of the sea surrounding the isles, contrasting with their warmth and fertility:

Rien n'égale dans l'air les fleurs que vous placez,
Mais dans la profondeur, que vos pieds sont glacés!
(11.359-360)

The same pattern is to be found in Charmes. The sea-creature formed by the lovers' embrace is dying, monstre qui se meurt (F du N, II, 1.39), while the cypres, tombeaux (11.58, 56), introduce the sea, souffles de la mer (1.59). Again, if our interpretation of La Pythie can be accepted, the sea-foam, don des écumes, brings death to the priestess (11.89-90) and the onset of the waves later in the poem is mortal, "Je sens [...] / La mort⁹¹ monter de mes

talons" (ll.194-195).

But the supreme example of the Racinian connection between the sea and death — physical death, and the death of pride — must be Le Cimetière Marin, where even the title of the poem announces the connection.

It is reinforced by the entre les tombes (l.2), the abîme, sommeil (ll.10, 16), which point forward to

La mer fidèle ... dort sur mes tombeaux!

(1.60)

and we have, of course, the final oblivion, the silence of the sea (l.137), as a pendant to the destruction of the wave (l.141).

As so often in Valéry's poems, the tragic and life-giving aspects of the sea, the aspects we find in Racine, are deliberately combined. It is not surprising therefore to find that the glittering invader of whom we have spoken can come to ravish in another sense, that the sea offers life and rebirth. Two outstanding examples may suffice to demonstrate this.

In La Jeune Parque, the serpent is not the only brilliant sea-borne creature. If we turn to the passage on the Harmonieuse Moi, we find the Parque herself as the front limpide, the égale ... du jour (ll.104, 107), borne by the waves, large, vol (l.106). Brought, like Eriphile, Phèdre, Aricie, by ship (we have elsewhere discussed the significance of brins, vol, soulève, l.106), she is herself designed to ravish her public, as were Racine's heroines.

Equally, the sea which has brought her to the verge of destruction also brings her freedom from illusions (l.503). It awakens her to full consciousness:

que

Et sur toute ma peau/morde l'âpre éveil

(1.507)

as it has been present at the first moments of her return to life:

Réveil d'une victime inachevée ... et seuil
Si doux ... si clair, que flatte, éffleurement d'écueil,
L'onde basse, et que lave une houle amortie! ...

Là, l'écume s'efforce à se rendre visible.

(11.335-337, 341)

Present at a revival of desire also, "vermeille à de nouveaux désirs" (1.339). Indeed, we find that it may have been the sea which has actually rescued the Parque from death:

Le sais-je, quel reflux traître m'a retirée
De mon extrémité pure et prématurée ...

(11.441-442)

Thus, it is through the actions of the sea that the Parque has attained the power to accept and transcend. It is a route (an escape-route from death) to a new form of life. Moreover, its very bitterness, which we have seen as a sign of the bitterness of loss and death, is transformed into the joy of 1.491, riante amertume, which may prepare us for the life-giving powers of the sea, puissance salée, which we have already noted in Le Cimetière Marin:

Courons à l'onde, en rejaillir vivant!

(1.132)

Racine's sea had, as we saw, connotations of grief, death, disorder, but also of escape — an escape to renewed and productive life. Valéry's use of the sea and its attributes corresponds, as we have seen, to Racine's use of sea-imagery. Even the attributes Valéry adds, bitterness/salt, the tides, reflux, and the brilliance, scintillement, are legitimate extensions of Racine's view of the sea.

The bitterness is implicit in the idea of the tears linked with the connotations of grief, desertion, sacrifice and death we find there:

Salamine témoin des pleurs de Péribée ...

Ariane aux rochers contant ses injustices ...

(Phèdre, I, 1, ll.86, 89)

The tides are there in the movement of Racine's sea, "le flot, qui l'apporta, recule," (Phèdre, V, 6, l.1524). The brilliance and glitter, we noted, are the attributes of the conquerors brought by the sea, and perhaps of the blinding whiteness of Racine's foam, blanchissante d'écume (Iphigénie, V, 6, l.1781).

The whole provides a rich field of interlocking symbols for the birth and death of mankind, as individual or in the mass — bodily birth and death, or the creation and inevitable destruction of the work of the poet, the thinker — Racine shows us how the actions of Thésée, the solar hero, and Phèdre, possessed by Venus, produce the sea-born monster — means of Hippolyte's destruction and of his vindication. Valéry, taking the characteristics of Racine's sea, which, as we have seen, is a symbol of grief and death, but also of renewal of life (for it offers an escape to new life), transforms the Racinian sea into a monster (merveille, LJP, l.25; monstre, Ibid., l.503), an animate creature (hydre, CM, l.136; the serpent of La Jeune Parque; and the less complimentary chienne, CM, l.61).

This creature, under the influence of the sun, becomes the archetypal genetrix of both life and death. Through the use of this symbol, Valéry can simultaneously translate into poetic terms the current ideas of science on the origin of life, and the physiology of the individual,⁹² together with the experience common to mankind of birth and death. Further, he can also translate the process of poetic

inspiration and the shaping of a work of art. If we take these subjects in turn, we can see how they relate to the main metaphor.

Racine's sea, acted upon by Thésée, generated his monster.

The first life on earth was born (according to the generally accepted theory) of the action of sunlight and/or electrical energy upon salt water. Here we have the sea of Le Cimetière Marin:

Midi le juste y compose de feux
La mer, la mer, toujours recommencée ...

Quel pur travail de fins éclairs consume
Maint diamant d'imperceptible écume

(11.3-4, 7-8)

Again, Racine's sea, emblem of grief at separation or death, is composed of similar elements to those found in the tear. These indeed, are the chemical elements of which the human body, and its secretions, are largely made up — salts, and water. Thus we have a poetic transcription for body chemistry. The Parque's tear emerges from the depths (l'ombre amère, 1.293):

D'une grotte de crainte au fond de moi creusée
Le sel mystérieux suinte muette l'eau

(11.290-291)

It is doubly linked with the sea (amère, sel).

Again in the movement of the tides, we have the image of the ebb and flow of the circulation and of menstruation, for Valéry is describing female physiology. The Parque's blood flows through her veins, réseaux d'azur (1.256), and is subject to the seasons (11.222-223). The Pythie's blood thunders in her ears like the sound of the sea:

Est-ce mon sang? Sont-ce les neiges
Rumeurs des ondes sans merci?

(11.183-184)

This same movement of the tides, continually bringing new waves

to the shore, and their destruction, can also stand as a symbol for the process of life as it continually throws up new individuals:

Les flots toujours nouveaux d'un peuple adorateur
(Bérénice, I, 3, 1.53)

Their generation implies their total destruction, as Valéry makes plain in La Jeune Parque and Le Cimetière Marin — not only is the individual wave destroyed (LJP, 11.502-503; CM, 1.141), but it is forgotten:

... tous les sorts jetés
Eperdument divers roulant l'oubli vorace
(LJP, 11.320-321)

Et l'avare Achéron ne lâche point sa proie
(Phèdre, II, 5, 1.626)

This pattern of creation and destruction applies no less to the life of the mind, where again the Racinian sea, acted upon by the sun, offers a symbolic presentation of the stages of poetic creation — for it has a voice. Serpent or hydre, — even chienne,⁹³ the sea represents the Dionysiac frenzy of inspiration, and perhaps too the woman who also can inspire it:

Oui! Grande mer de délires douée,
Peau de panthère et chlamyde trouée
De mille et mille idoles du soleil,
(CM, 11.133-135)

But the multiple creations of the poet must also be submitted to the Apollonian faculties of shaping and, where necessary, destroying, as we have already seen in 11.7-8 of Le Cimetière Marin. And, as the same poem shows, whatever their perfection (diamant, 1.8), they are in any case doomed to eventual oblivion: "... un tumulte au silence pareil" (1.138). Each work of art, as each individual (even the poet!)

must perish, a sacrifice to the continuity of mankind, or perhaps, in the case of the poet, a sacrifice to gloire.⁹⁴

We have seen a close relationship between our first element, the sun, and our second, water in the form of the sea. We shall find that there is also a very close relationship between the sea and our third element, air in movement (in the form of wind).

We find synonyms for wind throughout the poetic work of Racine. Only one applies to a particular wind, Aquilon, which we find in the two Biblical plays and in one poem.⁹⁵ In the Biblical plays it is obviously another instance of the mingling of classical and Hebrew/Christian mythology so common in the 17th century and whose use by Racine has been noted in Chapter IV.

Of the more general terms applicable to wind, we shall find air(s). This, although properly speaking a synonym for the heavens, is frequently linked with the sound caused by air in movement (for example, ce bruit dans les airs (Athalie, I, 4, 1.338)) and with the wind itself: "Les vents agitent l'air d'heureux frémissements," (Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1779). Other synonyms include souffle(s),⁹⁶ vent(s), tempête(s).⁹⁷

In a study of Racine's use of the imagery of wind, our attention must be directed to Iphigénie, and it is worth recalling that, although the play cannot be said to have the importance of Phèdre or of the Biblical plays, Valéry does mention it in the Cahiers, and in a vital context — with reference to the pursuit of excellence, the conquest of perfection. The quotation is moreover

from a speech by Achille:

Et que m'a fait à moi cette Troie, où je cours? ...

(Iphigénie, IV, 6, 1.1372)

That this was Degas' favourite (mis)quotation from the play only underlines its importance, for Valéry may well have discussed the play with the painter in view of the importance he attached to Degas' love of Racine.⁹⁸ Certainly Achille's demand expresses Valéry's own view that it is the intangible reward that counts.

Condottieri, Léonardo. Et que me fait à moi, cette Troie, que m'importe ce parti? Je ne juge pas son objet, mais son acte, et son art. Un drapeau quelconque, mais une victoire organisée.

Ceci est science, ceci est art [...] qu'importe.
C'est la perfection, l'essentiel.⁹⁹

It is to Iphigénie, therefore, that we shall turn, and secondarily to the two Biblical plays, for the attributes and functions of Racine's wind. We may ignore the hackneyed metaphor proper to Racine's tempête(s) (the only aspect in which it is used)¹⁰⁰ and concentrate on the vent(s) of Iphigénie and the souffle(s) of Iphigénie and of Esther and Athalie.

The main attribute of Racine's wind is sound, which announces the presence of the wind.

Avez-vous dans les airs entendu quelque bruit? ...

(Iphigénie, I, 1, 1.7)

Arcas asks Agamemnon, hoping for the wind. These sounds may evoke the human voice in lamentation, La rive au loin gémit (Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1781), or the voice of the Deity in thunder or in music:

Ces trompettes et ce tonnerre? ...

(Athalie, I, 4, 1.339)

Its main functions are to announce, and to execute, the will of the gods, or of the God, who control it. In Iphigénie, this function is

linked with the sea and its god, Neptune,

Neptune et les vents, prêts à nous exaucer ...

(Iphigénie, III, 3, 1.839)

In Esther, the wind is the bearer of the Hebrew God himself, who is described as the One

Qui voles sur l'aile des vents ...

(Esther, I, 5, 1.355)

It is under divine direction, therefore, that the wind carries out its tasks. In Iphigénie, the wind releases Racine's characters from their enforced inactivity (ll.30-31), so that at the end of the play we have a tumult of sound and action,

Les vents agitent l'air d'heureux frémissements,
Et la mer leur répond par des mugissements;
La rive au loin gémit, blanchissant d'écume; ...

Tout s'empresse, tout part [...]

(Iphigénie, V, 6, ll.1779-81, 1789)

This is reminiscent of the close of Phèdre, where we have a similar frenzy, and it is worth noting that in that play, wind is linked with the moment when Hippolyte so nearly escapes,

Déjà de ses vaisseaux la pointe était tournée,
Et la voile flottait aux vents abandonnés ...

(Phèdre, III, 1, ll.797-798)

The God of Esther and Athalie, a God of wind,

Les orages, les vents, les cieux te sont soumis, ...

(Esther, I, 4, 1.291)

releases the Israelites from their captivity,

Les chemins de Sion à la fin sont ouverts, ...

(Esther, III, 9, 1.1240)

as, in Athalie, He delivers Jerusalem. In every case, the god or gods directing the wind, and speaking through them, open the way to a conquest — Troy, Athens (object of Hippolyte's departure), or

Jerusalem, the holy city — often to a marriage — the marriage of Achille and Iphigénie, of Hippolyte and Aricie — and to a birth,

Cieux, répandez votre rosée,
Et que la terre enfante son sauveur! ...

(Athalie, III, 7, 11.1173-74)

But, as we might expect, this conquest is double-edged. The conquest of Troy implies a sack, and the winds can bring destruction (as Clytemnestre hopes they may, when the Greek fleet has been released):

Quoi! Lorsque les chassant du port qui les recèle,
L'Aulide aura vomé leur flotte criminelle,
Les vents, les mêmes vents, si longtemps accusés
Ne te couvriront pas de ses vaisseaux brisés? ...

(Iphigénie, V, 4, 11.1685-1688)

The winds can carry the wrath of the Lord, sweeping away those who displease Him, as a straw is blown away by the wind,

Qu'ils soient comme la poudre et la paille légère
Que le vent chasse devant lui, ...

(Esther, I, 5, 11.367-368)

or destroying them as a tree is overthrown, a comparison which appears in Esther,

J'ai vu l'impie adoré sur la terre;
Pareil au cèdre, il cachait dans les cieux
Son front audacieux; ...

Je n'ai fait que passer; il n'était déjà plus ...

(Esther, III, 9, 11.1208-1210, 1213)

This destruction does not even need a tempest — a breath is sufficient. Joad demands that God should destroy Eliacin, if the latter prove unworthy,

Qu'il soit comme le fruit en naissant arraché,
Ou qu'un souffle ennemi dans sa fleur a séché ...

(Athalie, I, 2, 11.285-286)

From all of this we conclude that the wind, allied with the sea, carries with it sound (the movement of air), or releases from

immobility, and that it conveys the voice and does the will of the divinity which controls it. In so doing it opens the way to conquest, to a joyful marriage, or to destruction and rape. We must enquire therefore whether it is possible to trace these aspects in Valéry's La Jeune Parque and Charmes.

Valéry uses Racine's words, vent(s),¹⁰¹ souffle,¹⁰² tempête,¹⁰³ replacing airs with air(s),¹⁰⁴ and adding brise.¹⁰⁵ As with Racine, there is only one mention of a specific wind, and again it is the cold north wind, Valéry's tramontane (Au P, 1.46). The presence of the wind is also evoked by various paraphrases, as in the line from Le Cimetière Marin,

Une fraîcheur de la mer exhalée ...
(1.130)

or by the movement the wind has given rise to, as in meuvent (L J P, 1.232), frémir (L J P, 1.235), frisson (F du N, III, 1.50), while the verb briser so often is associated with actions proper to Racine's destructive winds, as in l'air me brise (L J P, 1.244) or in the ending of the Fragments du Narcisse,

L'insaisissable amour que tu me vins promettre
Passe, et dans un frisson, brise Narcisse et fuit
(II, 11.49-50)

as to suggest very strongly that Valéry intended the play on words and that briser can imply the presence of the wind.

The main attribute of the wind in Valéry's poems is, as with Racine, sound. The Parque's wind has several voices, from lament, "Qui pleure là, sinon le vent simple?" (1.1) and the mourning of lines 316 - 319, to thunder,

Les arbres regonflés et recouverts d'écailles
Meuvent sur le soleil leurs tonnantes toisons ...
(11.230, 232)

Again, in Charmes, the wind arouses lamentation, "Ose gémir!" (Au P, 1.49), but will evoke music, Sonne (ibid., 1.47) which will be pure and holy, l'hymne (ibid., 1.57). We have the same complex of voices in the wind of the Fragments du Narcisse, the lament, again induced by the wind, plainte (I, 1.99), lamente (I, 1.108), together with the "rumeur / [...] docile aux souffles," (I, 1.102-103). If we may accept that ondes, in La Pythie, can apply to sound waves as well as to the more obvious movement of water (and the whole sense of Valéry's ending inclines us to do so), then we again have the rumeurs (1.184), evoking the thunder and perhaps the brass of Racine's wind-borne deity,

Mes secrets sonnent leurs aurores!
Tristes airains, tempes sonores ...

(11.185-186)

Le Cimetière Marin gives us reminiscences of the closing scenes of Iphigénie and Phèdre in the sacrificial song of the wind,

Et le ciel chante à l'âme consumée
Le changement des rives en rumeur ...

(11.29-30)

and the frenzy of wind and sea in its last two stanzas, with the significant tumulte (1.138). Palme presents us with the purest of music,

L'or léger qu'elle murmure [the tree]
Sonne au simple doigt de l'air ...

Une voix impérissable
Qu'elle rend au vent de sable
Qui l'arrose de ses grains,

(11.31-32, 35-37)

The main function of the wind, for Valéry as for Racine, is to announce and to execute the will of the deity who controls it. That this power is divine is indicated by Valéry, by various subtle means, throughout La Jeune Parque and Charmes. We find the wind in

La Jeune Parque linked with the star-deities: "Demain, sur un soupir des Bontés constellées," (1.225), and the tree shaken by the wind, l'arbre unanime, ramer (1.238), is clearly wrestling with something divine, Pour et contre les dieux (1.238). Again, divine powers direct the wind which shakes the plane-tree, le ciel t'exerce (1.63), (and there might well be another allusion to the surpa-terrestrial in tramontane, for this word is also a synonym for the Pole Star). The Narcissus too accuses the gods, brutes divinités (I, 1.105), who have changed and augmented his lament, carried by the winds (roseaux, 1.98, here suggests Pan). The Pythie in turn, begs to be spared from the effects of the wind, tempête (1.149), sent by a supernatural power: the capital letters of Puissance Créatrice (1.131), and the adjectives merveilleuses (1.142), surhumains, indicate this, while the plectre (1.138), oracles (1.141), here suggest Apollo. In Le Cimetière Marin, another god (the sea, Dionysos, 1.134) is the source of the wind. Finally the palm tree "digne de s'attendre / A la seule main des dieux," (11.29-30) is moved by miraculous powers (1.39). However, Valéry would not be Valéry if he did not give us the gods with one hand, so to speak, and take them away with the other, following Racine's example in Phèdre, for the breath, souffle ravisseur, which the Parque attributes to the gods whose company she longs to attain to, may well emanate from her own lips:

Nulle jamais des dieux plus près aventurée
N'osa peindre sur son front leur souffle ravisseur,
Et de la nuit parfaite implorant l'épaisseur,
Prétendre par la lèvre au suprême murmure ...

(11.366-369)

However that may be, the alliance of the wind with one god, the sea, emerges clearly from La Jeune Parque, from La Pythie, from the

Fragments du Narcisse II, and from Le Cimetière Marin. That the sea is a deity has already been argued, but we must not forget Racine's other god, his sun/God of Greek and Hebrew mythology, for we note that it is the sea and the sun together who preside over the action of Valéry's winds. As examples of this, we note the influence of the sun upon the wind-shaken trees of La Jeune Parque, Meuvent sur le soleil (1.232), or upon the plane-tree: "Quand l'âpre tramontane/Sonne, au comble de l'or, ..." (11.46-47). Again it is the sun which with the sea, is seen as divine, calme des dieux (CM, 1.4), and it is from this sea, glistening under the sun (11.134-135), that the wind emanates (11.129-131). The Pythie's god too must be the sun-god, and it is he, as well as the sea, who sends the tempest (11.145-150). Even the palm-tree responds to her deities, soleil (1.22), and there is perhaps an evocation of the sea in the vent de sable (1.36) and the colombe (1.74), Venus' bird, which is associated with the brise (1.76).

The consequences of the wind's action, as it fulfils the will of its directing gods is plain. The initial effect is to set on foot a movement which, as in Racine, releases from a deadlock, or ruptures a spurious peace; and in La Jeune Parque especially the analogy with the vessel released from inaction, and impelled upon a voyage towards creation or destruction (developed, we would suggest, from the vessels of Iphigénie and Phèdre), is particularly strong. The wind is implicated in the suggestion of voyage after calm in lines 104 - 106 — especially as brins (1.106) can apply to the cordage of a vessel. But an even more violent impression of vessels in movement is conveyed in the section on spring (11.230-241) where the trees spread their sails, Les arbres regonflés (1.230), chargés (1.231),

meuvent (1.232), déchirants départs (1.241), reminding us of Hippolyte's vessels, with their sails spread: "Et la voile flottait, aux vents abandonnée," (Phèdre, III, 1, 1.798). All this movement has been initiated by the first wind of spring — soupir (1.225), wind of release (11.225-226).

But, as with Hippolyte and with the ships in Iphigénie, it is a movement which has been arrested,

Nos vaisseaux par les vents semblaient être appelés ...

Un prodige étonnant fit taire ce transport ...

Il fallut s'arrêter, et la rame immobile

Fatigua vainement une mer immobile ...

(Iphigénie, I, 1, 11.44, 47, 49-50)

... Et dans l'espace accablé par les liens,
Vibrant de bois vivace infléchi par la cime,
Pour et contre les dieux ramer l'arbre unanime ...

(11.236-238)

until the abrupt release of 1.241 —

Aux déchirants départs des archipels superbes ...

(1.241)

— suggesting the tragic sacrifices of Iphigénie, and Hippolyte's death (superbe, déchiré; Phèdre, V, 6). Further, the transference of the movement of the fleet-forest to the single entity (the Parque herself) still gives us the movement of the ship dragged from anchor, evoked by the earlier lines (accablé, liens, (1.236)), and now at the mercy of wind and tide, Quelle résisterait, remous, (1.243), l'air me brise (1.246). The sequence is continued in lines 246 - 256, with the Parque in propria persona. We see the influence of the wind, l'air me brise (1.246), and then again, the wind fills the sails (here the Parque's breasts):

Et roses! mon soupir vous soulève, vainqueur
Hélas! des bras si doux qui ferment la corbeille ...

and then have the full movement of sailing:

Mon sein [...] m'entraîne [...]
Ah! qu'il s'enfle, se gonfle et se tende ...

(11.248-249, 254-255)

This pattern of inaction and release into movement is continued in Charmes. In Au Platane, movement is denied to the plane-tree

De ton front voyageur les vents ne veulent pas ...

(1.9)

and to its companions, who struggle in vain,

Ne cessent point de battre un ciel toujours fermé,
Vêtus en vain de rames, ...

(11.27-28)

again recalling Racine's rame inutile, his vents enchaînés sur nos têtes (Iphigénie, I, 1, 11.49-50). The voyage in Valéry's Au Platane, however, never takes place, although this movement is increased, tangage (1.62), with the power of the wind, tramontane, tempête, (11.46, 71).

There is again a release from enchanted calm in the Fragments du Narcisse (I, 11.7-12), beginning with the first faint breath, souffler (I, 1.43), brise (1.45), and mounting to the vents (I, 1.99), rumeur / déchirante (I, 11.102-103), and decreasing to the frémir (III, 1.35) and frissonner (III, 1.36), which presage the final departure, announced by the mille flottants adieux (III, 1.35).

This lower-key study is in contrast to the bolder lines of the vents, tramontane, tempêtes of Au Platane, which, in turn, is exceeded by the wind's power in La Pythie — ouragan is surely the ultimate in Valéry's Beaufort scale. The pattern is the same, nevertheless — there is the charmed inaction,

Ils m'assoupirent d'aromates ...

(1.118)

and, after, the onset of the attacker, l'ouragan des songes (1.106).

It may well be that in another illustration of charmed inaction, in Le Cimetière Marin (Zeno's fable of Achilles and the tortoise), Valéry had the Achille of Iphigénie also in mind, a frustrated hero, "Achille immobile à grands pas," (1.126), denied access to Troy and immortality. As we have already noted, the poet-hero of Valéry's poem had shared the other hero's desire for immortality,

Et vous, grande âme, espérez-vous un songe?

(1.97)

The wind releases him, too, from the world of inaction, but of inaction chained by thought, which pertained at the start of the poem,

Brisez, mon corps, cette forme pensive,
Buvez, mon sein, la naissance du vent! ...

(11.128-129)

— a release foreshadowed, perhaps, by the first breath of air early in the poem, soupir (1.19), and by the noise of the waves brought by the wind,

Le changement des rives en rumeur ...

(1.30)

The wind finally is concerned in the movement of release in the final poem of Charmes, Palme. Here, divine wisdom (une sage, 1.56) has maintained a state of nullity,

Ces jours qui te semblaient vides
Et perdus pour l'univers ...

(11.61-62)

until the moment when wind and sea (1.76) release the matured fruit in the gentlest of movements (1.77).

We have noted that Racine's wind initiates voyages which can end in triumph or disaster, in marriage or rape and death. Valéry's use of wind imagery would seem to indicate that he has amalgamated the

two aspects. This is certainly so in La Jeune Parque, where the movement leads to rape, l'air me brise (1.246), to shipwreck and death, suggested by the lame, ruine, rame, of 1.318, the linceul of 1.316; but the conclusion of the poem describes the final, joyful marriage with reality, and this too is ushered in by the wind, as the Parque stands on her rock:

L'être contre le vent, dans le plus vif de l'air ...

(1.499)

This double aspect is repeated in La Pythie. The Pythie's climax, whose origin is traceable as far back as the entry of the winds in lines 99 - 100, is again brought on by the wind, l'ouragan des songes (1.10), and it can be seen either as disastrous, rape and death, or as the summit of ecstasy (11.193-200). It is no less a marriage between the divine and the human, whose outcome is a birth (1.224, 11.219-220). And, in Le Cimetière Marin, the last of the major poems of Charmes, we have the same ambivalence, catastrophe — La vague en poudre (1.141), Rompez (1.143), and joy (1.139). The ideas of destruction and obliteration meet those of renascence, and the former are only just cancelled by the final réjouies (1.143).

It must be noted, however, that we have two poems in Charmes where the movement ends in tragedy. The plane refuses the command of the winds, and its static resistance specifically does not lead to marriage, but to the final tragedy, for we cannot but see the tree as levelled to the ground by the fury of the wind, as though it were grass,

Que la tempête traite universellement
Comme elle fait une herbe

(11.71-72)

The lines evoke Racine's picture of the idolater swept away "comme

la poudre et la paille légère," (Esther, I, 5, 1.367), or of his god

Reste d'un tronc par les vents abattu, ...

(Esther, II, 8, 1.765)

Our other example of the tragic conclusion of movement at the behest of the wind is to be found in the Fragments du Narcisse.

It is a delicate action, far removed from the fury of the north wind in Au Platane. It is nevertheless as fatal as the cold breath of the wind in Athalie, Racine's souffle ennemi (Athalie, I, 2, 1.286), for the final breath of the night wind foretells the destruction of the image, and the Narcissus with it:

Adieu ... Sens-tu frémir mille flottants adieux?
Bientôt va frissonner le désordre des ombres! ...

(11.35-36)

as its first breath had set the movement on foot:

La nuit vient sur ma chair lui souffler que je l'aime ...

(I, 1.43)

There is scope for much more detailed discussion of Valéry's use of wind imagery in its relation to Racine's, but what has been said above will perhaps show its value as yet another polyvalent symbol. It works in the field of science, where it stands for the wave movement of the air particles which we identify as sound, and thus is a valid symbol for the raw material of speech, created by man through this basic material, as he also transforms speech into poetry or music. Associated with the breast, or chest (as in La Pythie, 1.99; or Le Cimetière Marin, 1.129), the same movement of air will symbolise breath, the physiological prerequisite for life as well as for speech and for song. Again, since all these movements of air depend upon some mysterious power — Racine's

gods of sea and sun, Valéry's Puissance Créatrice — wind can symbolise poetic inspiration, sent by Apollo — the divine afflatus which can launch the poet on the voyage to success or ruin — an inspiration which often acts in concert with the inspiration of passion, which launches the lover on the search for conquest also. (Here, indeed, Racine's wind marries well with La Fontaine's, in his Psyché. And we must not forget that La Fontaine, Racine's master, had his part in the creation of Valéry's poetic universe.) We need scarcely reiterate that Valéry regarded both poetic inspiration (as it is commonly conceived) and passion as invasions of the personality, so that aspects of rape and sack are allied to the prospect of conquest.

Finally, the wind of Racine, acting upon the destiny of mortals, was ruled by the sea and the sun, Venus/Dionysos and Apollo, gods of passion and of reason; and conquest (of a city, or a woman — or of a poem) demands just such a union, of inspiration subdued and directed by reason, and of human physiology.

With regard to the fourth of the elements we are considering, earth, its most interesting aspect is, for a student of Racine and Valéry, its substance, the rock from which it is formed.

Racine's use of words denoting rock or stone is restricted, but nevertheless significant for our study. We find roc, rocher(s), écueil and pierres (the first and the last only once), in the plays, the poems, and in a poem in the correspondence. The plays where these words occur are those which Valéry mentions in the Cahiers and

the unpublished notes for his speech for the Racine celebrations, and we may by now take it, perhaps that he read the poems. We know that he read the correspondence, of course, from his letter to Albert Mockel, in 1917,¹⁰⁶ as well as from a reference to it in the same year in the Cahiers,¹⁰⁷ but it is worth mentioning that the poem from Racine's correspondence which is of particular interest to us is to be found in a letter he wrote to La Fontaine¹⁰⁸ written in La Fontaine's own manner. In view of Valéry's own interest in La Fontaine as a poet, as shown by his references in the Cahiers, and as a precursor of Racine from whom Racine may have learnt much,

Peut-être ces accents de Vénus ont-ils communiqué à cette pure voix [that is, to Racine] [...] le ton initial et les premiers sentiments d'elle-même? Il en faut assez peu pour enfanter un grand homme dans un jeune homme ignorant de ses dons ...¹⁰⁹

it seems likely that this poem would have had much to interest Valéry. It, as well as the preface to *Iphigénie*, is a possible source for Valéry's mention of the word nocher in his remarks on poetic language (C 6, 6).

We find that rocks, rocher(s) in the literal sense, occurs in Alexandre, Mithridate and Phèdre,¹¹⁰ and in the metaphorical, in the Ode on the Convalescence du Roi (1.24), and in the Hymnes¹¹¹ together with a poem in the Correspondence.¹¹² Ecueil is used metaphorically throughout.¹¹³ Roc,¹¹⁴ pierre,¹¹⁵ are both used metaphorically.

In their metaphorical contexts, the reefs are, naturally, linked with shipwreck, while the rocks are associated with the power of faith, and its steadfastness,¹¹⁶ and with the living water springing from Moses' rock.¹¹⁷ Again, rocks are associated with

cities; Luxembourg is one such, roc sourcilleux (Idylle sur la Paix), and Rhodes is a reef (Bajazet, II, 1, l.357). More unexpected and daring, the rocks of the Rhone in drought are seen as nymphs or naiads:

On pouvait, sans difficulté
Voir ses naïades toutes nues, ...
Ces nymphes sont de gros rochers ...

(Correspondance, O C R, II, p.401)

Racine's rocks and reefs have few attributes. They are either bare (awe-inspiring in their nakedness; Racine writes of the effroyable figure of his river nymphs) or covered by grass or thorns, as in Phèdre (V, 6, ll.1577-1578). Reef and rock (the rochers of the Rhone poem are also a reef, écueil) can be seen as high: l'horrible sommet de l'écueil of the same poem suggests height. And finally, there is a link with blood — Hippolyte's blood, "les rochers en sont teints" (Phèdre, V, 6, l.1557).

The attributes of rock and reef may be few, but they follow the Racinian pattern of our previous examples in having two sharply differing aspects — the benign and the fatal (though here it must be admitted that the disastrous considerably outweighs the happy). To deal first with the benign, we note that the association in Athalie is joyful, celebrating the power of the Lord to save and sustain "D'un aride rocher [He] fit sortir les ruisseaux" (I, 4, l.357). The rock in the Hymnes is a symbol of security, stabilité (HLV, l.18) and in the Idylle sur la Paix, it is a barrier against the pride of the enemy,

Ils ont vu ce roc sourcilleux
De leur orgueil l'espérance dernière
De nos champs fortunés devenir la barrière ...

(ll.45-47)

and there is a minor instance in the Stances à Parthénice, "Bois, fontaines, rochers, agréable séjour" (1.34).

Having said this, we have said all that can be brought in favour of Racine's rocks. The connotations of danger, treachery, and death are rife, in the plays and the poems. In the plays, we find Britannicus speaking of Narcissus' vigilance, which has saved him from hidden danger, mille écueils couverts (I, 4, 1.345) (and, given the role of Narcisse, this is doubly indicative of treachery). In the poems, the reef/rock is linked with terror and death and particularly with death by shipwreck. The sailor, seeing the rock he has escaped, sees death,

Ses yeux, où la mort paraît peinte,
Regardent longtemps avec crainte,
L'horrible sommet de l'écueil;
Et le voyant si redoutable,
Il tremble encore, et le cercueil
Lui semble presque inévitable ...

(OCR, II, 11.28-33)

The rock, or the reef, is the cause of another kind of shipwreck, the ruin of pride, as we have already seen in the lines cited above from the Idylle sur la Paix, and we find this connotation in Bajazet also: Rhodes is the barrier to the pride and power of the Turks, redoutable écueil (II, 1, 1.475), and in Esther the King is seen as a barrier to the pride of the enemies of the Lord,

Des mêmes ennemis je reconnais l'orgueil:
Ils viennent se briser contre le même écueil ...

(Prologue, 11.45-46)

The source of all these banal shipwrecks in the plays and the vers d'occasion lies far back, perhaps, in the unusual imagery of the lines on the nymphs of the Rhone, of 1661. Perhaps Racine had suffered an early defeat in love (and therefore pride), which led him to link the dangerous rock to the more usually complimentary

naïads and nymphs — at all events, the connotations of danger and death are there:

On pouvait, sans difficulté,
Voir ses naïades toutes nues,
Et qui, honteuses d'être vues,
Pour mieux cacher leur nudité,
Cherchaient des places inconnues.
Ces nymphes sont de gros rochers,
Auteurs de mainte sépulture,
Et dont l'effroyable figure
Fait changer de visage les plus hardis nochers.

(Corr., OCR, II, p.401)

It is not, however, until Phèdre that we find all the tragic connotations of rocks brought together with the ideas of lamentation, and turned to poetry, the grief of Ariadne,

Ariane aux rochers contant ses injustices ...

(Phèdre, I, 1, 1.89)

the blood of Hippolyte (1.1557) and the total shipwreck of life and pride which is Hippolyte's death.

Can we find similar attributes and associations in Valéry's rocks? They will be traced, if they exist, through the contexts in which we find them, under their differing synonyms.

We find roc(s),¹¹⁸ Roche,¹¹⁹ rocher,¹²⁰ Ecueil,¹²¹ pierre(s).¹²²

We also, by extension, have other forms of basic rock, cristal, marbre, matrice.¹²³

The attributes of Valéry's rocks/reefs can, in fact, be seen to correspond to those of Racine in some important respects, but a meaningful comparison cannot be made without first establishing a basic metaphor, drawn we believe, from Racine's rock/nymphs. It will have been seen from the above list of words that the greatest use of rock imagery occurs in La Jeune Parque, and it is there that we must look for that metaphor, which subtends Valéry's use of Racine's imagery. Once this is done, many of Racine's attributes

will be found contributing to and enriching Valéry's image. The natural physical attributes of height and of stability are already there, précipice (1.313), dureté (1.308), when we think of Valéry's rock as an object in itself, but when we turn to the Parque it is not difficult to see that she, too, has the substance of stone or rock, marble, traversed by veins of mineral, gold (1.159). Her body itself contains caverns, grotte (1.290), antres (1.478); its forms are contour(s) (1.260). Again, there is a parallel drawn between the Parque and the reef. Both are wounded by a supernatural being, the Parque by the serpent-monstre (1.37), the reef by the supra-natural sea, mordu par la merveille (1.25). Then, too, her substance is one with the rocky earth, to which she is conjoined,

Cette terre si ferme atteint mon piédestal ...

(1.312)

This identity extends to other beings of her kind. The isles (her daughters, perhaps — c.f. 1.358), the merveilleuses Parques (ibid.), are of rock (1.351). The whole being, woman-rock, possesses attributes which may well derive from Racine's reef/rock attributes, beginning with the nudity of his rock deities, naïades toutes nues. The Parque speaks of her breasts, îles de mon sein nu, and this nudity appears again in the lines:

Et si la robe s'arrache à la rebelle ronce
L'arc de mon brusque corps s'accuse et me prononce ...
Nu sous le voile enflé ...

(11.129-131)

The bare rock appears beneath the covering of vegetation — Racine's ronce is certainly there (1.129), and we may perhaps be allowed to see the trail of flowers as an extension of his generalised herbe (Phèdre, V, 6, 11.567-8, 1577).

This identification of woman with rock or stone is not confined

to La Jeune Parque, of course. We find it hinted at in Poésie, where the breasts are turned to stone (ll.35-36), with its attributes: rigueur (1.29), veine (1.27). The Pythie also is of rock,

Frappez, frappez, dans une roche ...

(1.188)

and basic, unworked rock, at that, matrice (1.133). There is again the suggestion of caves (1.182), through which the tides of her blood will rush. The Eve of the Ebauche d'un Serpent is another woman of stone and mineral, marbre, or, (1.245), ambre (1.246), and the parallel between the statues of stone and women is the basis of Les Colonnes. There is no space here to enlarge on all the metamorphoses of Racine's rocks — the parallel with the building, for example, suggested by the examples of Luxembourg and Rhodes, or the further connotation of place of sacrifice which emerges from the blood-stained rocks of Phèdre — but we should note that, although it is predominantly the woman's body which is seen as of rock or stone, there is also the body of the Narcissus, "temple [...] / Où je vis" (F du N, III, ll.27-28) which is of stone, pierre (Ibid.). Again, the poet of Le Cimetière Marin has affinities with stone, building, Temple du temps (1.19), toit (ll.18, 144).

As regards the main connotations of Racine's rocks, it is possible to say that they can be plainly traced in Valéry's poems. Again, as with Racine, the tragic implications are stronger than those of joy — better, of transcendence — but these latter do exist (and often, so subtle is Valéry's use of language, co-exist). The rock, in La Jeune Parque, in Poésie, in La Pythie, in Ebauche d'un Serpent, is the source of nourishment for the mind and soul.

The Parque's soul feeds from her breasts, rocs charmants (11.56-57), the poet from the marble breast, veine (P, 11.27-28). The Pythie's "Frappez [...] dans une roche" (1.187) evokes the Racinian use of the Biblical legend:

D'un aride rocher [il] fit sortir les ruisseaux ...
(Athalie, I, 4, 1.357)

The tree of Knowledge seeks it in the rock (11.273-274) and drinks it from that source, "buveur / Des plus profondes pierreries" (11.281-282).

The rock implies security, stability, for Racine. For Valéry, the Parque speaks of the dureté précieuse (1.308); the Colonnes, quarried from rock (11.21-24), are pillars of strength, Fortes (1.50). They are barriers against the ravages of time, pour l'éternité (1.42); while for the Narcissus, the stone, Pierre simple, is his defence against death (F du N, III, 1.29). As for the rower, the stones which finally enclose him are an assurance of eternal stability (1.31).

This benign aspect of the rock would not be complete without a reference to the rocks in Phèdre, whose tragic aspects are so obvious, for through and beyond this, they are, as the instruments and locus of Hippolyte's death, the means of transcendence for Hippolyte, for Phèdre, and for Thésée, and for Aricie, the means of a rebirth. This is the aspect most clearly present in La Jeune Parque, where the rock, scene of her pain and bewilderment (1.25), is also the scene of her revival and transformation, both as the seuil-écueil (11.335-336) which finds her flushed with new life, vermeille à de nouveaux désirs (1.339), and as the roc (1.505) on which she experiences transcendence and joy (1.510). This aspect is met with again in Le Cimetière Marin, where the rock which shatters the wave

is the means of its transformation,

La vague en poudre ose jaillir des rocs! ...

(CM, 1.141)

Finally, the Pythie's exclamation (1.188) may also be said to announce a coming transformation:

Mes deux natures vont s'unir ...

(1.190)

This transformation results in the transcendent voice of the last stanza.

We observed earlier that the connotations of Valéry's rocks were, like those of Racine, double-edged. In La Jeune Parque the rock is a means of death,

... mon précipice,
L'insensible rocher, glissant d'algues, propice
A fuir ...

(11.313-315)

while it is the rock, as cap, which destroys the wave (11.502-503) as in Le Cimetière Marin (1.141). Here, the suggestion of dust in the poudre, and the pages éblouies (11.141-142), convey the sense of obliteration of being. In the same poem we have the pietre (1.58) and the marbre (1.59) associated with the tombs, and the association repeated in the nuit toute lourde de marbres (1.82), and again in Le Rameur, in the pierres (1.31) where the context is sufficient to evoke the idea of death.

If we remember Racine's shipwrecks, we may well see the connotations of shipwreck which accompany Valéry's deaths as significant for our argument. We have commented elsewhere on the shipwrecks evoked by the lines in La Jeune Parque¹²⁴ following the mention of the rock (11.314-321) and on the resemblance between the death of Hippolyte and the deaths of the monstre de candeur. The

vague en poudre (CM, 1.141) also evokes Hippolyte's death. The idea of destruction and the common idea of the waves as horses are linked by the poudre (CM, 1.141) and the flancs poudreux (Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1540). What comes to grief, besides the body, in these shipwrecks, is pride, to which the rock is an obstacle. We see this in Esther,

Des mêmes ennemis je reconnais l'orgueil;
Ils viennent se briser contre le même écueil;
Déjà, rompant partout les plus fermes barrières,
Du débris de ses forts il couvre ses frontières ...

(Esther, Prologue, 11.145-148)

and, of course, in Phèdre, where the real sacrifice, together with the physical destruction of the body (for Hippolyte and Phèdre), is pride. This too, is the case for Valéry — the Parque's conception of her immortality, her pride in her ascendancy over herself, the poet's pride in his mental supremacy and its power to confer immortality in Le Cimetière Marin are the true victims.

The rock, obstacle to pride, is also linked with treachery, pain, and lamentation. Its slippery surface, Glissant d'algues (LJP, 1.314), is in itself a suggestion of treachery, and the association is repeated in the rock which, returning the words of the Narcissus, mocks and betrays them,

De son rire enchanté, le roc brise mon coeur ...

Mes secrets dans l'air sonnent ébruités, ...

(I, 11. 95, 106)

(a repetition as fatal as was the betrayal of Britannicus' secrets by Narcisse). Again, the rock is linked with deception and plaint in La Jeune Parque through the gorges de roche (1.10), the déçue (1.11) and the rumeur de plainte (1.12). It is linked with betrayal, Au plus traître de l'âme (1.43), and with pain through the wound (11.25-26).

In Racine's treatment of rocks, then, and especially in his rock/nymph analogy, we have a symbol which, again, is capable of entering into a great many combinations. Many of these are common currency — reefs, shipwrecks, bastions — but, taken together with the particular image of the rock/nymph, and with the overall pattern of Racine's use of rock imagery, their connotations do seem to offer great opportunities for the complex and pliable imagery Valéry sought.

It would seem clear that Racine's nymphs and naiads offered, in their substance, gros rochers, a symbol for the earth itself, in its basic substance, rock, which may have come together with the rock imagery at the end of Phèdre, where the rock is associated with vegetation, and thus aids the comparison.

The form of the woman's body, implicit in Racine's river-deities, and its substance, could then lend itself to the analogy with the earth-mother, amalgamating geographical and physiological features (breasts as mountains, as the source of springs, the womb as grotte, caverne, antre). Again, the position of the nymphs in the river would give an analogy with the land-masses of the earth, islands and archipelagoes surrounded by water, or with granules of matter in a preponderant liquid, the composition of the human body.

The usefulness of the rock analogy would not end here, however. The rock symbol offers a translation of mental events, the idea of death, the threat of love, for the body is an obstacle on which man's pretension to unlimited power (as a lover, or as a poet and thinker) is wrecked. Barrier against death, it is also a barrier to immortality, "temple qui me sépare / De ma divinité" (F du N, III, 11.29-30). Yet it is also the only material with which man can

achieve an approach to success, either in love or art, and here, the rock analogy is especially useful. The primitive substance, matrice (La P, 1.133), is capable of being transformed into creations shaped by the mind — statue, temple, city, altar. It may thus stand as a symbol for the basic material of language, from which poetry is created, as in Colonnes. For us, the statue analogy is especially interesting, when we think of Racine's stony river-nymphs, and of Valéry's own description of the heroines of Racine as statues par la beauté de forme.¹²⁵ And if we turn from the substance of Racine's naiads to their quality of deities, we have a symbol for the source of inspiration, whether it comes from dreams, lait des rêveries (LJP, 1.57), or from the intellect, ma mère Intelligence (Poésie, 1.5), or from introspection and its wisdom, as in the Fragments du Narcisse, with its nymphé:

toujours
Effleurée, et vivant de tout ce qui approche,
Nourrit quelque sagesse à l'abri de sa roche ...

(11.12-14)

Finally, the rock analogy, as it extends into the varying forms of mineral, or, pierre, cristal, permitted a marriage between the jewels of Hérodiade and Racine's goddesses. Once again, Racine's imagery had provided imagery which could marry the 17th century to the 20th, and give us something new.

In a very important passage in the Cahiers for 1939, Valéry writes of the synthesising activities of the creative mind. He instances Virgil, as Dante's guide, in a compound of Latin poetry and Christian love, and the scholastics who combined Aristotle and

the scriptures. He then goes on to form a law, and to adduce a very significant and personal instance — for we cannot but suppose it to be so, in the light of all that he has written of himself and of Racine:

Mais je généralise et observe que dans toute suite de temps où se produit accumulation de valeurs [...] il y a combinaisons de ce genre.

Ainsi Racine du XVII^{me} fut combiné avec des facteurs du XX^{me} et accommodé aux besoins du temps (après un sommeil réel de quelque 100 ans — 1780 - 1880 — entre Voltaire et Moréas). Je songe, bien entendu, à des utilisations réelles, et non à de simples conservations à l'état de Momies.¹²⁶

Our attempt, in what has gone before, has been to isolate some of these Racinian factors as they may be traced in Valéry's 20th century utilisation of the past. Valéry in the Cahiers writes of Racine's care for the details of his workmanship as essential elements of his perfection: "ces minuties qui font le style et sont l'atome du beau".¹²⁷ It is an expression we might well transfer to Racine's symbols, for they have the versatility of an atom, lending themselves, as primary units, to a variety of structures. They lend themselves, in the first place, to this latest translation of scientific ideas (Valéry's adaptation of the physics of Maxwell, "les vues d'un monde à la Maxwell"¹²⁸), into dramatic poetry. They lend themselves also to the concrete manifestations of the physical universe, amalgamating human physiology and the world of landscape, so that sun and water became themselves, actors in the drama.

Again, Racine's symbols could translate the world of thought, Valéry's "choses de l'esprit" (C 20, p.543) (1937). They were thus capable of representing all the metamorphoses of energy.

But their usefulness did not end here. We have seen that each

of Racine's elements could bear not one, but several interpretations — wind, for example, could be equivalent to movement of air, breath, poetic inspiration — and they could combine with other symbols to build up a group, which would interact with another group, Valéry's "opération par groupes de symboles" (C 1, 487). A good example is the spring passage in La Jeune Parque (ll.222-242), where the symbols of earth, trees, ships, wind and water combine to represent the renewal of vegetation in spring, under the sun, the woman carried away by passion, the poet by inspiration, in a description valid at all these levels (and probably more). Never can the substance of the elements and man, Valéry's actors in his drame lyrique, have been more completely fused, nor a crucial point in that universal drama more vividly presented.

It is in operations like this that we recognise most fully the value of Racine's symbolic world, as Valéry perceived it. Other poets — indeed, all poets — have used symbols, but those of Racine were such that they can be combined with and enriched by those of other poets who were, or had been, of importance to Valéry — Mallarmé above all, but also Hugo, Baudelaire, La Fontaine (a poet whom Racine, perhaps, had taught Valéry to appreciate) — but combined in such a way that we recognise patterns laid down by Racine, lines steeped in the atmosphere of Racine's world, giving a recognisable picture of Racine's universe. The miracle is that this is yet, unmistakably, a picture of Valéry's universe. As Valéry himself wrote of such "continuations"¹²⁹

L'art suprême sera, peut-être, d'arranger les pensées des autres. Un homme [...] fera enfin de toutes ces "pensées", ou "images", qui demeurent des points, des diamants détachés, [...] quelque rosaire, rivière, diadème qui vaudra des milliards de fois plus [sentence unfinished] ...¹³⁰

Une Sorte de Symbolisme

Notes

Introduction

1. C 6, 169-170 (1916).
2. C 6, 717 (1917).
3. "Je tiens que mon principal bénéfice est dans les remarques faites au cours de ce long travail." (Letter to André Fontainas, O C V, I, Notes, p.1631). See also the letter to Aimé Lafont (ibid., p.1635).
4. C 20, 543. See also Valéry's comment to Frédéric Lefevre, "Notre langage psychologique est d'une extrême pauvreté." (Entretiens, pp.55-62).
5. C 8, 832 (1922).
6. C 4, 489 (1910).
7. C 2, 150 (1900-01).
8. C 1, 313 (1897).
9. "J'ai fait plus de cent brouillons. Les transitions m'ont coûté une peine infinie. Enfin, ce fut un rude exercice!" (Letter to Aimé Lafont, O C V, I, Notes, p.1636).
10. C 4, 472.
11. C 5, 668-669 (1915).
12. Guiraud, Langage et Versification dans l'oeuvre de Paul Valéry (hereafter Guiraud), p.170.
13. Ibid.
14. See Chapter VII.
15. C 6, 296 (1916).
16. C 6, 876.
17. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.10.
18. Ibid., p.15.
19. C 26, 121 (1942).
20. C 5, 558.

21. For example, Valéry makes full use of Mallarmé's gold and jewels, and the imagery drawn from nature, the stars, the flowers, and the sun.
22. Pierre Laurette's Le Thème de l'Arbre chez Paul Valéry and Christine Crow's Paul Valéry, Consciousness and Nature are two such detailed studies. Later studies by Mme de Lussy (Les Astres et la Mer dans la Jeune Parque), by Serge Bourjea (Le Sang et le Soleil de la Jeune Parque), and by Monique and Pierre Parent did not come to my notice until this section was completed. Again, although these studies are valuable, and confirm some of the interpretations outlined here of the role of the elements in Valéry's poetry, there is no reference to the Racinian picture of the elements in these studies.

Sun

23. In La Thébaïde, Mithridate, Iphigénie, Phèdre, Athalie, and in most of the poems.
24. In Phèdre, Esther, Athalie, Les Promenades de Port-Royal-des-champs (hereafter P-R), Sur la naissance d'un enfant a Nicolas Vitart (hereafter N V), La Nymphé de la Seine a la Reine (hereafter N S), Hymnes traduites du Breviaire romain (hereafter H), Cantiques Spirituels (hereafter Cant.).
25. In Esther, P-R VII (1.75); H mercredi, vêpres (hereafter H mer. V), 1.6.
26. L'astre qui nous éclaire (Phèdre, IV, 2, 1.1061); astre du jour (Athalie, I, 1, 1.153).
27. Astre des saisons (P-R I, 1.480); astre des temps (H, lundi laudes) (hereafter H L L), 1.35; and as a measure of time, Athalie, I, 1, 11.153-154.
28. "O soleil, ô flambeaux de lumière immortelle," (Esther, II, 7, 1.654); l'unique flambeau (P-R VII, 1.55); le clair flambeau (H mer V, 1.6).
29. N V, 1.2.
30. Ce beau soleil [Henri] (Ode sur la Convalescence du Roi, 1.57).
31. O soleil de justice (H, mardi, laudes (hereafter H M L), 1.13).
32. Ce soleil inaccessible (Cant. I, 1.64); (H L L, 11.1-5).
33. See note 28.
34. See note 31.

35. H L L, 11.1-5.
36. C 20, 736-737 (1937-38).
37. Mme Agathe Rouart-Valéry confirmed this to me by letter and by a conversation in Edinburgh. We may also remind ourselves of the well-known remark, in Valéry's letter to André Fontainas, "Faire réciter le songe d'Athalie m'a appris des choses incoupçonnées, — qui éclairaient une fois pour toutes les difficultés précisément auxquelles j'étais en proie." (O C V, I, Notes, p.1631). [Valéry's italics]
38. See Valéry's eulogy of the Père Cyprien's translations of the works of St John of the Cross (Cantiques Spirituels, O C V, I, pp.449-457).
39. Professor Picard, in his notes to the Pléiade edition of Racine, emphasises this (O C R, I, p.1180).
40. See Professor Picard's comments on Racine's translations of the last stanzas of the Hymnes (Ibid., p.1181).
41. "Racine vivant indéfiniment, écrivant mille Phèdres aussi belles" (C 4, 167) (1906).
42. See Chapter II.
43. H, jeudi, laudes (hereafter H J L), 1.6.
44. Glaive étincelant (Athalie, II, 3, 11.409-410).
45. Un homicide acier (Ibid., II, 5, 1.513).
46. Athalie, V, 5, 1.1730.
47. Phèdre speaks of the sun as her ancestor : "Ce sacré soleil dont je suis descendue," and as the ancestor of the gods : "J'ai pour aïeul le père et le maître des Dieux." (Phèdre, IV, 6, 11.1274-1275).
48. "Eclatant de lumière." This description recurs continually in the Hymnes.
49. "Grand Dieu, voici ton heure, on t'amène ta proie" (Athalie, V, 3, 1.1668).
50. We have already noted the disappearance of the Mallarmean lune from Valéry's poetic vocabulary. Racine's poetic vocabulary hardly draws at all upon the moon.
51. L J P, 11.116, 171, 487; Aurore, 1.43; Fragments du Narcisse (hereafter F du N) II, 1.71; L'Ebauche d'un Serpent (hereafter Eb d'un S), 1.21; Le Cimetière Marin (hereafter C M), 11.10, 125; Grenades, 1.5; Le Rameur (hereafter Le R), 1.15; Palme, 1.22.

52. Jour for Racine (as for poets in general) can imply sunlight. We find it used thus by Valéry : L J P, 1.152; Colonnes, 1.53; F du N, I, 1.48; Le R, 1.13; Palme, 1.48.
53. C M, 1.37.
54. See L J P, 1.508; Eb d'un S, 11.22, 31; Colonnes, 1.53.
55. See Colonnes, 1.52. Valéry's intention here is underlined by the use of jour (without the capital letter) in the next line.
56. This line reminds us of the cancelled stanza of Aurore, where we find treasure also : "Immobile, tête fée / Ta substance de cristal / Matière même d'Orphée / Rayonne le jour total". For the whole stanza see O C V, I, Notes, p.1656.
57. Athalie, V, 2, 1.1589.
58. We are here thinking particularly of Hérodiade.
59. As seen in La Bouche d'ombre.
60. Valéry tells us himself that the poem gives us a picture of creation : "J'ai donné à croire dans 'le serpent' que la véritable 'chute' c'était peut-être la création même," (C 19, 280) (1936).

Sea

61. In Andromaque, Bérénice, Bajazet, Mithridate, Iphigénie, Phèdre, Esther; Athalie; N S, 11.20, 30; H, jeudi, vêpres (hereafter H J V), 11.5, 13; Cant., 1.4.
62. "Neptune, par le fleuve aux Dieux mêmes terrible," (Phèdre, IV, 3, 1.1158). Strictly speaking, the reference is to the Styx, but it is the god of the sea who rules it, thus lending a useful ambiguity to fleuve.
63. In Mithridate, Iphigénie, Phèdre, Athalie, and twice in the translations from the Latin Breviary : H J V, 1.5; H, mardi, vêpres (hereafter H M V), 1.4.
64. Attached to Océan in Alexandre, and in the famous : "L'onde approche, se brise, et vomit à nos yeux / Parmi des flots d'écume, un monstre furieux ..." (Phèdre, V, 6, 11.1515-1516), and also in a hackneyed paraphrase for sunset (Correspondance, O C R, II, p.416).
65. In Andromaque, Mithridate, Athalie, and in the translations from the Latin Breviary, H, lundi, vêpres (hereafter H L V), 1.3; H J V, 1.1.

66. Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1781.
67. Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1515.
68. Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1780.
69. Ibid., 1.1781.
70. Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1780; Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1521.
71. Iphigénie, V, 6, 11.1778, 1783, 1785.
72. Andromaque, I, 1, 11.11-12.
73. As is made plain in Phèdre, V, 1, where Hippolyte asks, "Ai-je dû mettre au jour l'opprobre de son lit? / Devais-je, en lui [Thésée] faisant un récit trop sincère, / D'une indigne rougeur couvrir le front d'un père? ..."
74. The elements of breaking waves, a thunderous voice (of the gods), the death of a monster (Eriphile; cf Iphigénie, V, 4, 1.1679), and the key words gémissant (Phèdre), gemit (Iphigénie), mugissements (both plays), flots d'écume (Phèdre), blanchissante d'écume (Iphigénie), make this comparison inescapable when lines 1768 - 1771 of Iphigénie are compared with lines 1507 - 1511, and lines 1515 - 1516, 1521, of Phèdre. The sacred horror so terrible in Phèdre is the "horreur [...] qui nous rassure" in Iphigénie.
75. L J P, 11.327, 356, 492, 500; F du N, II, 1.59; C M, 11.4, 60, 130; Le Vin Perdu, 1.11.
76. L J P, 11.106, 320.
77. Le Vin Perdu, 1.1.
78. L J P, 1.317; Poésie, 1.11; La P, 1.96.
79. There are too many of these compounds to give more than a few significant examples : arbustes amers (L J P, 1.163); the repeated amère, amers (F du N, II, 11.60, 61); amère demande (La P, 1.175); amerement la même (L J P, 1.327).
80. Again, this occurs too frequently to give every example. It does not, of course, always refer to the sea, but must do so in L J P, 11.337, 502; in C M, 1.99; and in Poésie, 1.11.
81. C M, 1.141.
82. L J P, 11.9, 331.
83. L J P, 1.62.
84. L J P, 1.441.

85. The words étincelant, étincelle, éclat, underline the general idea of brilliance Racine attaches to his furious commanders, from Pyrrhus les yeux étincelants (Andromaque, III, 8, 1.999) to the Deity himself : "Ainsi du Dieu vivant la colère étincelle," (Esther, II, 7, 1.653).
86. See Chapter IV.
87. Apart from the internal evidence of the poem itself, its association with Valéry's obsession with Mme de Rovira (see Chapter I) led us to re-read his letter to Gide, where this passion is strongly associated with sea-imagery. The relevant passage runs as follows : "Je suis frénétique : une telle brise de mer souffle que ma chevelure en est mouillée et je hume dans l'air la mer! / Si vous saviez comme elle me pénètre et quel amour c'est! Elle me transporte et me ferait hurler des folies : c'est un triomphe d'indomptable gueuse, trompétée au large par les vents vastes qui bondissent et se roulent et vagabondent sur les vagues! .. J'ai le cerveau plein de ces vents et de ces coruscantes vagues qui hennissent; contre l'écume furieusement jetée, le vaisseau noir s'effare ... " (C G V, p.109). Nor is there anything incongruous in linking the mounting violence of the sea with the assault of a crescendo in music, another aspect of the poem which also relates to Valéry's obsession with Mme de Rovira.
88. A research into the origin of this word (suggested to me by Dr Lowe) showed that there were other significances besides the resemblance of the sails to birds' beaks (Entretien avec Frédéric Lefèvre). The Dictionnaire Provençal connects foc with flames (Latin focus - hearth). It is also the source of a well-known four-letter word applied to the activities of those who fed the fire. Thus we have a complex suggesting the sails of an invading force bringing flame and rape over the waters and the invading forces of desire (for a woman or for the creation of a poem) which attack the tranquillity of the poet.
89. As we see from the first lines, especially line 3 (haletante, ivre, hurle).
90. Phèdre, I, 4, 11.323-326 and II, 1, 11.380-382.
91. It may be that there is also a suggestion of one of the Fates (Racine's Parque homicide (Phèdre, II, 2, 1.469) in the fileuse of line 196, and perhaps of the first cold touch of the water (frileuse, 1.195; doigt mouillée, 1.196): "Le long de ma ligne frileuse / Le doigt mouillée de la fileuse / Trace une atroce volonté ..." (La P, 11.195-197).
92. Particularly female physiology, as can be seen in La Jeune Parque, La Dormeuse, Poésie, La Pythie. Elsewhere Valéry writes of the nervous system as female (the brain of course is male!) : "le cerveau loyal [...] enchaîné à ce serpent de femme nerveuse," (C 5, 11 (1913)).

93. The sea as chienne inevitably recalls Valéry's use of the word gueuse in his description of his passion for Mme de Rovira, full of sea-imagery (see note 87).
94. There may be a reference to Mallarmé, and to the idea of the one perfect Book to which he devoted his whole life, in the pages scattered by the wind at the end of Le Cimetière Marin : "Envolez-vous, pages tout éblouies!" (1.42). The parallel here would be with lines 42-43 of Hérodiade, the nurse's "Pardon! l'age effaçait, reine, votre defense / De mon esprit pâli comme un vieux livre ..." [My italics].

Wind

95. Esther, III, 3, 1.985; Athalie, II, 9, 1.780. In the plural, with a capital, N S (1.33).
96. Esther, III, 3, 1.985; Athalie, I, 2, 1.286; P-R, II, 1.24.
97. This is the commonest synonym and is found in the plays and the poems. It occurs in Andromaque, III, 1, 1.790; in Iphigénie (some sixteen times in all); in Esther (four times); and in Athalie, V, 6, 1.1747. In the poems we find it in P-R, II, 1.23; P-R, IV, 1.30; P-R, VI, 1.30; and in a poem from the Correspondance (O C R, II, p.416).
98. See Valéry's notes on the painter's death (C 6, 747 (1917)) and his essay on Degas (O C V, II, pp.1167, 1178, 1208).
99. C 4, 439 (1910).
100. Agrippine's speech may serve as an example : " ... Je m'assure un port dans la tempête," (Britannicus, I, 1, 1.71).
101. L J P, 11.1, 105, 151, 316, 499; Au P, 1.51; F du N, I, 1.99; F du N, II, 1.63; La P, 1.100; Le Sylphe, 1.4; C M, 11.129, 139; Le R, 1.26; Palme, 1.36.
102. L J P, 1.19; F du N, I, 1.103; F du N, II, 1.54; F du N, III, 1.9; La P, 1.214; Au Platane (hereafter Au P), 1.71.
103. La P, 1.149.
104. L J P, 1.246; F du N, I, 11.8, 106; F du N, II, 1.6; La P, 1.157.
105. L J P, 1.162; Colonnes, 1.60; F du N, I, 1.45; Palme, 1.76. These references in notes 101 - 105 are not intended to be a complete list of Valéry's synonyms for wind, but representative examples.

Rock

106. L Q, p.122.
107. C 6, 758.
108. O C R, II, pp.400-403.
109. Sur Adonis (O C V, I, p.493).
110. Alexandre, II, 2, 1.578; Mithridate, II, 3, 1.445; Phèdre, I, 1, 1.89 and V, 6, 11.1541, 1557; Athalie, I, 4, 1.357.
111. H L V, 11.17-18.
112. O C R, II, p.401.
113. Alexandre, I, 2, 1.203; Bajazet, II, 1, 1.475; Esther, Prologue, 1.46.
114. Idylle sur la Paix (hereafter I P), 1.45.
115. Esther, I, 1, 1.87.
116. H L V, 11.17-18.
117. Athalie, I, 4, 1.357.
118. L J P, 11.56, 505; F du N, I, 11.95, 107; C M, 1.141.
119. L J P, 11.10, 351; F du N, II, 1.14; La P, 1.188.
120. L J P, 1.314.
121. L J P, 11.25, 336.
122. Poésie, 1.35; F du N, III, 1.27; Colonnes, 1.68; Le R, 1.31.
123. Cristal (see note 56), Colonnes, 1.25; marbre (L J P, 1.159); matrice (La P, 1.133).
124. In the section discussing the sea.
125. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.13.

Conclusion

126. C 22, 699 (1939).

127. Valéry is commenting on Racine's letter to Boileau on the question of whether to use Misérables or Infortunés in Cantique II (C 6, 758 (1917)).
128. Mémoires d'un Poème (hereafter M P) (unpublished notes for a lecture on La Jeune Parque).
129. "Cet être très noble qui est le continuateur" (C 4, 645 (1911)). In a later passage (C 5, 750) Valéry writes of the reader who "reproduces" the work of an author he has been studying, as one who carries on that work, le continue dans une autre bouche, distinguishing that act from mere plagiarism.
130. C 5, 65 (1913).

CHAPTER VI

UNE FORME DE QUALITÉ

Une Forme de Qualité

It is impossible to discuss the place of Racine's language in Valéry's poetry without taking into account the conventions which governed Racine's production. Many of the most powerful of these conventions were the result of the flowering of that passion for distinction, the cult of the aristocratic, which was deeply influenced by the salons and the ruelle — 17th century préciosité.

Before we proceed with the discussion of Valéry's concern with the principles governing this form of preciousness, and their effect upon his poetry, it is necessary to define the meaning we attach to the word itself. Here we cannot do better than turn to René Bray:

La préciosité est un effort vers la distinction.¹

And for Bray, preciousness can still be defined thus, even when it misses its aim and relapses into affectation or fadeur because of the incompetence of its devotees.² When, however, it succeeds, it expresses what is noblest in man's mind; it is une aristocratie de l'esprit.³

If we accept this definition, it is easy to see how greatly preciousness, that flowering of the conventions of Racine's time, must have appealed to Valéry, haunted as he was by the idea of achieving excellence. There is evidence enough throughout the Cahiers of his passion for submitting himself to various forms of mental discipline, but a passage⁴ from 1927 on conventions, headed Racine, defines his attitude. Conventions are a specific mark of the human mind, ce qui distingue l'homme des animaux, and the sine qua non of all mental activity, par quoi l'homme crée, conçoit. They are at the very root

of language as signes, lois arbitraires, and even have the power of an incantation or a rite, to conjure up a revelation:

L'emploi de l'arbitraire pour le développement incalculable des actes, leurs enchaînements ... 5

This attitude of Valéry's towards the importance of conventions is relevant to a discussion of the language of preciosity, for that language is the expression of the whole attitude to life of the précieux:

Le langage précieux n'est qu'une conséquence de l'effort de distinction qui est à la base de la préciosité.⁶

The language of preciosity was, so to speak, a distillation, suc précieux (LJP, 1.287), of the principles which dictated that the commonplace and 'natural' should be banished from life and language in favour of the exquisite and artificial.

The language of preciosity, then, was a chosen language, selected and refined from the everyday material of the vocabulary. And if we follow Valéry's comments on preciosity in the Cahiers, we can see that he was singling out those aspects of the chosen language of preciosity which correspond most closely to the ideal of a poetic language — the ideas of deliberate choice, the creation of a language within a language by means of certain rules: "Spécifications qui forment un nouveau langage dans l'ancien."⁷

This is particularly marked during those years when Valéry was re-examining the language of the older poets, l'ancien stock, for the benefit of La Jeune Parque and Charmes. Of the relevant passages⁸ we may single out two as especially important for us — the first, as it defines the 17th century langue noble, the second, as it analyses Racine's use of it:

Langage et poésie /

Langage et poésie

Du langage poétique. Pourquoi coursier, esquif, carrière, nocher, coeur etc.? plus poétiques que cheval, barque, etc.

On dirait qu'on voulait éviter l'image précise et proche, quotidienne. Style noble. Espèce d'ésotérisme, langage de clan et de caste. Rôle immense de la phobie de la grossièreté. Idée du vulgaire. Règles compliquées, barrières de l'étiquette.⁹

The second, and well-known passage, is that in which Valéry is emphasising the factors of restraint and of deliberate suppression, as significant elements in the perfection of Racine's poetry — a perfection which is, in some part, the result of a deliberate effort to obey the rules. In this passage, Valéry stresses the trammels of the langue noble, la langue précise, and the distance from natural speech, la formule fondue dans une fraîcheur artificielle. He refers to the effort of will, la volonté heureuse et cachée, fraîcheur obtenue.¹⁰ We may assume, too, that Valéry is thinking of Racine's avoidance of the mots bas, when he refers to the part suppression (abstention) plays in pure poetry. We note that this solution of Racine's to poetical problems is again mentioned in 1916,¹¹ and once more in 1920, where Valéry sees Racine's restraint as a response to the tastes of his public, an élite.¹²

This interest of Valéry's in the 17th century language of preciousness and Racine as its exponent, was not, of course, confined to the years of his greatest output. He was, whether he liked it or not, a poet all his life — and a passionate defender of preciousness.¹³ It is, however, in his notes for the projected speech in celebration of the Racine tercentenary year that he most convincingly sums up his feelings with regard to Racine and the effect of the 17th century conventions upon Racine's work. In these

pages, worked and re-worked, it is clear that for Valéry the effect of Racine's poetry has been achieved by the poet's working within the constraints of his time and its chosen speech — those constraints which preciousity delighted in enforcing and exaggerating. Valéry writes here of a chosen language, artificial conventions:

Il [Racine] a produit dans l'atmosphère d'une cour, sous les conditions les moins naturelles, dans une langue choisie, sous l'empire de conventions très artificielles ... ¹⁴

On other sheets, various jottings reinforce the idea of artificiality, systeme de conditions (p.8), Danse lente des attitudes (p.10), formules nettes (p.10). Restraint of language is hinted at, Dépouillement du nom (p.8). The veiled and ambiguous references to crude reality, result of the social embargoes imposed by preciousity, are suggested by the remarks: La passion doit paraître et non (p.11) and trouble introduit par termes étranges (p.17). This last remark is to be found on the same page as that whereon Valéry glances at Racine's concern for virtue in his preface to Phèdre, l'enseignement de la vertu — the idea, again, of excellence in all the fields of existence that was the ideal of preciousity. Lastly, Valéry underlines the aspect of choice by an act of will, La volonté consciente (p.11). Thus we find Valéry, towards the end of his life, re-affirming what he had said long before of the part preciousity played in classical poetry in general,¹⁵ with particular reference to Racine.

So far we have been dealing with Valéry's own views. What of those of his commentators? Do they, too, see Racinian preciousity as making a substantial, and valuable, contribution to Valéry's poetic language?

Some, indeed, of Valéry's critics saw his preciousity as a defect,

as Valéry himself was well aware; when he linked 17th century preciousness with his own, by an insensible transition from the one to the other:

[...] j'ai paru un mystique à certains — un précieux etc. — après tout la préciosité ne choque que des habitudes — Molière [ne] doutait pas que le langage le plus commun est en soi aussi précieux que le langage de l'hôtel de Rambouillet — mais c'est un précieux qui est digéré et qui ne demande aucun effort pour être conçu ni compris.¹⁶

Other critics, in turn, although they emphasise the restraint of Valéry's vocabulary and his restricted imagery, tend to regard his eclecticism as an inheritance from Mallarmé and the symbolists, and his preciousness also as deriving from Mallarmé.¹⁷ However, among those who do see the influence of Mallarmé as a major factor in Valéry's poetic language, Guiraud points out two important tendencies in that language — the choice of the generalised term¹⁸ and the use of 17th century vocabulary, la recherche du terme noble.¹⁹ In addition, Guiraud observes the absence of mots bas among the substantives in general (p.152), and among nouns designating parts of the body.²⁰ Again, even while remarking on the extent to which Valéry draws on Mallarmé for his vocabulary, Guiraud insists that there are important differences, both in atmosphere and in the vocabulary itself.²¹ In this latter category, he notes the disappearance in the later poems of certain specifically Mallarmean words found in the Vers Anciens, and the replacement of the particular by the general in terms relating to nature (p.170).²² He further notes the disappearance of many specialised terms relating to building and architecture, reminding a reader of Racine, and of the ban laid on technical terms by the langue noble.²³ Again, as regards the general atmosphere bathing the works of the two poets,

we may note Guiraud's emphasis on the warmth and tenderness which distinguishes Valéry's attitude to love from the érotisme glacé of Hérodiade;²⁴ Valéry's is perhaps an attitude more akin to the conception of love held by preciousity, to the passion and tenderness demanded of the lover by his mistress.

In view then of the comments above, we may perhaps conclude that, greatly as Valéry was indebted to Mallarmé for his poetic vocabulary, his own preciousity was not wholly that of Mallarmé, and that, as Guiraud remarks,

Les différences sont donc sensibles et le deviennent surtout après les Vers Anciens.²⁵

We know that for Valéry, Mallarmé's vocabulary was a tool of choice, and one he prized greatly. If then it did not completely satisfy him, and if he was looking for aid to Racine's language, shaped by preciousity and obedient to its rules — why did he do so? What had it to offer him, of which traces can be found in his work?

Two characteristics stand out from Valéry's descriptions of the language of Racine and of preciousity in its highest form, the langue poétique. They are those of restraint, abstention, of the use of the generalised term — on dirait qu'on voulait éviter le mot précis et proche. These are precisely the characteristics which have been singled out by many of Valéry's commentators as marking his later poetry, especially from the period of La Jeune Parque and Charmes. These characteristics would therefore seem to merit a closer examination.

The briefest of considerations will show us why these particular characteristics are important. They are fundamental to the principles which lay behind the language of preciousity, and to Valéry's conception of the language of poetry, the distancing of both

from everyday life. The langue noble was one on which the first operations necessary to produce the language of poetry had already been performed. The ban on mots bas meant, not that the realities of life could not be dealt with, but that they were dealt with in code — Trouble introduit par termes étranges²⁶ — and, we may add, by euphemisms or circumlocutions which gave scope to the exercise of the poetic imagination. Again, the generalised term — on dirait qu'on voulait éviter le mot précis et proche²⁷ — meant that a skilful user of the language could evoke a multiplicity of connotations (even, sometimes, apparently contradictory ones) from the same word. Here, the change of meaning undergone by words in common use could be played on.²⁸ In spite, however, of such occasional alterations in meaning, the generalised term resists the changes undergone by language to a degree impossible to the specialised term, promising some degree of immortality to the poet.²⁹

Here were advantages on which Valéry was not slow to seize. And there was also a final advantage, stemming from a strict adherence to a code. It was that any infringement had a shock value. It gave the poet a powerful weapon, to be used only in situations requiring the extreme of horror, and we shall see that both Racine and Valéry knew how to use it to the maximum effect.

These then were the possibilities offered to Valéry by these two most important characteristics of the language of preciousness. There is no space here for a detailed account of Valéry's vocabulary as it compares with Racine's, but we would refer here to Guiraud's illuminating lists,³⁰ and in particular to his list of substantives among the key words, mots-clés.³¹ Nothing could be more in accordance with the rules followed by Racine, a fact which stands out

strikingly from the list of parts of the body. These last are of great importance in Valéry's poetry,³² and so are a valuable touchstone for his adherence to Racine's rules (and when need be, his disobedience). We may therefore perhaps be allowed to confine ourselves mainly to this area, extending it to cover physiology in general, in our discussion of the principle of restraint, the phobie de la grossièreté to which Valéry himself refers.

Human physiology, indeed, must have been of considerable interest to the dramatic poet of the 17th century, if we accept Valéry's dictum that tragedy pictures man in all his aspects:

La tragédie a pour matière nécessaire la psycho-physiologie avec ses réflexes, ses instincts, ses orages, sa sensibilité, et les idées, puisqu'elle met des hommes entiers sur scène ...³³

It was a subject, however, which presented considerable difficulties to such poets, as they skirted around the great unmentionables of preciosity. Tragedy can discuss the permissible activities of love, hate, politics, death, even marriage, but never, of course, the physical realities which underlie them — copulation, birth, the mundane necessities of eating or drinking. Even death (though violent, and bloody) lacks the full horror of physical dissolution and decay. Thus the Racinian hero or heroine is a figure where the danger area between neck and knee is vague and ill-defined, where the generalised sein, or flanc(s), cover the functions of breast and womb. Should dramatic necessity compel the poet to introduce a more exact description of the baser activities (Phèdre's abstinence, Jézabel's paint), then circumlocution or euphemism are called upon.³⁴

Yet, even within these rules, it is remarkable how much Racine could convey. Nowhere is this more striking than in Phèdre. The subject of the play in itself must have presented a formidable

challenge, and the development of the plot is strewn with obstacles; Hippolyte's bastardy, Thésée's amorous past — a series of rapes — Phèdre's own past, and her physical condition in the present, Hippolyte's supposed rape of Phèdre. Yet all these forbidden subjects are conveyed past the censor either by euphemism or circumlocution, and some, notably the list of Thésée's conquests and Phèdre's description of her passion, are the occasion of Racine's greatest poetic triumphs: the dying fall of Ariadne's plaint:

Ariane aux rochers contant ses injustices ...

(Phèdre, I, 1, 1.89)

and the onslaught of the most famous line of all:

C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée ...

(Ibid., I, 3, 1.306)

Moreover, in Phèdre herself we have a portrait of the complete woman, startling in its insistence on physical reality, which justifies Valéry's dictum on the psycho-physiologie of the human entity as the subject of tragedy. We have Phèdre's innocent girlhood, her rape by Thésée (obliterated, as it were, by her subsequent marriage):

Phèdre enlevée enfin sous de meilleurs auspices ...

(Phèdre, I, 1, 1.90)

We have her children, the fruits of that marriage. We have her intensely physical sufferings,³⁵ the effect of her passion for Hippolyte, and her death, where the body's cold and the darkened vision are described in Racine's supreme euphemism, Poetry's triumph:

Et la mort, à mes yeux dérochant la clarté
Rend au jour, qu'ils souillaient, toute sa pureté ...

(Phèdre, V, 7, 11.1643-1644)

The whole play indeed demonstrates the triumph of the language of preciousness over the grosser realities from which preciousness

shrank, but which Racine was determined to bring before his public, the better to destroy the forces of naked passion.³⁶ And we must not forget that in the pursuit of that aim, Racine was prepared to break the rules where necessary. Phèdre not only offends against the absolute strictness of the rule of bienséance, but against the ban on mots bas, in the description of the monstre (croupe, V, 6, 1.1520; gueule, ibid., 1.1533) — a description which brought Racine great public acclaim. Racine's avowed purpose throughout was to paint deformity, and by contrast, to exalt excellence.

Preciosity, too, provided the code for Valéry's description of the major events in the Parque's life, as she passes through the physical stages from the adolescent to maturity — with the addition of one stage absent from Phèdre, that of menstruation. It was not needed for Racine's purposes, but Valéry could not well ignore it if he wished to describe all the physiological events which can govern mental reactions. The Parque, then, reaches puberty: "La renaissante année / A tout mon sang prédit de secrets mouvements." (11.222-223). She, like Phèdre, yields to a ravisher: "L'étonnant printemps rit, viole ..." (1.226), and "Quelle résisterait?" (1.243). The physical act of love is indicated (11.255-257 and 1.262). She imagines conception: "mêlant l'âme étrange aux éternels retours," (1.243), and we have a strong suggestion of the maturing embryo, the seeds of death in the fruit:

Rien ne me murmurait qu'un désir de mourir
Dans cette blonde pulpe au soleil pût mûrir:

(11.115-116)

a suggestion supported by line 362: "Ma mort, enfant secrète, et déjà si formée." The Parque, in fact, does give birth (to the tear, 11.292-295) and, performing a maternal function Racine does mention,

notably in Phèdre (I, 1, 11.69-70), she suckles a child (11.55-57).

The code of preciousness serves Valéry equally well when he wishes to describe other, more universal, physiological events. Sleep,³⁷ and dreams, loss of consciousness,³⁸ blushing,³⁹ even the sense of smell,⁴⁰ — for all these he can find a paraphrase. More, he was able to use the same device to describe mental events and adumbrate their dependence upon the physical: perception,⁴¹ consciousness,⁴² thought,⁴³ — the life of the mind is displayed with no loss of poetic fitness, no rebarbative technical terms.⁴⁴

The same restrained vocabulary and use of circumlocution⁴⁵ are to be found in Charmes⁴⁶ — with one notable exception, La Pythie, which is discussed below. Nothing, however, could be more Racinian than Sections I and III of the Fragments du Narcisse, the restraint of Le Rameur, or the classical severity of Le Cimetière Marin. Where there are exceptions, either in parts of the poems, or in a poem as a whole, there are reasons — reasons as valid for Valéry in the 20th century as for Racine in the 17th. We have, in fact, already noted that Racine obtained some of his finest, and most dramatic, effects from disobeying the rules. We have seen, too, the power of contrast, the shock value, of such disobedience. Can we find Valéry also disobeying the rules, and for the same ends?

In discussing La Jeune Parque and Charmes, emphasis was laid on restraint, and on the euphemistic qualities of the paraphrase. Yet here and there, the rules are broken. The Parque, at the moment of intense aspiration towards immortality, is reduced physically to the torse: "Mon corps désespéré tendait le torse nu" (1.372), the immaterial âme (1.373), coeur (1.376). But, touched by desire, she is given the joue enflammée (1.150), the explicit narine (1.151).

As she meditates on death, the animal mugit (1.166) points forward to La Pythie. In the closing section of the poem, when she accepts her mortal status, there is the explicit peau (1.507), and the very Racinian vomir (1.504). However, it is in Charmes, and with La Pythie, that Valéry's pure Parque is best contrasted. Almost the whole poem can be taken as an example of the different ways in which it is possible to disregard the code of preciousness. Valéry's infringements mark the intrusion of the animal,⁴⁷ of the particular,⁴⁸ and of the extraordinary⁴⁹ — even that of everyday life.⁵⁰ These, and the explicit references to two major events in woman's physical life, coupling and birth,⁵¹ contrast with the circumlocutions which describe the Pythie's purity (ll.81-86, 125-126). We have, too, the plethora of extravagant adjectives — colossale (1.15), éternels (1.64), immenses (ll.99, 157), hagarde (1.169), and so on. There is everything, in fact, which can emphasise those elements in life and language which preciousness most wished to suppress. It may well be that, by drawing attention to these elements, Valéry wished to show us the raw material of life and language undergoing a process of purification,⁵² until the disordered speech of the Pythie, mots écumants (1.44), is transmuted into the language of poetry — a language which, as used by Racine, was indeed divine:

Racine (p. ex[emple] dit (par son oeuvre) —
Si vous savez bien le français, — si vous avez l'oreille
qu'il faut, si vous êtes sensible aux passions, aux
illegible word etc. etc.
lisez-moi.
... Alors ceci est fait pour vous, —
prenez et goutez ⁵³

The parallel with the Mass is inescapable, and casts light perhaps on the identity (or one of the identities) of the pontife hilare (1.216).

We have dwelt on La Pythie at some length because here the shock

value of the contrast between a strict observance of the rules of preciousity, and their infringement, is most powerful — La Pythie is a 'shock' poem, standing out from the rest. But the same value of contrast applies in other poems of Charmes — we can refer briefly to the central section of the Fragments du Narcisse, with its references to nuque (II, 1.29), épaule (1.31), and a more explicit description of physical love (11.32-40) than preciousity would approve — although preciousity veils some aspects. This section brings into relief the purity of the image in the water, described in a way that is well within the rules.⁵⁴ Again, in Ebauche d'un Serpent, laine (1.48), nuque (1.149), peau (1.176), emphasise the animal attractions of Eve, and in Le Cimetière Marin we have the sudden apparition of the Chienne splendide (1.61), golfe mangeur (1.50), the details of physical love in stanza 16 (again, even here preciousity cloaks to some extent what in Baudelaire would have been crude), and the brutal crâne vide (1.108), the physical reality of death.

We should perhaps conclude our brief examination of the principle of abstention by noting that although the code of preciousity could be of immense value in creating a poetic language, it also had its excesses, and that there is, in Charmes, in Ebauche d'un Serpent, a caricature of these excesses, where not only is the subject far removed from everyday life (the Creation), and thus noble et universel⁵⁵ in the way Valéry ascribes to Corneille,⁵⁶ not Racine, but the language self-consciously enriched by every device of circumlocution possible — precisely, in fact, the sort of preciousity to which Racine seldom, if ever, yielded, but very much in the spirit of Molière's parody.

So far, we have been discussing the principle of abstention. We have emphasised the avoidance of mots bas, and the use of circumlocutions, but less stress has been laid on the part played by the generalised term — although such terms were useful for the observance of the code. As we noted, flanc, sein, cover most of the forbidden area, while the vague robe, voiles, avoids specific detail, just as détours renders architectural description of either Pyrrhus' palace,⁵⁷ the seraglio,⁵⁸ or the labyrinth,⁵⁹ unnecessary. But the usefulness of the generalised term goes far beyond this. Such terms as objet, bord(s), détours, sang, chemin(s), lien(s), are flexible. They take on the colouring of the context in which they are used, but can bring with them the shadowy tints of other contexts in which they were equally valid. Sang, in the sense of descent, or kinship, does not altogether lose the overtones of the physical blood; lien(s), used to signify the marriage bond, carries the suggestion of material bonds. Such words, therefore, were not only euphemistic, but multivalent, and could be ambiguous. Hippolyte, enslaved by Aricie, calls his bonds beautiful, un si beau lien,⁶⁰ but their beauty does not prevent his chafing against them. Indeed, the word itself will serve as an excellent example of the uses to which Racine could put the generalised term. It signifies a material bond,⁶¹ the ties of blood,⁶² of love,⁶³ of marriage,⁶⁴ of self-control,⁶⁵ and of life itself.⁶⁶ And, as we observed, the shadow of the physical object it designates lies behind the figurative uses.

It is not hard to see, then, how the generalised term was a tool that might have been designed for Valéry, in his search for polyvalence and for the means of portraying the interaction of

physiological and mental that controls human existence. In his poems, and in La Jeune Parque in particular, he exploits its possibilities to the full. To take only one line of La Jeune Parque as an example, we can see the process in action:

Et dans mes doux liens, à mon sang suspendue,
(1.34)

The Racinian echoes (doux liens, sang) alert us to several meanings. The Parque is defining her position. She defines her status (liens as ties of marriage,⁶⁷ of love,⁶⁸ or of slavery⁶⁹). She refers back to her descent (sang), thus defining her genealogical position. She also shows us her attitude towards the ties of marriage, or love, (doux). At the same time, she reminds us of her physiology. Liens, as the ties which retain her in life, can apply to the network of veins and nerves which bind her to existence, and allow for the process of thought; just as the sang suggests the circulation of blood on which life and thought depend. She even defines her immediate physical position; the liens can refer to her crossed arms (bras si doux, 1.249). Furthermore, the bonds will fit into other contexts, describing different aspects of the Parque, without losing the essential meaning which underlies all the aspects. In the longs liens de fleurs they convey suggestions of sacrifice (reminding us of Racine's sacrificial wreaths⁷⁰), reinforcing the sacrifiait (1.118), victime (1.335), hostie (1.338), and helping to link the Parque with the flower she becomes.⁷¹ In the same way, the repetition of liens in the passage on spring, will help to link the woman to the tree, and to the ship:

... Et dans l'espace accablé de liens,
(1.236)

for we remember the Parque's arms, doux liens, and the verb accablé⁷²

suggests both the ship straining to depart, and the being weighed down by all that holds him prisoner.

The analysis could be repeated for other generalised terms in La Jeune Parque, but considerations of space forbid. We must however note that Valéry extends this procedure to Charmes, and a no less Racinian example of it can be found in the way Valéry uses the word onde(s), which we first find in La Jeune Parque (ll.61, 104, 502). This word runs through the poems of Charmes, is of major importance in La Pythie and Le Cimetière Marin, and dominates the Fragments du Narcisse. From La Jeune Parque, the word brings with it its connotation of the sea (ll.501-502) and of a wave (of the sea, ll.343, 61, 501-502) or wave movement (l.64), but leaves behind the meaning of waves of hair (l.104).

In Charmes, then, we find onde, as the generalised Racinian sea,⁷³ in Le Cimetière Marin: "Courons à l'onde, en rejaillir vivant" (l.132), and perhaps also in line 99, l'onde et l'or. The word further applies to a wave, or waves, or the sea,⁷⁴ But it can also denote other forms of water, water in general,⁷⁵ still water,⁷⁶ or river.⁷⁷ Moving to another connotation, we find it as a movement of air — of wind, as in the cancelled lines of Au Platane, l'onde tramontane (cancelled line), or of breath as it moves the breast.⁷⁸ Again, the word can apply to sound waves⁷⁹ or to light waves.⁸⁰ Change of meaning, with change of context, is of course a normal feature of speech, but, as Valéry uses this change, we find the word he uses carries with it more than one connotation within its context. Thus the movement of the breast in La Poésie is also a movement of the sea (onde marine, l.11) and lends itself to the image of the poet as the ship (l.10). Similarly, l'onde (CM, l.99) from the context

of the poem, suggests sea to us, but can also suggest the waves of light responsible for colour (1.98), just as onde, in the Fragments du Narcisse, could refer to them — the image is their creation (II, 1.97) but the reflection is also the creation of the water. The river water, disturbed by the rower's oars, produces rings, cercles d'onde (1.6), an image of thought (and, as we observed before,⁸¹ the river itself is not unconnected with the idea of the sea). But it is in La Pythie that we find the complex of meanings in onde at its most compressed. Sound waves and sea waves marry, perhaps, in her ondes sans merci (1.184), but sea, waters, sound — maybe even light — could enrich the generalised ondes of line 230.

It will be seen from the above what advantages Valéry could have obtained from his observance of the major canons of the code of preciousness, abstention and the generalised term. There was, however, another way in which preciousness, as a social code, developed yet another language within a language. We have referred to the ways in which the 'baser' elements of existence were dealt with, but not to the code of manners and specialised language which was developed around the realities of love and passion. This code was very largely imposed by woman (though its ruling ideas stemmed, no doubt, from the earlier courts of love). It was the précieuse who laid down the limits, and approved the language, though the prescribed rituals and their expression in language were elaborated and enriched by the writers of the time. And, since its prescriptions were still very much in force, in Racine's time, he too used the code, in his own way, and in so doing, helped perhaps to provide an extended metaphor for Valéry, as he strove to depict the total patterns of life, of love, and of language, ruled by his basic desire to attain perfection

in all these fields.

Here, perhaps, is one reason among many why Valéry chose to assume a female persona in La Jeune Parque — for the Parque, as we shall see, is a précieuse, but a précieuse à la Racine. Her language, and her attitude to love, echo the 17th century concept of love as a duel, a combat à l'outrance. The language of preciousity betrays this attitude, while it attempts to cloak it — the ferocity appears behind the mask of tender sensibility.

In this combat, either sex can be a danger to the other, but it is woman, in general, who is seen as the aggressor, the pitiless huntress, at once Artemis and Aphrodite. Racine's heroes subscribe to this view, and it could not but appeal to Valéry. Even Pyrrhus (no Céladon, as Racine points out in his preface to the play), even the fierce Hippolyte, use the vocabulary, and Aricie is a model précieuse, in her attitude to love, and in her language:

Mais de faire fléchir un courage inflexible,
De porter la douleur dans une âme insensible,
D'enchaîner un captif de ses fers étonné,
Contre un joug qui lui plaît vainement mutiné
C'est là ce que je veux, c'est là ce qui m'irrite;
Hercule à désarmer coûtait moins qu'Hippolyte ...

(Phèdre, II, 1, ll.449-454)

Nevertheless, even Aricie fears the defeat, which in fact is suffered by Phèdre, the defeat caused by Hippolyte's icy indifference.⁸² Although woman is the attacker, in the conventions of preciousity, aggressor and victim are, in reality, two roles played by the same figure, as we see from the changing patterns of Andromaque. Hermione is at once all-powerful (over Oreste), and vanquished by Pyrrhus, who in turn is enslaved by Andromaque.

The aggressor, l'ennemi(e),⁸³ has the absolute cruelty of the divinity into which the lover has transformed him, or her:

L'amour me fait ici chercher une inhumaine ...

(Andromaque, I, 1, 1.26)

He, or she, attacks through the eye, as a study of the great plays shows us. Racine's stage is crowded with figures attesting to this. Oreste may serve as example of the deadly power of the eye:

Enfin je viens à vous, et je me vois réduit
A chercher dans vos yeux une mort qui me fuit ...

Ils n'ont, pour avancer cette mort où je cours,
Qu'à me dire une fois ce qu'ils m'ont dit toujours ...

(Andromaque, II, 2, 11.495-496, 499-500)

We may note here that for Racine, the power of the eye is only enhanced by the tears, which appear to emphasise the weakness of the aggressor, but which are powerful weapons. Andromaque and Junie are outstanding examples, and there is a suggestion of it in Aricie.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the opponent is overthrown, enslaved, and so deeply wounded that he or she is reduced to tears, groans, and sighs.⁸⁵ And, as though the eye had indeed the power of the lightning-stroke to which love is compared, the victim is consumed as by fire: "Mon âme ... / Ne peut ni soupirer, ni brûler que pour elle" (Phèdre, IV, 2, 11.1125-1126), Hippolyte tells Thésée — but what in Hippolyte or Pyrrhus affects us as cliché is given absolute and physical reality by the sufferings of Phèdre.⁸⁶

The victorious enemy, whatever his or her real nature, is seen by the victim as encased in icy indifference: "Quand je suis tout en feu, d'où vous vient cette glace?" (Phèdre, V, 1, 1.1374). He — or she — is deaf to pleas, blind to suffering, and silent.⁸⁷

Quoi? même vos regards ont appris à se taire?

(Britannicus, II, 6, 1.736)

Deaf, blind, dumb — a statue which only desire could awaken and warm to life.

Here is a complex which Valéry could use, an image of the passion which could be aroused by the perception of ungraspable beauty, woman or perfection of language. He has even left us indications in the text of La Jeune Parque, as if the language and context alone were not enough: suc précieux (1.287), dureté précieuse (1.308), vaisseau précieux (1.408). The word itself has almost disappeared from Charmes, if we except line 11 in La Fausse Morte (in itself a monument of preciousness) and Le Vin Perdu (1.4), but the play on preciousness, and precious in the sense of a precious stone, which is evident in the Parque's joyaux cruels (1.300), distillation of her suc précieux (1.287), is to be found in several poems.⁸⁸ And we may perhaps also adduce the continued insistence on gold, brilliance, and treasure, which we mentioned in Chapter V, as aspects of the same theme — one which marries well with the Mallarmean stars (as we also observed) and with the search for precious metals, the refinement and polishing of brute matter, and alchemy.

However, to revert to the pattern of love traced by Racine's preciousness, we must return to La Jeune Parque, for the Parque conforms to this pattern. She is herself her own opponent: L'Ennemie, / Mon ombre! (11.141-142), for it is her own perception of beauty, her own desire, which have conferred divinity upon what she desires.⁸⁹ She is both aggressor and victim. As aggressor, she has affinities with Aphrodite (sea-borne, 11.154, 441; conque, 1.440), and she has the dark eye of Racine's Venus.⁹⁰ She can be seen as a huntress: l'arc de mon brusque corps (1.130) (and perhaps, since she is also the bird, the chasseresse ailée (1.20) may also apply). Yet she is also the prey, the target (11.172, 173).

Nor is there any doubt that the eye is the source of danger:

O dangereusement de son regard la proie!

(1.173)

This is only confirmed by lines 18 - 23, in the Parque's description of the stars, with their weapons of light, and by line 35, Je me voyais me voir. Here, the Parque, observing herself, is the victim of her own pursuit, her own sorcery, her own poison:

D'un regard enchanteur connaît-il le poison? ...

(Britannicus, II, 2, 1.429)

Néron asks of Britannicus, and the Parque tells us:

Je me voyais me voir, silencieuse, et dorais
De regards en regards mes profondes forêts ...

Le poison, mon poison, m'éclaire et se connaît ...

(11.35-36, 44)

Her gaze is deadly, "Mon oeil noir est le seuil d'infemales demeures" (1.161), and indeed, she is later recalled from these depths as from death, d'entre les morts (1.414).

As victim, the Parque is enslaved, but has imposed her own chains.⁹¹

Her inevitable defeat is indicated in the coeur qui va faiblir (1.203).

She is wounded, douleur, blessée (11.41, 42), by her own attack:

Au plus traître de l'âme, une pointe me naît

(1.43)

and is reduced to sighs (1.248) and tears (11.299-300). She burns:

Je m'ébranlais brûlante (1.123), but can herself inflame: "Non! vous

ne tiendrez pas de mes lèvres l'éclair." (1.276). As the apparently

indifferent opponent, she possesses the icy armour of insensibility:

Dure, armée (1.149), sein glacé (1.200). She is deaf (1.236),

silent (1.276), and blind (11.160-161), cold as the statue she

resembles (1.158).

The Parque is, however, a statue which can be warmed to life

(as was Aricie, finally, by Hippolyte). It is a different matter when we turn to Charmes, to the Fragments du Narcisse. In this poem, whose whole atmosphere breathes Racinian preciousness, the emphasis is upon the point of view of the victim (a victim to himself), adoring his divinity:

Mon coeur jette aux échos l'éclat des noms divins! ...
(I, 1.120)

Narcissus has been hunted down, and vanquished (I, 11.4-5). The eye is again the source of power, and of danger. The gaze of Narcissus captures, and is captured (I, 11.85-88). Its brilliance, effect of the fountain and of its mirrored skies (I, 11.72-73) is deadly (fatal, mortel, I, 11.72, 74) — and again the eyes are dark (I, 1.75). Moreover, Narcissus and his image are both captives, linked by their chains:

Tout m'appelle et m'enchaîne à la chair lumineuse ...
(F du N, I, 1.70)

both are slaves (I, 11.86, 138). There is at least a suggestion of the wound in the éclats (I, 11.12, 72) and in the reference to le fer qui coupe un fruit (I, 1.127). There is no doubt about the suffering (I, 1.69), and the complaints (I, 11.108-109). The flames which consume a lover are not lacking either. In the inset portrait of the course of physical love (Section II), they underline the universal effect of desire, brûlant (1.26), ardente alliance (1.45); but the site of the flame marks the difference between the physical conquest of the mistress, which is possible: "Et dans ce corps caché [...] / Brûle un secret baiser" (11.80-82), and the aspiration towards the ideal, which is unattainable:

Voir sur mon front l'orage et les feux d'un secret
(I, 1.140)

Consumed by this passion, Narcissus wastes away in the approved manner (II, 1.90), and in the approved manner adores a divinity who is necessarily silent and deaf (since it is only a reflection⁹²); blind too, if we can so interpret the yeux noirs (I, 1.75). Perhaps less statue than ikon (II, 1.89), it is equally cold (froide rose, III, 1.9) and equally unobtainable.

Narcissus, however unattainable his desire, was prepared to worship. Not so the plane tree, in revolt against physical love, and against the constraints imposed by the translation of his passion into the artifices of language. Naked feeling rejects the devices of preciousness, but does so in the language of preciousness itself. Thus the passionate lover aspiring to the skies (11.9, 14-15) is a captive, ta candeur est prise (1.3). Suffering, impatient martyr (1.53), complaining (1.49) (at least, in the poet's mind), and burning (11.55, 60), the tree refuses the very terms which describe its condition: Non, dit l'arbre (1.70) — but with a gesture (11.69-72), silent to the end.

The language of preciousness is also rejected by the priestess of La Pythie, and for good reasons. Through her disjointed and extravagant utterances, Valéry presents the physical reality underlying the imagery through which the 17th century lover sought to distance the truth. Even so, we can trace the prescribed pattern. The priestess has divinity thrust upon her (honneurs souterrains, 1.120). Artemis is suggested by the arc (1.36), lune (1.62); Aphrodite by the conque (1.126). The power of her eye is evident in lines 66 - 70, and again that eye is dark (1.171), in tears (1.172), and linked with death "Mais la prunelle la plus grande / De ténèbres se doit nourrir" (11.176-177). Ironically, this divinity is far more

victim than conqueror, although she has enchained the god who possesses her (11.223-224). She is wounded (1.5), and suffers (1.25). She voices her sufferings — but fortissimo (11.3, 212); and she is almost literally in flames (1.1). As a divinity, however, she would prefer not to inflame, but to freeze, by her stony pallor.⁹³ And although she does finally respond to those who have adored her, her answer lies outside the domain of preciousity, for it has transcended its constraints:

Une voix nouvelle et blanche
(1.219)

Nothing, on the other hand, could exceed the preciousity of the serpent of the Ebauche, nor his faith in its powers. Though a florid exaggeration of the preciousity of Racine, a caricature of the language of the ruelle, there are traces of the common pattern. Valéry's Eve has the silence (1.250), the deafness (1.145), the calm perfection of the statue (11.125, 245), but not its chill. There is a hint of her power to inflame in the or ardent (1.148), and of her power to wound:

Les plus durs sont les plus meurtris ...
(1.138)

but this apprentice précieuse lacks the conscious cruelty of a Hermione or an Aricie. Nor is she yet the victim (although on the verge of becoming so). It is the serpent who plays that rôle, as unsuccessful lover — of his God, objet radieux (1.71), and again the familiar pattern develops, in an exaggerated form. The deity (1.52), the Sun/God, is an incendiary, who has inflamed the serpent (11.68-70) and caused intense suffering (la géhenne, 1.73). Again the power of the eye is deadly, whether it is the brilliant eye of the sun,⁹⁴ or its sinister reflection in the eye of the serpent (1.76).

If there are still suggestions of the conventional mistress (albeit caricatures) in the Eve of the Ebauche, the serpent's passion for the sun, his less conventional desire to usurp divine powers, reappear in the poet's desire in Le Cimetière Marin. He woos nothing less than the absolute, immortality achieved through perfection (of intellect, Minerve (1.13)); of poetry (1.45). This divinity is here represented by the light, emanating from the sun, or from its reflection upon the water.⁹⁵ His divinity, worshipped in inner silence (11.17, 19), is armed (1.39) and pitiless. The eye is a threat, "Oeil qui gardes en toi / Tant de sommeil" (11.15-16), abîme (1.10). The poet is vanquished (1.35), tamed perhaps, like Hippolyte: soumis, apprivoisé (Phèdre, IV, 6, 1.1223), he too recognises the deadly power of his adversary, in the shadow⁹⁶ revealed by the light:

Sur la maison des morts mon ombre passe
Qui m'apprivoise à son frêle mouvoir ...

(11.35-36)

Like Phèdre, he is consumed as by fire, l'âme consumée (1.29), by his fiery divinity: "L'âme exposée aux torches du solstice" (1.37). Nor is the idea of the immobility and indifference of the idol lacking, in the sun (Midi sans mouvement, 1.75), or in the disdainful sea (Eau sourcilleuse, 1.15; Masse de calme, 1.14). Preciosity is here refined almost to absence, if we take preciosity as being the too obvious display of ingenuity in language, but its spirit, if we remember Bray's definition, was never more faithfully observed, in theme and language.

The foregoing account, necessarily incomplete, will perhaps have shown why Valéry found the conventions of 17th century preciosity, and Racine's manipulation of them, so valuable. The style noble,

finest flower of these rules, has advantages both psychological and poetic. Preciosity itself was the armour of naked fear — the fear of the aristocrat for the forces which threatened his supremacy, the fear of the weak for the forces which threaten existence. But at the same time, it was the creation of those who valued intelligence above all other virtues (save the virtue of pleasing), and the one was devoted to the attainment of the other. "La première partie d'une précieuse est l'esprit," Somaize observes.⁹⁷ This was the audience Racine had to please; theirs were the standards to which he had to conform. In so doing, he employed a code, through which the poet can convey the emotions he feels to the audience, without betraying his personal involvement — a code, too, through which he can describe the grossest physical necessities, while avoiding a direct and detailed reference to them. The principle of abstention, the avoidance of the 'low', the use of the ambiguous generalised term, gave man the illusion of banishing, or controlling, the forces he most feared, as Phèdre sought to banish her love for Hippolyte:

J'ai même défendu, par une expresse loi
Qu'on osât prononcer votre nom devant moi ...

(Phèdre, II, 5, 11.603-604)

Together with circumlocution, through which intelligence exploited all the possibilities of language to designate the feared or forbidden object, abstention and the generalised term gave the poet the means to create a new language — one from which the un-poetic and particular has already been banished. Thus it can be a language appropriate to all occasions, and periods, appealing to all those in the grip of the same emotions, and under the necessity of finding a way to express themselves poetically — a language, as Valéry said

of Racine's, doucement universel.⁹⁸

It was a language therefore, which, through its sources and its exploitation of language, seemed formed for Valéry, both as man and as poet. No stranger to either of the fears which it sought to combat, fear of the gross, and of the powers of love and death, nor to the worship of the intellect, the very universality of the language lent itself to Valéry's need to express his feelings sous cape, his passion for ambiguity in all the meanings of the word; double meanings, doubtful meanings, even, but above all, multiple meaning. This last was essential to Valéry's portrait of human life and intellect, of language, of poetic creation, in the framework of man's universe. But it was Racine who showed him how the language of preciousness could be a vehicle for absolute poetry, la poésie pure,⁹⁹ Racine who had traced a pattern:

Racine a trouvé [...] une forme de qualité. On peut alors tirer de cette forme des applications, un fonctionnement.¹⁰⁰

Une Forme de Qualité

Notes

1. La Préciosité, p.136.
2. Ibid., pp.136-137.
3. Ibid., p.138.
4. C 12, 165.
5. Ibid.
6. Bray, La Préciosité, p.139.
7. C 4, p.361.
8. See C 4, 398 (1910), 613 (1911); C 6, 6, 350, 395 (1916), 632-633, 758 (1917). There is also a curious passage in the style of the portraits of the précieuses we find in Le Grand Dictionnaire des Précieuses (C 6, 864 (1918)). The same interest in the langue noble is displayed in the Notes Diverses : "La forme, en France, a pris la valeur d'une sorte d'étiquette. Malherbe a interdit de faire des vers à ceux qui ignoraient les règles de convention, fussent-ils poètes-nés. / Ainsi la poésie est devenue une distinction de 'classe'. Et la forme a cessé d'être le produit fonctionnel de l'émotion."
9. This passage is echoed by the one quoted above (note 8).
10. C 6, 169-170 (1916).
11. C 6, 375 (1918).
12. "Racine et Shakespeare. / 800 mots; pas d'images apparentes; pas de spectres, pas de cris; peu ou pas de décors; pas d'accumulations; pas de étrangères au drame; il [Racine] s'adresse donc à une sensibilité concentrée et [drawing of a circle]." (C 7, 451 (1920)).
13. See C 10, 391, 577, 591 (1925); C 19, 682 (1936). Even at the very end of his life, we find Valéry returning to the social constraints imposed upon language, and Racine's use of them (C 27, 702).
14. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.6.
15. "Le vers classique fut une manière de parler, une manière noble, distincte, contrainte, nette, bien séparé de l'usuel par des conventions bien explicites et énumérables et faisant ressortir sa caractère voulue, sa loi arbitraire [...] / Cette volonté plaçait le vouloir même et le social [illegible word] convention au premier rang." (C 12, 147).

16. C 10, 785 (1925).
17. Not all, however. Lefèvre (Entretiens avec Paul Valéry) sees the influence of Racine.
18. "En face de ces termes généraux [Guiraud is referring to a list of substantives] nous ne pouvons relever qu'un petit nombre de mots d'une extension plus réduite." (Guiraud, p.65).
19. Ibid., p.154. See also p.152 with regard to the limitations of Valéry's vocabulary.
20. "Les seuls mots bas se trouvent à la rime. Tous les autres sont des termes nobles. On ne relève guère que dent et ventre qui aurait été frappés d'exclusivité par Racine." (ibid., p.154).
21. Ibid., p.169.
22. "arbre, forêt, onde, mer, vent, qui surtout, à partir de La Jeune Parque prennent la place de lacs, lunes, roseaux" (Ibid., p.170). See also the list of substantives referring to the world of nature on p.165.
23. Both the list of such terms and Guiraud's comment underline this disappearance (Ibid., p.154).
24. Ibid., p.167.
25. Ibid., p.170.
26. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.17.
27. See note 9.
28. See Chapter V.
29. "Les termes généraux ont une extension de sens beaucoup plus large et en même temps ils ne vieillissent pas, car ils traduisent ce que la vision a de plus permanent et plus général; ils ignorent l'accident pour ne retenir que la substance" (Guiraud, p.155).
30. Ibid., pp.160-170.
31. Ibid., p.165.
32. Guiraud remarks that there are a large number of words designating parts of the body.
33. C 7, 162 (1918).
34. Phèdre, I, 3, ll.191-194; Athalie, II, 5, ll.494-496. We could also mention Junie's dress: "le simple appareil /D'une beauté qu'on vient d'arracher au sommeil," (Britannicus, II, 2, ll.389-390). Such circumlocutions could be ponderous, but at

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34. (cont.)

their most skilful, could decorate the text and flower into poetry, as with those paraphrases denoting time in Athalie; Joad's "Et du temple déjà l'aube blanchit le faite" (I, 1, 1.153) is already vivid, but a higher register is reached with the famous "C'était pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit," (II, 5, 1.490).

35. As described by Oenone in Act I, scene 2, and by Phèdre herself in Act I, scene 3 and Act II, scene 5.

36. Racine's preface to Phèdre emphasises this.

37. Particularly lines 434-437; but the whole passage is a series of paraphrases for the process of yielding to sleep, from both physical and mental aspects.

38. Lines 212-215. Again, physical and mental are described.

39. Line 150, and in yet more detail, 11.191-195.

40. Line 151.

41. Lines 170-172, 498 (physical); 11.174-179, 161, 252 (mental).

42. Lines 275, 342-343, 411-412, 445-446.

43. Lines 152-155, 160, 167.

44. This applies too, to quite minor events — tearing the dress (1.129), blowing out the lamp (1.29) — where Mallarmean and Racinian preciousity join hands; folding the arms (1.30) or letting them fall (11.248-249).

45. Together with other aspects of 17th century preciousity — the sonnet l'Abeille, whose form and conceits are the essence of what is considered to be preciousity; the puzzle poem l'Intérieur, resembling the riddles in verse form so popular with the précieuses; la Fausse Mort, again an example of all the procedures of classical preciousity.

46. Considerations of space forbid a detailed enumeration — particularly as the procedure is fundamental throughout the poems — but the following are a few of the paraphrases characteristic of Valéry : (Au P) l'éternelle halte (1.16), l'âme [...] / Vers l'Aphrodite monte (11.33-34), l'âpre tramontane / Sonne [...] l'azur (11.46-47); (Colonnes) finesses / Qui naissent par les nombres (11.47-48); (l'Abeille) un peu de moi-même vermeille (1.7); (Poésie) ta paupière / Me refuse ses trésors (11.33-34); (la Dormeuse) Ame par le doux masque aspirant une fleur (1.2); (F du N, I) Des cimes, l'air déjà cesse le pur pillage (1.34), Cede a mon corps l'horreur du feuillage ecarte (1.65); (F du N, II) don [...] divin de la faveur des eaux (1.92); (La Fausse Morte) tombeau charmant (1.1). The Ebauche

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46. (cont.)

is prodigal of the device. Two of the more elaborate are Toute offerte aux regards de l'air (1.128) and esprits / Qui naissent des roses bercées (11.123-124). (C M) Comme le fruit [...] forme se meurt (11.25-27), Amère, sombre et sonore citerne (1.47); (le R) toute la nymphe [...] / Empêche [...] mes membres harassés (11.17-18); (Palme) L'or léger qu'elle murmure / Sonne au simple doigt de l'air (11.31-32). In this way Valéry can 'translate' natural history (trees, action of wind, reflections), physiology and mathematics.

47. Naseaux (1.2), ruades (1.23), crins (1.57), tronçons (1.74), and the ignoble âme (1.123). Animal sounds : hurle (1.4), hennir (1.17), rugit (1.212).
48. Including explicit references to parts of the body — Valéry's favourite nuque (1.199), ventre (1.34), peau (1.112), prunelle (11.4, 176), tempes (1.186), talons (1.194) — contrasting with paraphrases like tendres sommets (1.84), partages [...] en îles sensibles (11.85-86) for the Pythie's breasts.
49. Among these are the unusual, and in a sense technical, terms such as vasque (1.9), tépied (1.24), ferment (1.32), arcanes (1.80), ouragan (1.106), stigmates (1.111), aromates (1.113), amulette (1.115), empyreumes (1.118), neumes (1.119), plectre (1.138), airains (1.186), fomentée (1.213). The influence of Mallarmé is perhaps being rebelled against.
50. anses (1.98), ruche (1.124), étables (1.205).
51. Cime de volupté (1.200), grossesse (1.33), "Fais craquer les vains scellements," (1.202) could refer to either event.
52. There are suggestions of alchemy in the vasque (1.9), tépied (1.24), the Pythie as a vessel (1.98), and lines 213 - 215, fomentée / Par les souffles de l'or rougi.
53. C 20, 655. See also C 26, 115, for a passage describing Racine's language as inhumain, and C 27, 457, suggesting that poetry is a divine language, "langage des dieux."
54. See F du N, I, lines 84-88, 115-143; F du N, III, 11.1-4, 24-26.
55. C 6, 170 (1916).
56. C 14, 663; C 15, 334.
57. "Je sais de ce palais tous les détours obscurs" (Andromaque, III, 1, 1.791).
58. "Nourri dans le sérail, j'en connais les détours" (Bajazet, IV, 7, 1.1424).

59. Phèdre uses the word twice, of the Labyrinth : "Malgré tous les détours de sa [the Minotaur's] vaste retraite" (II, 5, 1.450) and "Vous eût du Labyrinthe enseigné les détours" (Ibid, 1.656).
60. Phèdre, II, 2, 1.556.
61. Monime's attempt to strangle herself : "Faire un affreux lien d'un sacré diadème" (Mithridate, V, 1, 1.1456). In Athalie's lien malheureux (Bajazet, V, 1, 1.12) the object is both mental and physical.
62. "Mais ce lien de sang qui nous joignit tous deux" (Britannicus, IV, 2, 1.1133). Agrippine is alluding to the fact that she is Claudius' niece.
63. Hippolyte, as mentioned above, speaks of his love for Aricie (note 60).
64. Un lien si doux (Phèdre, V, 1, 1.1379). Aricie refers to the fact that she is not yet Hippolyte's wife. (Also in Alexandre, V, 3, 1.1506.)
65. Agrippine warns Burrhus of Néron's real nature : "Cette ferocité que tu croyais fléchir / De tes faibles liens est prête à s'affranchir" (Britannicus, III, 2, 1.802).
66. Titus expresses his wish to die instead of his father, if it were possible : "si le sort moins sévère / Eût voulu de sa vie étendre les liens" (Bérénice, II, 2, 1.433).
67. "J'étais l'égle et l'épouse du jour" (1.107).
68. The Parque, later in the poem, defines her attitude to the sun, "Seul support souriant que je formais d'amour / A la toute-puissante altitude adree" (11.108-109).
69. The Parque refers to herself as a slave, cette esclave de roi (1.219).
70. The closest parallel is to be found in the flowers which decorate Iphigénie and her path to the altar, the festons odieux (V, 4, 1.1694), and Clytemnestre's heartbroken : "Je verrais les chemins encor tout parfumés / De fleurs dont sous ses pas on les avait semés!" (Iphigénie, IV, 6, 11.1308-1309).
71. Rose sans prix (1.216), Sombre lys (1.407).
72. The same suggestion is also to be found in Poésie (11.9-12) where the arms can also be seen as chains or ropes, Accablé de blancs liens (1.9).
73. See Chapter V, section on Sea.
74. L J P, 11.104, 502; Poésie, 1.11; La P, 1.184; Vin Perdu, 1.12.
75. The generalised ondes (Colonnes, 1.68; La P, 1.230).

76. L'onde unie (Aurore, 1.88), and many times in the Fragments du Narcisse (I, 11.6, 30, 58, 60, 92, 142, 148; II, 11.9, 97; III, 11.9, 34).
77. Cercles d'onde (Le R, 1.6).
78. Poésie, 1.11; La Dormeuse, 1.7.
79. La P, 11.184, 230.
80. F du N, II, 1.97; C M, 1.99.
81. See note 73.
82. See Phèdre, II, 1, 11.457 et seq. for Aricie's fears, given colour by Hippolyte's avoidance of her (Ibid, 11.400-404).
83. "Athènes me montra mon superbe ennemi" (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.272).
84. See Andromaque, Act I, scene 4 for Andromaque's insistence on her tears, and Pyrrhus' estimate of their powers; Junie's tear-drenched eyes are equally powerful (Britannicus, II, 2) and over both suitors (Ibid., 11.431-432). Aricie refers to herself and her tears: "Un coeur toujours nourrie d'amertume et de pleurs" (Phèdre, II, 1, 1.419).
85. Hippolyte's confession to Aricie in Phèdre, Act II, scene 2, is a classic example of the effects of passion in the mould of preciosity, as is Pyrrhus' (Andromaque, I, 4), despite Racine's disclaimer in the preface.
86. As described in Act I, scene 3 and Act II, scene 5.
87. Again, Hippolyte is the perfect example (Phèdre, III, 3), in his role as aggressor, as he was in his role of victim. Hermione sums up the deafness and silence in one phrase: Muet à mes soupirs (Andromaque, V, 1, 1.1407).
88. Cristal (cancelled stanza of Aurore; Colonne, 1.25); émeraude(s) (L J P, 1.189; F du N, III, 1.17); béryl (Eb d'un S, 1.239); saphir (Ibid., 1.277); pierreries (L J P, 1.58; Eb d'un S, 1.282); rubis (Grenades, 1.8); gemmes (ibid., 1.11); diamant (C M, 11.8, 81); and various allusions to pierre(s) which have the primary meaning of stone, but perhaps also the secondary one of gemstones. We also have the diadème with its feux absolus (L J P, 11.182, 184) and that of Le Cimetière Marin, 1.77.
89. As we see from her confession in lines 427 - 430. She has, of course, conferred divinity upon herself also.
90. "Mais pour revenir à la couleur des yeux de Vénus, Homère les fait noirs, et tous les anciens aussi, et on voit que la plupart des beautés anciens ont été ainsi qualifiés" (Racine, Notes on the Odyssey, Livres Grecs, O C R, II, p.738). Thus the Parque's eyes can be seen as either black, or void of regard (closed, in shadow).

91. Her folded arms.
92. F du N, II, 1.103. There is also the muet blasphème (I, 1.121).
93. As is appropriate to the Medusa.
94. Serpent and sun are linked by their gaze : "Regardez-vous dans ma ténèbre!" (1.75). A comparison between sun and eye (commonplace of preciousity) is found in Le Rameur, sensibles soleils (1.30).
95. The double entity, sun and sea, necessary for this, is described in the poem as the calme des dieux (1.6).
96. As did the Parque (11.141-142).
97. Le Grand Dictionnaire des Précieuses, p.22.
98. C 6, 169-170.
99. Ibid.
100. C 7, 567 (1920).

CHAPTER VII

LE VRAI ÉCRIVAIN

Le Vrai Ecrivain

Nothing could better highlight the vital importance of a choice of vocabulary for Valéry than the following passage:

Pour étudier un écrivain, la première chose à faire est d'étudier son vocabulaire — (en soi et comparativement). On obtient ainsi des fréquences — dont la plus remarquable est la fréquence nulle. Tels mots n'y figurent jamais. Ensuite on observera les emplois des mots — et puis les formes et longueurs des phrases. — Ces examens permettront de définir la particularité de chaque écrivain — ses antipathies et ses attractions. Le vrai écrivain n'est pas égal. Il choisit ses mots non seulement par l'esprit — c'est à dire par le besoin local et actuel de son objet — mais en outre, par l'âme, c'est-à-dire par le plexus et le reste.¹

The vocabulary, then, is the man, reveals his being in a way nothing else could. This in itself would be a sufficient reason to study Valéry's own choice of words, but it is all the more important to do so with regard to La Jeune Parque (and hence, with regard to the related Charmes), for we know that the vocabulary Valéry eventually chose was the outcome of a long struggle and much research. Frédéric Lefèvre tells us of the care Valéry devoted to the vocabulary of La Jeune Parque² and Valéry himself called his difficulties "un mal de diable."³

There is much information to be had about Valéry's problems and the solutions he found to them in the published work and letters, and this is reinforced by the unpublished jottings relative to the composition of La Jeune Parque,⁴ from the notes he made for his lecture on the poem,⁵ and from the notes for his speech on Racine for the tercentenary celebrations.⁶ From these, we can see that his principal problem was to reconcile contemporary thought with poetic language.⁷ The first solution was one of despair — to reject

any attempt to do so.⁸ The second solution was to attempt to preserve the content, but without resorting to quasi-scientific terms.⁹ Instead, Valéry would ransack the treasury of the past, the origins of the French language (the word stock here gives the idea of the vaults of the Banque de France).¹⁰ He also mentions the three poets on whose work he had concentrated, that is, Hugo, Racine and Mallarmé. He refers to them in connection with language and music, and with the voice he sought. A note in red pencil at the side of the list underlines the importance of this: Vox, retrouve la Vox.¹¹

Mallarmé, as we have had occasion to note, is not here in question. He had his part, and most profoundly, in the composition of La Jeune Parque, and his vocabulary was extensively drawn upon by Valéry; but it may well be that his voice, in all its purity and truth to the inner being of the man, was, on that account, alien to the inner voice heard by Valéry. His own inner voice was the one Valéry felt compelled to obey.¹²

If Mallarmé's voice was not altogether what Valéry needed, Hugo's voice was even less appropriate.¹³ His vocabulary was too exuberant, too distracting, too idiosyncratic¹⁴ to be in tune with Valéry's inner nature.¹⁵ But Racine was a different matter. He had the words, and the voice,¹⁶ and Valéry's references throughout the Cahiers, and again in the 1939 notes for his Racine speech, insist upon just those qualities which Racine had, and which Hugo lacked. These are primarily the qualities of restraint,¹⁷ of truth to nature,¹⁸ and of true originality. Indeed, by the time we come to examine Valéry's views in 1939, we find that not only does Valéry consider Racine's choice of words as impeccable, but as perfection, in its

adaptation of means to the end:

La perfection de la parole, quand elle ne doit qu'à la sorte de nécessité combinée de facteurs indépendants, et de son mouvement, sa puissance de présence.

Rien que fonctions, certitude, pas d'écart, pas d'introductions.

Le sublime du fonctionnement pur [...]

La VOIX poétique doit pouvoir se substituer à la voix vraie intérieure.¹⁹

Now Valéry's recommendations for the study of the vocabulary of an author have indeed been followed with regard to his own output, and by many writers whose work is indispensable to our understanding of Valéry's work. The list is impressive, but among those who have studied Valéry's vocabulary in detail we may bring forward Sørensen,²⁰ Henry,²¹ Nadal,²² and Guiraud.²³ Considerable attention, too, has been devoted to Valéry's use of the etymology of the French language, especially in connection with its Latin roots (as in the work of Albert Henry and Pierre Guiraud). Frequent reference has also been made to Valéry's use of classical language, but, as a rule, in general terms (though Sørensen gives a few examples in his chapter on Valéry's use of obsolete words).²⁴ Again, all Valéry's commentators insist on the quality of restraint in his vocabulary, but this is most often seen as a quality he owes to Mallarmé.²⁵ Nevertheless even Guiraud, who brings out the similarity of Valéry's vocabulary to Mallarmé's, especially with regard to the keywords common to both poets,²⁶ stresses the difference in tone.

In spite, therefore, of a general consensus of opinion on the restraint of Valéry's language, of its debt to the classical influence, on its deliberately archaic flavour, even of its Racinian tone, no specific comparison has as yet been made between the vocabularies of Racine and Valéry. What is proposed here is a narrowing-down of the

study of Valéry's vocabulary to its connection with the vocabulary of Racine, in an attempt to show that the meanings which Racine would have attached to many of the words Valéry uses can add resonances to our comprehension of them, and, sometimes, even help us to unravel Valéry's intentions. For this, certain very powerfully evocative words have been chosen, but they by no means complete the list.

The change of meaning in a word as it travels down to us, and the new resonances it acquires on the journey, was a favourite idea of Valéry's. In 1921, as in 1939, he uses a famous quotation from Racine to illustrate this change:

Jamais Racine, par exemple, quand il a écrit son illustre vers,

Dans l'Orient désert quel devint mon ennui !
ne s'est imaginé de peindre autre chose que le désespoir
d'un amant. Mais l'accord magnifique de ces trois mots,
quand le temps les transporte et le fait traverser le
XIX^{me} siècle, trouve un renforcement inattendu et une
résonance extraordinaire dans la poésie romantique; dans
une âme de notre époque, il se mélange merveilleusement
à quelques-^{uns} des plus beaux vers de Baudelaire [...] cet
"Orient", ce "désert", cet "ennui", combiné sous
Louis XIV, acquièrent un sens illimité [...] par le fait
d'un autre siècle qui ne peut plus les concevoir que
dans sa couleur [...] ²⁷

Valéry returns to this theme in 1939, in the unpublished notes for his speech for the Racine tercentenary: ²⁸

Lui-même ne comprendrait pas toutes les valeurs que nous lui donnons, car il a fallu bien des choses, bien des expériences, pour que certains de ses vers aient pris une résonance imprévue.

Baudelaire

Dans l'Orient désert quel devint mon ennui ...

How skilfully Valéry himself combined these resonances can be seen from La Jeune Parque and Charmes, once we add the lost resonances of Racine's time. We therefore have elected to begin our list of examples here.

The strength of meaning the word once had can be judged from the 17th century definitions:

Ennui: Douleur odieuse, tourment insupportable, violent désespoir. [...] Il tient ce sens très fort du bas-latin inodium [...]. "Chose [...] en but à la haine", chose odieuse, insupportable".

Ennuier: causer [...] une fatigue intolérable, lasser, dérouter.²⁹

The many contexts in which Racine uses the word underline these connotations. It is not boredom of which Andromaque is complaining, but of the torture of Pyrrhus' repeated threats to hand over her son to the Greeks, and thus to death, a fate which perhaps would even be acceptable, as it would end her torment:

Et peut-être, après tout, en l'état où je suis,
Sa mort avancera la fin de mes ennuis ...

(Andromaque, I, 4, ll.375-376)

And if the word itself is missing from Phèdre's well-known plaint, its meanings of torture and unbearable fatigue are there in the repeated assonances,

Tout m'afflige et me nuit, et conspire à me nuire ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, l.161)

Fatigue, boredom and pain are well combined in Valéry's use of the word in La Jeune Parque, as he transposes the magical ennui, Orient, in lines 328 - 331:

... et sur la lèvre, un sourire d'hier
Qu'annonce avec ennui l'effacement des signes,
Glace dans l'Orient déjà les pâles lignes
De lumière et de pierre ...

and we find Racine's déserts, perhaps, in another section of the poem, where the whole feeling of Antiochus' hopeless love, the empty future of all unfulfilled love, are conveyed:

Car l'oeil spirituel sur ses plages de soie
Avait vu déjà luire et pâlir trop de jours
Dont je m'avais prédit la couleur et le cours,

L'ennui, le clair ennui, de mirer leur nuance
Me donnait sur la vie une funeste avance ...

(11.174-178)

A similar, almost hopeless, suffering emerges from the lines in which the Narcissus apostrophises the fountain in which he is mirrored,

Pour l'inquiet Narcisse, il n'est ici qu'ennui! ...

(I, 1.69)

Our next example too has a particular interest, given the title of the second collection of Valéry's poems. Both here and in the earlier La Jeune Parque the stronger, Racinian sense adds much. Cayrou defines the word thus:

Charme: artifice magique, sortilège, puissance magique
[...] Il tient ce sens très fort du latin
carmen, formule d'incantation magique [...] et
par extension, influence mystérieuse et
puissante [...]

Where the plural is applied to physical beauty (charmes), it implies a fascination, a secret and magical attraction,³⁰ and the verb charmer is defined along the same lines by Cayrou, quoting Furetière: "faire un effet merveilleux par la puissance des charmes ou du démon."

We are at once at home with Racine, with Phèdre, and the effect of love and the full force of Hippolyte's attraction:

Par un charme fatal vous fûtes entraînée, ...

(Phèdre, IV, 6, 1.1298)

or with Junie's effect on Néron, and even on Britannicus, which has all the power of a spell:

D'un regard enchanteur connaît-il le poison?

(Britannicus, II, 2, 1.429)

The original title of Charmes, Carmen Mysticum, shows that the Latin derivation was in Valéry's mind. The 17th century sense is

legitimised by the context of fascination and enchantment which surround the Parque and her serpent, with its spell (enchantelements, 1.420), and it decidedly adds much more meaning than the insipid "charm," "charming," to the Parque and her beauty: rocs charmants (1.56), or to that of her lover, col charmant (1.202). In

Ebauche d'un Serpent, the 17th century sense of the word suggests the strength of the spells the serpent fabricates, for they can reach even the deity:

Toutefois l'excès de mes charmes
Pourra de lointaines alarmes
Troubler ses desseins tout-puissants ...

(11.108-110)

(even if we suspect a hidden gibe at Hugo's plethora of effects). The spells, of course, are exercised on Eve also, but she in turn has hers,

Calme, claire, de charmes lourde ...

(1.146)

Our next word expresses perhaps one result of the working of the spell. Etonnement, étonner, étonnant, have now so lost their force of meaning that even the adjective "thunderstruck" barely registers:

Etonner, étonnement:

Paralyser comme par un coup de foudre ...

This definition given by the Dictionnaire de l'Académie is quoted by Cayrou and he defines étonnement, used in its figurative sense, as "Commotion morale, violente et brusque [...] en présence de graves dangers [...] Stupéfaction, état de l'homme abasourdi, en présence d'un spectacle extraordinaire, merveilleux." What better illustration of all three, than Racine's application of the word to Néron at the sight of Junie (for Junie, as we have reminded ourselves,

represents danger too):

Immobile, saisi d'un long étonnement ...

(Britannicus, II, 2, 1.397)

Valéry's use of the word brings Racine's resonances to our ears, and its implications to our minds. The hidden tonne ("paralysé comme par un coup de foudre") brings echoes of Phèdre's passion and Thésée's rage³¹ to the Parque's étonnements, in their context:

Et ce jeune soleil de mes étonnements
Me paraît d'une aïeule éclairer les tourments ...

(11.487-488)

Stupefaction, before a marvel, and terror of death, come together in the Fragments du Narcisse:

Que je déplore ton éclat fatal et pur,
Si mollement de moi fontaine environnée,
Où puisèrent mes yeux dans un mortel azur
Les yeux mêmes et noirs de mon âme étonnée! ...

(I, 11.72-75)

Cayrou's definition, "Commotion morale," is certainly appropriate to the Parque faced by the ocean of death and disruption,

Où va-t-il, sans répondre à sa propre ignorance
Ce corps dans la nuit noire, étonnée de sa foi? ...

(11.302-303)

In considering the effects of passion, we can hardly pass over so Racinian a word as our next, désordre, nor one which so aptly sums up Valéry's feelings towards the disasters of war and love, and the debasement of language in a society he saw as degenerate.

The word is defined in the figurative sense by Dubois and Lagane³² as "Confusion, embarras", and by Cayrou, quoting Richelet, as "Trouble, confusion ... causé par une passion, dérèglement, libertinage." This last meaning is clearly what Racine had in mind in the preface to Phèdre, in his well-known remark, "Les passions

n'y sont présentées aux yeux que pour montrer tout le désordre dont elles sont cause."³³ If the sense of the word in lines 38 - 39 of La Jeune Parque, désordre / De trésors, conforms rather to the first definition, picturing the confused mass of treasures offered by the implex of language, the second definition certainly applies to the Narcissus as he apostrophises his fountain, and to the Pythia also (though she, too, may be seen as symbolising the disorder of language). Thus the Narcissus:

Souffrez ce beau reflet de désordres humaines! ...

(I, 1.28)

and the Pythia, in her suffering, voices an incoherent speech:

... une harangue
Brisant la bave et les cheveux
Que mâche et trame le désordre
D'une bouche qui veut se mordre ...

(11.46-50)

The Serpent of the Ebauche perhaps hints also at the babel of language, but we know that he is a lover, both of his God and the Tree he blights:

Ses yeux font frémir ton trésor
Il en cherra des fruits de mort,
De désespoir et de désordre ...

(11.298-300)

From the idea of disarray, it is all too easy for the lover to pass to the next step, madness.

It was, perhaps, the power of the spell of love which led to the persistence of a legacy of earlier poetic conventions, the traditional image of the lover as madman, Orlando furioso. We see it persisting in Racine. Phèdre's monster, the embodiment of her passion and jealousy, was a monstre furieux,³⁴ and certainly the 17th century definition of fureur, furieux, continues this tradition.

Furieux, in particular, is defined by Cayrou as "Fou, insensé; affolé, égaré par une passion, surtout par l'amour." The connotations he gives of fureur were even wider. It could mean actual madness, "folie furieuse au sens propre", but was more likely to be used figuratively, when it could apply not only to the passions but to poetic and religious frenzy:

les poètes sont transportés d'une fureur divine, de la fureur d'Apollon, ceux qui rendaient les oracles entraient dans une sainte fureur quand ils étaient agités du démon qui les possédait ...³⁵

This connotation, Cayrou tells us, came from the Latin:

Furieux:

tient ce sens très fort du latin, furor, "folie furieuse", d'où "passion folle", et plus spécialement, "délire poétique ou prophétique".³⁶

Racine shows us the figurative sense of the word in Phèdre:

Sers ma fureur, Oenone, et non point ma raison ...

(III, 1, 1.792)

and, while it is true that he does not use the word itself or its derivations to describe the prophetic delirium of Calchas, plein du Dieu qui l'agitait (Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1745), nor that of Joad, his description of both³⁷ fits its sense. Here was a word ready to Valéry's hand to describe the passionate intensity of love and poetic inspiration. The Parque's serpent, which engenders both states, is seen as enfantement de fureur (1.65) and the Parque's soul, preparing to receive the deity, is powerfully animated:

... l'âme intense souffle, et renfle furibonde ...

(1.501)

The Pythia, possessed by the god, her lover, shows the delirium of the priestess:

Le regard qui manque à son masque
S'arrache vivant à la vasque,
A la fumée, à la fureur ... (11.8-10)

The Serpent of the Ebauche, rejected lover (and perhaps priest of the God he now hates³⁸), broods over his rejection,

Ma fureur, ici, se fait mûre ...

(1.47)

and prepares to infect others with his madness — they will become the reptiles furieux of line 100. The lovers in the Fragments du Narcisse, too, share the madness common to Racine's Oreste, his Néron:

Et dans ce corps caché tout marqué de l'amour,
Qui porte amèrement l'âme qui fut heureuse
Brûle un secret baiser qui la rend furieuse ...

(II, 11.80-82)

The religious frenzy we have just mentioned in the previous definition had another aspect, in the awe-inspiring chill of fear its manifestations produced. Cayrou defines the word horreur as "Frisson, tremblement, saisissement, que cause la vue ou la pensée d'une chose affreuse", but adds a definition taken from the Dictionnaire de l'Académie, "crainte religieuse". Horreur is, certainly, part of Mallarmé's vocabulary, but its Racinian sense is perhaps there in Mallarmé, and is undoubtedly appropriate to the Parque. The religious awe felt by Agamemnon's army, "sainte horreur",³⁹ is the reaction to something so unnatural, even if it is joyful, as in this case, as to be literally hair-raising. This reaction is felt by Phèdre also, as she considers her crimes against nature and the gods,

Chaque mot sur mon front fait dresser mes cheveux ...

(Phèdre, IV, 6, 1.1268)

A similar reaction of religious awe is produced in the Parque by the revelation of line 265:

L'horreur m'illumine, exécration harmonie! ...

and, combined with chill, is also evoked by the sight of the awe-inspiring stars, hérissée (1.13). She reacts thus, too, to the threat of mortality,

Mais sous le pied vivant qui tâte et qui la crée
Et touche avec horreur à son pacte natal,
Cette terre si ferme atteint mon piédestal ...

(11.310-312)

Both the Pythia and the Narcissus fall prey to the terror aroused by the presence of a god, the Pythia in her cavern,

Pâle, profondément mordue,
Et la prunelle suspendue
Au point le plus haut de l'horreur ...

(11.5-7)

So, too, does the Narcissus in his haunted forests, épaisseur panique (I, 1.67), as he pushes his way into their depths, l'horreur du feuillage écarté (ibid., 1.65).

With so much emphasis on the religious, we should expect Valéry to find a word to express his concept of the lover's attitude towards the object of his worship. A 17th century sense of the word idole, with its close approximation to the Greek eidolon, may have helped him to induce a feeling of the unreality of the image created by the lover (or the poet), and their vain adoration, without losing the accepted meanings of the contemporary and of the Racinian idole. Cayrou, quoting Furetière, defines the nouns, with its adjective, thus:

Idole:

Fantôme. Se dit poétiquement d'une vaine image,
comme celles qui paraissent en songe [...]
L'adjectif [...] idolâtre [...] se dit d'un
homme qui adore les apparences et s'y laisse
prendre [...]

Thus we have Racine's use of vaine idole in Mathan's rejection of this symbol of non-existent gods,⁴⁰ and in Phèdre's worship of

Hippolyte, only a god⁴¹ because she makes him so: "l'ennemi dont j'étais idolâtre" (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.293). Néron too adores the beauty of Junie, to which he, as poet, has given some of its lustre (Britannicus, II, 2, 1.407):

J'aime, que dis-je aimer? J'idolâtre Junie ...
(Ibid., 1.384)

The Parque refers to herself as idole when she yields to the sleep in which she is doomed to find, and then to lose, the phantom image of her own perfection that she has adored (idolâtre, 1.70):

Dans vos nappes, où lisse elle imitait sa mort,
L'idole malgré soi se dispose et s'endort ...
(11.475-476)

The Narcissus, too, adores appearances, the phantom image in the fountain,

Douce et dorée, est-il une idole plus sainte ...
(II, 1.89)

and although the use of idoles in Le Cimetière Marin (1.135) can simply be taken as a rather precious way of referring to the reflections of the sun's image (eidolon), yet we remember that the sea and the sun were both objects of worship for the poet.

As an appendix to the varying aspects of the "idol", we may perhaps find, turning back to the 17th century and Racine, a gloss for the word Momie in La Jeune Parque. The Jews in Esther rejected the heathen idols because they were dumb (muette idole, Esther, II, 8, 1.760). Cayrou, quoting Furetière, adds to his definition of idole some remarks on the use of Momie to designate someone without brains or speech, silent and inactive as a statue, "qui paraît insensible comme une statue, [...] sans action". This definition lends itself to the Parque's serpent-shadow, la souple momie (1.142),

insubstantial and silent, stirring not a leaf, n'irrite / Nul feuillage (ll.146-147).

Another aspect of the effect of passion, is the melancholy not unrelated to sadness which was also a commonplace in the 17th century conception of the unsuccessful lover, or the lover who doubts his success, and of which Oreste and Néron are such striking examples. The words used in Racine's time to describe this state, triste, tristesse, had much stronger connotations than those of today, connotations tinged with the sinister. Cayrou defines triste as "sombre, lugubre, funeste, redoutable, en parlant des choses" and as "ombre, sévère, funeste, en parlant des personnes." The word takes these connotations from its Latin derivation, which Cayrou again provides:

Il tient ce sens très fort du latin tristis, "de mauvaise augure", d'où "fatal," "cruel".

No better examples of these aspects could be found than those from Britannicus with which Cayrou glosses them. We find the idea of severity in Burrhus' advice to Agrippine:

Ah! quittez d'un censeur la triste diligence ...
(Britannicus, II, 1, 1.271)

together with the ideas of darkness and cruelty in Agrippine's description of Néron's character:

Il se déguise en vain: je lis sur son visage
Des fiers Domitiers l'humeur triste et sauvage ...
(Ibid., I, 1, 11.35-36)

Yet there is, perhaps, a more innocent aspect (though an equally melancholy and unfortunate one, in Néron's description of Junie:

Triste, levant au ciel des yeux mouillés de larmes ...
(Britannicus, II, 2, 1.387)

This aspect is apparent in the Parque, for Valéry was not slow to

employ the word, and to attach the older depths of meaning to its modern implications. It is perhaps the sense of severity, and cruelty, which predominates in the lines on the Parque's tear:

D'où nais-tu? Quel travail toujours triste et nouveau
Te tire avec retard, larme, de l'ombre amère ... ?

(11.292-293)

for we remember the pain of childbirth, and the need for the poet constantly to criticise and amend his lines, triste diligence. The tristes esprits of the Parque's serpent (1.424) also have the connotations of strictness and severity, but they also lend it the more sinister aspect of a creature whose appearance heralds suffering (1.65), and which is allied to darkness and fatality, noir retour (1.84). The Pythia too, in her ravings (triste délire, 1.103) exemplifies the more sinister aspects of the word, which are more appropriate to her desperate condition than merely the ideas of sadness or misfortune. Then, too, in the Fragments du Narcisse, Valéry evokes the Racinian intensity of the word, its connotations of black and doomed melancholy, when he uses it to describe the dark and dangerous water (eau triste, I, 1.113), or the dragging steps of the lovers (tristes pas, II, 1.52) — with perhaps some touch of Junie's innocent beauty and sorrow in the tear-drowned eyes of the Narcissus, tristes regards (I, 1.21).

To continue with the disastrous aspects of love, the lover is also traditionally consumed by his passion for the perfection he adores. Our next verb, consommer, had already begun to take on its contemporary sense in Racine's time. Its principal meaning is given by Cayrou: "Achever, accomplir, mettre en sa perfection." For its second meaning, consumer, he quotes the Dictionnaire de l'Académie:

Amener à sa destruction, sans employer la chose à son propre usage; consumer. Plusieurs confondent mal à propos consommer avec consumer.

Racine, it would seem, was one of those who confused the two meanings. His petition in the Hymnes⁴² follows the second sense,

Consomme pour jamais leurs passions impures ...

(Hymne, Jeudi, Matinés, 1.7)

So tempting a confusion was made to be seized on by Valéry, who makes play with the double meaning in La Jeune Parque,

Quel crime sur moi ou par moi consommé?

(1.27)

and in the Fragments du Narcisse:

O présence pensive, eau calme qui recueillies
Tout un sombre trésor de fables et de feuilles ...

Tu consommes en toi leur perte solennelle ...

(II, 11.17-18, 21)

An act of destruction has been perfected in both these instances.

It is in Le Cimetière Marin, however, that we find the meanings most perfectly married, in an act of simultaneous creation and destruction:

Quel pur travail de fins éclairs consume
Maint diamant d'imperceptible écume ...

(11.7-8)

and in an act of destruction and transcendence, "Et le ciel chante à l'âme consumée," (1.29). It is, of course, only an imaginary transcendence. The poet has reached the point of change, not assumption. We note also that the poet, âme consumée, is almost literally so, for he is the prey of the ver rongeur (11.112-114).

Our choice of words so far has brought out the suitability of Racine's vocabulary for Valéry's presentation of love. If, like Guiraud,⁴³ we also see in La Jeune Parque and Charmes a portrait of poetic creation through the extended metaphor of the lover and the object of his desire; our next word must have appealed particularly to Valéry in his search for symbols for the perfect language, object

of the poet's desire, and for the means through which it is created, and the desired end attained. We refer here to the word détour(s). Cayrou, quoting the Dictionnaire de l'Académie, defines it as follows:

Détour:

"Sign. aussi figurativement. Adresse, subtilité pour éluder un péril, pour venir à bout de ce qu'on veut obtenir."

Cayrou also cites Richelet who gives détours the figurative sense of circuit de paroles — Racine uses this figurative sense of détours in Phèdre, to describe Hippolyte's attempt to escape understanding Phèdre's offer:

Ciel! Comme il m'écoutait! Par combien de détours
L'insensible a longtemps éludé mes discours! ...

(Phèdre, III, 1, ll.743-744)

The Parque's serpent, as symbol of language, gives the word a physical appeal:

Reptile, ô vifs détours tout courus de caresses ...

(1.79)

and Valéry actually uses the synonym circuits to describe the attitude of his other serpent in the Ebauche:

Je m'écoute, et dans mes circuits,
Ma méditation murmure ...

(11.49-50)

These senses of the word détours should be borne in mind when we remember the continued emphasis on the circular form in relation to the Parque and her serpent, and to the Pythia, with her reptilian manifestations, as well as in connection with the serpent of the Ebauche. It is possible, too, that the same word, as used by Racine to describe the windings of his passages and labyrinths, may have provided a metaphor for the physical mechanism which works to

produce the perfect language. Phèdre's monstre inhabits the labyrinth:

Par vous aurait péri le monstre de la Crète,
Malgré tous les détours de sa vaste retraite ...

(Phèdre, II, 5, ll.649-650)

How well, indeed, the word détours combines the subtle nature of the desired end, the perfect line, with the representation of the physical means of attaining it, the tissue of the brain whose coiled channels carry the current of thought, or the circulation of the blood which nourishes thought in that labyrinth of the mind.

To continue with the concept of the analysis of poetic creation co-existing with an analysis of passion, the search for symbols for the ungraspable principles which inform both — the essential being of the lover, the spirit which breathes from a work of art — must have brought Valéry hard up against one of his greatest difficulties. His dislike of the vague and grandiose, the concept for which there is no physical counterpart, is well-known — but even he could not always escape using such generalities. A word which refers to one such concept (and for which Valéry had little respect) is âme — too often abused. Yet Racine's use of the 17th century connotations of the word may have allowed Valéry to overcome his prejudice against it — more, to find in it not only a means of conveying the immaterial, the notion of the vital principles of a living being, and of a work of art, but a word which could also refer to the physical breath without which the lover and poet could not exist, and through which the poem can be passed on.

The Racinian use of the word provides one referent for the vague "soul", "being", in a definition backed by its Latin derivation.

Cayrou quotes from Furetière's dictionary:

Âme: Se prend souvent pour la vie ... du latin anima, souffle; d'où souffle vital, principe vital ...

A second definition of âme, quoted by Cayrou from Richelet, suggests a second referent. Here âme is defined as "Tout ce qui anime, tout ce qui fait agir, ... mouvoir quelque chose". Both aspects are illustrated in Racine, the first by Phèdre, as she speaks of her approaching death: "Et mon âme déjà sur mes lèvres errante" (Phèdre, III, 1, 1.1770), and the second by Agrippine, telling us how she inspired the senate: "J'étais de ce grand corps l'âme toute-puissante" (Britannicus, I, 1, 1.96).

The first meaning, âme as breath, the vital principle, lends itself very well to the conception of a living, breathing Parque, with an affinity to the central figure of the famous article on Rachel,⁴⁴ as in line 501: "Si l'âme intense souffle, et renfle furibonde". This use of âme can be found, too, in the Fragments du Narcisse: "L'âme croit respirer l'âme toute prochaine" (II, 1.41). This aspect of air as breath as well as soul, combines well with the second aspect of movement, tout ce qui fait agir, in the Narcissus' request:

Nymphes: Si vous m'aimez, il faut toujours dormir!
La moindre âme dans les airs vous fit toutes frémir ...

(I, 11.7-8)

The two aspects are one in Le Cimetière Marin:

Une fraîcheur de la mer exhalée
Me rend mon âme ...

(11.130-131)

This double aspect of âme, blended by Valéry, also allows him to parallel the life and movement of the mind with the life and movement of the earth. The Fragments du Narcisse abounds in this double play, of which the last section gives a rich example. Here

the movement of the breeze in the trees gives an image for the movement of the breath in the branched complex of the lungs, and the movement of thought in the crossing nerve-links

L'arbre aveugle vers l'arbre étend ses membres sombres ...
Mon âme ainsi se perd dans sa propre forêt ...

(III, 11.37, 39)

The same fusion of meanings can also be found in Aurore, where, as a metaphor for the beginnings of creative work, it has a special place. We see the first faint stirrings of the breath, the first movements of inspiration (and the first movements of physical expression of inspiration : the sound is preparing to issue):

Toute l'âme s'appareille ...
Elle s'écoute qui tremble
Et parfois ma lèvre semble
Son frémissément saisir ...

(11.56, 58-60)

Once âme has been accepted, and invested with the meanings of breath, life, wind, it can be given other physical garb. We see it for example as mist in Le Cimetière Marin (Grande âme, vaporeuse, 11.97, 100) and perhaps smoke (11.29-30); as perfume in La Dormeuse (1.2). In this way, the Racinian meanings carried by âme can lend a physical strength to the vague "soul", "mind", and allow Valéry to link it to his other metaphors for the imponderables which initiate and support passion and inspiration, the 'mind' and 'life' of man, the content of a work of art. An instance of this is the Parque's breeze and the scent it carries:

La narine jointe au vent de l'oranger ...

(1.151)

So much for some of the more important treasures of the rich past of the French language. We shall conclude this section with a

minor instance. We refer to the word insecte, which has a rather surprising definition by Furetière, as quoted by Cayrou:

On a aussi appelé insectes, les animaux qui vivent après qu'ils sont coupés en plusieurs parties, comme la grenouille [...] les lézards, serpents, vipères, etc. [...]

A note tells us that the word is thus used by La Fontaine, but the quotation which Cayrou uses as a gloss to this definition is particularly interesting (though it is from Boileau and not from Racine), for it couples ver and insecte with fourmi:⁴⁵

Quoi, dira-t-on d'abord, un ver, une fourmi,
Un insecte rampant qui ne vit qu'à demi, ...
A l'esprit mieux tourné que n'a l'homme? ...

(Satires, 11.5-7)

Have we here yet another possible identity for Valéry's insecte of Le Cimetière Marin? His gratte (1.68), applicable both to the noise and to the action of the cicada, is not inconsistent with the sound of a snake's scales rustling over the dry ground, and the trail of furrowed sand it leaves behind. The idea of the serpent need not exclude that of the cicada, but would certainly fit with the other uses of the snake as an image of continued and gnawing passion, cognate with the ver rongeur in Le Cimetière Marin, but a haunting presence throughout Valéry's poetry.

We introduced our discussion of particular examples of 17th century vocabulary with a quotation from Valéry's own assessment of the values of Racine and of the 20th century world of poetry. Racine himself, Valéry tells us, could not have guessed at the unforeseen resonances his lines were to acquire down the centuries. It could be said, perhaps, that the instances we have dwelt on above show us Valéry reversing the process, as it were, and using Racine's words to restore a lost resonance to our contemporary vocabulary.

It is not a case of substituting one value for another, which would have been a process alien to Valéry's conceptions of fruitful ambiguity, but an extension of the principle of polyvalence which Guiraud remarks on:

Il s'agit moins de créer un mot nouveau, que d'étendre le domaine sémantique d'un mot connu et d'en prolonger les harmonies ...

Guiraud was writing of Valéry's use of the derivations of the words he was revivifying. These derivations, as we have seen from the words discussed above, were what lent its strength to Racine's language, for a high proportion of 17th century vocabulary remained far closer in meaning to the original Latin than its twentieth century descendant. Racine's words, with their burden of today's connotations added to their original strength of meaning, are thus living examples of the metamorphoses of the French language down the centuries, as it changed from Virgilian and then low Latin to the language of Racine and his contemporaries, from the language of Racine to that of Baudelaire and Mallarmé — even, perhaps, to slang.⁴⁶ Valéry's return to these words demonstrates the richness, not the poverty, of his treasury, and the truth of his remark in the Cahiers:

... Un écrivain peut évoquer lui, au vol, l'ombre de Virgile, et la voix de Racine. Ils sont devenus des moyens, comme les mots et les locutions.⁴⁷

We would add here that considerations of space and of balance have prevented a fuller exploration of Valéry's levies upon the vocabulary of Racine's world, but a further selection is more briefly dealt with below, in alphabetical order.

ALTÉRER:

fâcher, troubler. Il marque un trouble profond, presque toujours causé par la colère, qui fait que l'âme est autre (lat. alter) que d'habitude.⁴⁸

Et nos seuls ennemis, altérant sa [Nero's] bonté
Abusaient contre nous de sa facilité ...

(Britannicus, 11.1601-1602)

(Agrippine, reassuring Britannicus as to Nero's intentions.)

Leurs fonds passionnés [of the deserts] brillent de sécheresse
Si loin que je m'avance et m'altère pour voir
De mes enfers pensifs les confins sans espoir ...

(LJP, 11.66-68)

CARESSER, CARESSES:

The verb derives from the noun, which in the plural, signifies "Démonstration d'amabilité ou de bienveillance qu'on fait à quelqu'un par un accueil gracieux [...]" (F). The verb also implied courtship.

Selon qu'il vous menace ou bien qu'il vous caresse,
La cour autour de vous s'écarte ou s'empresse ...

(Britannicus, IV, 1, 11.1111-1112)

Reptile, ô vifs détours tout courus de caresses ...

(LJP, 1.78)

COMPLAISANT, COMPLAISANCE:

"Qui tâche de plaire" (F).

Ciel, avec quel respect et quelle complaisance
Tous les coeurs l'[Titus] assuraient de leur foi! ...

(Bérénice, I, 5, 1.312)

(Bérénice is describing the attitude of the public towards her lover.)

Qui que tu sois, ne suis-je point
Cette complaisance qui point
Dans ton âme, lorsqu'elle aime? ...

(Eb d'un S, 11.115-117)

CONFONDRE, CONFUS:

CONFONDRE, CONFUS:

Mêler intimement, traiter de la même façon,
identifier.⁴⁹

Tous ces yeux qu'on voyait venir de toutes parts
Confondre sur lui seul [Titus] leurs avides regards ...

(Bérénice, I, 5, 11.309-310)

This is a usage much favoured by Valéry:

Tendre lueur d'un soir brisé de bras confus? ...

(LJP, 1.208)

Ils vivent séparés, ils pleurent confondus
Dans une seule absence ...

(Au P, 11.29-30)

La même nuit en pleurs confondre nos yeux clos
Et nos bras refermés sur les mêmes sanglots ...

(F du N, II, 11.111-112)

CONSPIRER:

Concourir, en parlant de personnes, être unis
d'esprit et de volonté pour quelque dessin bon
ou mauvais ... (A).

Tout ce que vous voyez conspire à vos désirs ...

(Britannicus, II, 3, 1.649)

(This is Junie, telling Néron how fortunate he is.)

Quand de ce plein sommeil l'onde grave et l'ampleur
Conspirent sur le sein d'une telle ennemie ...

(La Dormeuse, 11.7-8)

A peine, dans la brise, elle [la nuit, 1.43] semble mentir,
Tant le frémissement de son temple tacite
Conspire au spacieux silence d'un tel site ...

(F du N, I, 11.45-47)

DÉMON:

Quelquefois, il se prend dans le sens des anciens
pour Génie, esprit soit bon, soit mauvais ... (A)

... quel démon envieux

M'a refusé l'honneur de mourir a vos yeux? ...

(Britannicus, II, 6, 11.701-702)

Nul démon, nul parfum, ne m'offrit le péril
D'imaginaires bras mourant au col viril ...

(LJP, 11.427-428)

Délicieux démon, désirable et glacé! ...

(F du N, I, 1.114)

DÉPLORER, DÉPLORABLE:

Plaindre, avoir pitié (R);

DÉPLORABLE:

Digne de pitié (D/L).

Vous voyez devant vous un prince déplorable ...

(Phèdre, II, 2, 1.529)

(Hippolyte, confessing his love to Aricie.)

Que je déplore ton éclat fatal et pur,
Si mollement de moi fontaine environnée ...

(F du N, I, 11.72-73)

DISPUTER:

Discuter, débattre, soutenir [...] (D/L).

Vous seule pour Pyrrhus disputez aujourd'hui ...

(Andromaque, I, 2, 1.47)

(Oreste to Hermione, speaking of her defence of Pyrrhus.)

Souviens-toi de toi-même, et retire à l'instinct
Ce fil (ton doigt doré le dispute au matin) ...

(LJP, 11.415-416)

DIVERS:

[...] opposé, contraire (F).

Lui que j'ai vu toujours, constant dans mes traverses
Suivre d'un pas égal mes fortunes diverses ...

(Bérénice, I, 4, 11.143-144)

(Bérénice to Antiochus, faithful to her whether she is fortunate or
unhappy.)

... et tous les sorts jetés
Eperdument divers roulant l'oubli vorace ...

(LJP, 11.320-321)

ENNEMI:

Term for the beloved: style précieux (D/L).

Athènes me montra mon superbe ennemi ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.272)

It seems to us that this is the meaning we can attach to the Parque's description of the shadow/serpent, which as serpent represents her desire:

... à mes pieds l'Ennemie,⁵⁰
Mon ombre! la mobile et la souple momie ...

(LJP, 11.141-142)

The meaning is clear in La Dormeuse, where ennemie is applied to the sleeping mistress (1.8).

EPERDU:

égaré.

Un trouble s'éleva dans mon âme éperdue ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.274)

(It is scarcely necessary to explain that Phèdre is describing the disarray into which the sight of Hippolyte has thrown her.)

... et tous les sorts jetés
Eperdument divers roulant l'oubli vorace ...

(LJP, 11.320-321)

ESPRIT:

Âme, souffle vital. Coeur, âme considéré comme
siège des sentiments (D/L). [Also] substance
qui pense (F).

Un désordre éternel règne dans son esprit ...

(Phèdre, I, 2, 1.147)

(Here Oenone is describing Phèdre's distracted mind.)

The second sense given above is apparent in:

L'esprit n'est pas si pur que jamais idolâtre ...

Ne fasse fuir les murs de son morne tombeau ...

(LJP, 11.70, 72)

and the third sense, substance qui pense, in

Je n'accorderai pas la lumière à des ombres

Je garde loin de vous, l'esprit sinistre et clair ...

(LJP, 11.274-275)

In the plural, esprits has the special sense of esprits vitaux, animaux (A). Both transmit the life force, but the former are especially linked with the blood and warmth of life, the latter with feeling and mind. (F)

J'ai senti défaillir ma force et mes esprits ...

(Bajazet, V, 1, 1.1439)

(Atalide, describing her faint.) The Parque begins to succumb to her loss of consciousness:

La pensive couronne échappe à mes esprits ...

(LJP, 1.215)

ETRANGE, ETRANGER:

Hors du pays où l'on vit habituellement [...] il se dit en particulier de malheurs extraordinaires, épouvantables ...

Quel étrange captif pour un si beau lien ...

(Phèdre, II, 2, 1.556)

Hippolyte thus describes his enthrallment to a bond he has never known.

The Parque also is a stranger to her own body:

Toute? Mais toute à moi, maîtresse de mes chairs
Durcissant d'un frisson leur étrange étendue ...

(LJP, 11.32-33)

Her soul is a stranger to the conditions of the body, "Mêlant l'âme

étrange à d'éternels retours" (1.263). In L'Ebauche d'un Serpent, the serpent's speech is foreign in its artificiality to the artless Eve:

Elle buvait mes petits mots
Qui bâtissaient une oeuvre étrange ...
(11.211-212)

and in Le Cimetière Marin the implication is that idleness is foreign to the poet's nature:

Après tant d'orgueil, après tant d'étrange
Oisiveté ...
(11.32-33)

Further, given Racine's view of love as in the main disastrous, and Valéry's view of the power of the body and the imagination over reason, the connotations of disaster may be added to those of the alien, especially in the case of the Parque and Eve.

FLATTER:

Flatter quelqu'un, l'entretenir dans l'espérance
trompeur de quelque chose (D/L).

De quoi viens-tu flatter mon esprit désolé? ...
(Phèdre, III, 1, 1.739)

(Phèdre to Oenone, as the nurse exhorts her to resume her rule over Trézene.) The Narcissus also sees the hope of grasping his image as delusory:

Du monstre de s'aimer faites-vous un captif; ...
Mais ne vous flattez pas de le changer d'empire ...
(I, 11.86, 89)

The serpent's intentions are equally clear towards Eve:

Use de tout qui lui nuise:
Rien qui ne flatte, et ne l'induisse
A se perdre dans mes desseins...
(Eb d'un S, 11.185-187)

FOI:

Fidélité à un engagement [...] amour fidèle (D/L).

Aricie a son coeur! Aricie a sa foi! ...

(Phèdre, IV, 5, 1.1204)

(Phèdre, describing Hippolyte's open declaration of love.)

Ce corps dans la nuit noire étonné de sa foi ... (?)

(LJP, 1.303)

(The Parque, describing the blind constancy of the body to its own purposes.)

FUNESTE:

Qui cause la mort, ou qui en menace [...] (F).

This meaning is clear in Oenone's speech to Phèdre:

Vous verrai-je toujours, renonçant à la vie,
Faire de votre mort les funestes apprêts? ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 11.174-175)

and in the Parque's anticipation of death:

L'ennui, le clair ennui, de mirer leur menace [of her hopeless days]
Me donnait sur ma vie une funeste avance ...

(11.177-178)

Faut-il qu'à peine aimés l'ombre les obscurcisse [the limbs of
the image]

Et que la nuit déjà nous divise, ô Narcisse,
Et glisse entre nous deux le fer qui coupe un fruit!
Qu'as-tu?

Ma plainte même est funeste? ...

(F du N, I, 11.125-128)

(The breath of the Narcissus stirs the water and troubles the image.)

GLOIRE:

Honneur [...] estime, réputation qui procède du
mérite d'une personne (A). Désire de considération,
ambition; amour-propre.

Je voulais en mourant prendre soin de ma gloire ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.309)

(Phèdre to Oenone, preferring to death the loss of reputation and self-respect.)

Mon corps désespéré tendait le torse nu
Où l'âme, ivre de soi, de silence, et de gloire ...

Ecoute, avec espoir, frapper au mur pieux
Ce coeur, - qui se ruine a coups mystérieux ...

(LJP, 11.372-373, 375-376)

(The Parque also aspires to death and immortalisation.)

IMPATIENT, IMPATIENCE:

[...] exprime la même impossibilité de se contenir ...

Cayrou cites the following as example:

Entre l'impatience et la crainte flottant:
Il [Britannicus] allait voir Junie, et revenait content ...

(Britannicus, II, 2, 11.441-442)

This meaning could add a gloss to Valéry's famous line:

Génie! O longue impatience! ...

(Eb d'un S, 1.241)

and reminds us of his other reptile:

Si proche impatience et si lourde langueur ...

(LJP, 1.79)

INQUIET:

incapable de repos [...] se dit de l'homme qui ne
peut pas se contenter de ce qu'il a.

Son chagrin inquiet l'arrache de son lit ...

(Phèdre, I, 1.148)

(Oenone, describing Phèdre's suffering through love.)

Je m'accoude inquiète et pourtant souveraine ...

(LJP, 1.94)

Pour l'inquiet Narcisse il n'est ici qu'ennui! ...

(F du N, I, 1.69)

INTELLIGENCE:

Bonne entente, accord, communauté de sentiments,
secrète entente (A) [...] Etre de l'intelligence,
s'entendre avec.

Notre salut dépend de notre intelligence ...

(Britannicus, III, 5, 1.916)

(Agrippine to Britannicus.)

... Mon fils, mon propre fils
Est-il d'intelligence avec mes ennemis? ...

(Phèdre, III, 5, 11.983-984)

There are elements of this in the Parque's self-betrayal:

Mais avec mes périls, je suis d'intelligence ...

(1.82)

IRRITER:

Se dit fig. en choses morales [...]. Exciter,
rendre plus vif et plus fort [...] (F).

[D'] enchaîner un captif de ses fers étonné, ...

C'est là ce que je veux, c'est là ce qui m'irrite ...

(Phèdre, II, 1, 11.451, 453)

(Aricie is explaining why she wishes to enslave Hippolyte.) This figurative sense may lie hidden in the apparently purely physical connotation of the movements of the Parque's serpent: "glisse et n'irrite / Nul/^{feuillage}" (11.146-147) but it is clear in her plea:

Non, non! ... N'irrite plus cette réminiscence! ...

(1.406)

LINCEUL:

Drap délié [very fine] qu'on fait du lin. On le prend généralement pour toutes sortes de draps (F).

Hence the Parque's draperies/sheets: délicieux linceuls (1.465)

which double as shrouds.

JOUR:

Clarté du soleil (F): se dit parfois de ce qui éclaire l'esprit.

Mes yeux sont éblouis du jour que je revois, ...
(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.155)

J'étais l'épouse et l'égale du jour ...
(LJP, 1.107)

Je ne rends plus au jour qu'un regard étranger ...
(Ibid., 1.152)

These references are applicable to the sun and its light, but there seems to be a suggestion of mental powers, ce qui éclaire l'esprit, in the lines:

Mais qui l'emporterait sur la puissance même,
Avide par tes yeux de contempler le jour
Qui s'est choisi ton front pour lumineuse tour ...?
(LJP, 11.410-412)

Jour as a source of light reappears in the Fragments du Narcisse:

O douceur de survivre à la force du jour ...
(I, 1.48)

MAIN:

En termes de fauconnerie, se dit proprement du faucon. [...] on dit aussi ses doigts et ses ongles [...] (F).

This meaning fits in well with the chimaeric aspect of the Parque, and her metamorphosis into the bird (1.438).

MERVEILLE, MERVEILLEUX:

Phénomène surnaturel, accompli par une divinité; miracle. Chose rare et [...] surprenante (F).

"On ne voit plus pour nous ses (of God) redoutables mains
De merveilles sans nombre effrayer les humains ..."

(Athalie, I, 1, 11.101-102)

(The Hebrews, quoted by Abner, reproaching their God.)

We also find Joas/Eliacin called miraculous, cet enfant merveilleux (Athalie, II, 9, 1.753). This use of the word and its derived adjective certainly lends colour to Valéry's identification of the sea, and of the Parque herself, with the supernatural. For the sea we have line 25, l'écueil mordu par la merveille, and for the Parque, line 382 where she imagines her death and transfiguration, ma merveilleuse fin. The same connotation may be present in the Fragments du Narcisse:

Voir, ô merveille, voir! ma bouche nuancée
Trahir ... peindre sur l'onde une fleur de pensée ...
(I, 11.141-142)

MISÈRE, MISÉRABLE:

Malheur (D/L). Digne de pitié (F).

Misérable! et je vis? et je soutiens la vue
De ce sacré soleil dont je suis descendue? ...
(Phèdre, IV, 6, 11.1273-1274)

There seems a suggestion of its later, more derogatory meaning here, but we have also Phèdre's O comble de misère (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.289) for wretchedness, misfortune. Valéry's Narcissus combines all the senses:

Hélas, corps misérable, il est temps de s'unir ...
(III, 1.47)

OBJET:

Se dit poétiquement de belles personnes qui
donnent l'amour. Se dit même des hommes.

Peut-être a-t-il un coeur facile à attendrir.
Je suis le seul objet qu'il ne saurait souffrir.
(Phèdre, IV, 5, 11.1211-1212)

(Phèdre, speaking of Hippolyte's susceptibility to love.) The serpent of the Ebauche, as a lover of the Deity (Vous que j'aimais, 1.72),

speaks of Him as: Objet radieux (1.73).

OBSÉDER:

Entourer continuellement. Etre assidument autour
de quelqu'un [...] pour se rendre maître de son
esprit.

Narcisse au palais obsédant l'Empereur ...

(Britannicus, variant, OCR I, pp.30-32)

Sûr triomphe! si ma parole
De l'âme obsédant le trésor, ...

Ne quitte plus l'oreille d'or ...

(Eb d'un S, 11.197-198, 200)

OISIF, OISIVETÉ:

Sans emploi, inutilisé, improductif (A).

Cette oisive vertu, vous en contentez-vous?
La foi qui n'agit point, est-ce un foi sincère? ...

(Athalie, I, 1, 11.70-71)

Après tant d'orgueil, après tant d'étrange
Oisiveté, mais pleine de pouvoir ...

(CM, 11.32-33)

The emphasis here seems to be upon the unused powers.

OPPRIMER:

Abattre, tuer, mais à l'improviste (A). Accablé
sous le poids de chagrins [...] souffrances,
embarras. Perdre.

Je tremble qu'opprimés de ce poids odieux
L'un ni l'autre jamais n'ose lever les yeux ...

(Phèdre, III, 3, 11.867-868)

(Phèdre fears the effect her crime may have on the future of her
children.) The sense of treachery and death may be added to the
sense of weight in the Parque's:

O paupières qu'opprime une nuit de trésor ...

(1.111)

PLAINDRE, PLAINTÉ:

Regretter, en parlant d'une chose perdue, ravie
[...] Déplorer.

Ainsi, dans vos malheurs ne songeant qu'à vous plaindre ...

(Phèdre, III, 1, 11.753-754)

(Oenone to Phèdre, who is lamenting Hippolyte's rejection of her love.)

La houle me murmure une ombre de reproche, ...

Une rumeur de plainte et de resserrement ...

(LJP, 11.9, 12)

(The Parque hears her own lament in the voice of the sea.)

Qu'as-tu?

Ma plainte même est funeste? ...

(F du N, I, 1.128)

(The Narcissus is lamenting the approach of night and the incipient loss of his vision.)

PLEUR:

Action de verser des pleurs, accompagné de
plaintes, de gémissements, de lamentations ... (F).

Tu triomphes, ô paix plus puissante qu'un pleur ...

(La Dormeuse, 1.6)

POUDRE:

poussière (A).

On dit qu'on a vu même, en ce désordre affreux
Un Dieu qui d'aiguillons pressait leur flanc poudreux ...

(Phèdre, V, 6, 11.1539-1540)

(Théramène, describing Hippolyte's horses in their flight.) The Parque describes her shadow on the ground, Sur la poudre qui danse (1.146)

La vague en poudre ose jaillir des rocs ...

(CM, 1.141)

(A foam, that is to say, as fine as particles of dust.) The same

meaning of dust is to be found in Palme (1.83).

SÉDUIRE:

Egarer, induire en erreur; tromper, abuser (A)
sans idée de charme attirant.

Pallas de ses conseils empoisonne ma mère;
Il séduit chaque jour Britannicus mon frère

(Britannicus, II, 1, 11.363-364)

(Néron is complaining of the treason of a dissident.)

... Ce corps si pur, sait-il qu'il me puisse séduire? ...

(F du N, III, 1.1)

(The Narcissus is led astray, as well as seduced in the contemporary sense, by the image of impossible perfection.)

SINGULIER:

Qui n'appartient, qui ne s'applique qu'à un
seul individu.

"Pour toute ambition, pour vertu singulière,
Il [Néron] excelle à conduire un char dans la carrière ..."

(Britannicus, IV, 5, 11.1471-1472)

(Narcisse, quoting the Romans' estimate of Néron.)

Où sont des morts les phrases familières,
L'aut personnel, les âmes singulières? ...

(CM, 11.88-89)

SOUFFRIR:

Veut dire aussi Permettre (A).

Souffrez que mon courage ose enfin s'occuper ...

(Phèdre, III, 5, 1.947)

(Hippolyte asking Thésée's permission to leave Trézène.)

Souffrez ce beau reflet de désordres humains! ...

(F du N, I, 1.38)

(The Narcissus begs the fountain to reflect his grief.)

SOUTENIR:

Supporter l'assaut d'une chose, tenir tête (A).

Misérable! et je vis? et je soutiens la vie
De ce sacré soleil dont je suis descendue? ...

(Phèdre, IV, 6, 11.1273-1274)

(Phèdre, knowing her guilt, accuses herself of outfacing the sun.)

Je soutenais l'éclat de la mort toute pure
Telle j'avais jadis le soleil soutenu ...

(LJP, 11.370-371)

SPÉCIEUX:

qui a belle apparence (F).

Habitant de l'abîme, hôte si spécieux
D'un ciel sombre ici-bas précipite des cieux ... (?)

(F du N, III, 11.3-4)

(The Narcissus, apostrophising his beautiful shadow. A perfect example of Valéry's double-talk as is the next word.)

STUPIDE:

Frappé de stupeur (A).

Eve, jadis, je la surpris, ...
L'âme encore stupide, et comme
Interdite au seuil de la chair ...

(Eb d'un S, 11.121, 129-130)

SUFFISANCE:

Habilité, science. Capacité pour quelque emploi
(A) [...] se dit déjà parfois de la sottise,
présomption d'un homme qui croit suffire à tout.

Mais, Madame, Néron suffit pour se conduire ...

(Britannicus, I, 2, 1.215)

(Burrhus, trying to persuade Agrippine and himself of Néron's fitness to rule.)

Tremblez, mortels! Je suis bien fort
Quand jamais à ma suffisance
Je bâille à briser le ressort! ...

(Eb d'un S, 11.12-14)

(Valéry's serpent boasting of his capacities.) Here the nuances of ability and presumption are added to the physical idea of extent — the opened jaws.

SUPERBE:

Elevé, d'une hauteur imposante [...] (F).

Les superbes remparts que Minerve a bâtis ...

(Phèdre, I, 5, 1.360)

(The reference here is to the walls of Athens.) This again is one of Valéry's favourite adjectives, as it can apply to physical elevation as well as to mental qualities, as in the Parque's archipels superbes (1.241) or with the serpent of the Ebauche seen as a star: "MOI! ... Des astres le plus superbe" (1.66), and again in Au Platane, tête superbe (1.70).

SURPRENDRE:

Prendre à l'improviste, par ruse, (personne)
[...] Obtenir frauduleusement (A).

Une autre de César a surpris la tendresse: ...

(Britannicus, III, 4, 1.887)

(Agrippine is here accusing Junie of obtaining favour with Néron, and thus usurping Agrippine's own position of power over him.) We can find both of the above meaning of the word as it is used by Valéry. The first, very delicately, in the girl "surprised by joy", "Elle se sent surprendre" (Au Platane, 1.37), and the second in the Narcissus' command to his own dreams and desires,

Ne cherchez pas en vous, n'allez surprendre aux cieux
Le malheur d'être une merveille ...

(I, 11.82-83)

and both meanings perhaps, in the lines of the Narcissus:

Qu'ils sont doux, les périls que nous pourrions choisir!
Se surprendre soi-même et soi-même saisir ...

(II, 11.107-108)

TRAVAIL:

Labeur, peine, fatigue [...] du corps (A). Peine
[...] de l'esprit (F).

Hercule, respirant sur le bruit de vos coups
Déjà de son travail se reposait sur vous ...

(Phèdre, III, 5, 11.943-944)

(Hippolyte is speaking of Thésée's deeds, comparing them to the labours of Hercules.) The 17th century meaning emphasises the dangers and difficulty in the birth of a work of art, as it is symbolised by the birth of the tear in La Jeune Parque:

D'où nais-tu? Quel travail toujours triste et nouveau
Te tire avec retard, larme, de l'ombre amère? ...

(11.292-293)

USER:

Employer, consommer (F).

This sense is evident in the

Use de tout/^{ce}qui lui nuise: [...] Eve

(Eb d'un S, 1.185)

and adds another nuance to the lines

Rien plus aveuglement n'use l'antique joie
Qu'un bruit de fuite égale et de nul changement ...

(Le Rameur, 11.23-24)

VAIN:

Vide (choses) (au fig.) ce qui n'est
qu'apparence (F). Signifie aussi orgueilleux,
superbe (F).

This word repeatedly adds its resonance to the vanity of the Parque's

aspirations, vaine puissance (1.133), Attente vaine et vaine (1.379), vains adieux (1.495), and emphasises the folly and pride behind the Narcissus with his dons vastes et vains (I, 1.117), or the dreams of the poet, the songes vains (CM, 1.66).

Le Vrai Ecrivain

Notes

1. C 13, 28 (1928).
2. Entretiens avec Paul Valéry, pp.55-62.
3. Letter to Aimé Lafont, O C V, I, Notes, p.1631.
4. Notes Diverses.
5. M P.
6. Racine notes (see Appendix A).
7. "D'ailleurs, le problème se posait. Que peut souhaiter en poésie, un esprit quand il est nourri, intéressé aux vues d'un monde à la Maxwell?" (M P).
8. "Rejeter tout" (ibid.).
9. "Tenter la conservation [illegible word] reprendre le problème Mais, pas de poésie quasi-scientifique" (ibid.).
10. "Examen approfondi de l'ancien stock. Rechercher les éléments essentiels" (ibid.).
11. Ibid.
12. "Pour moi, la voix intérieure sert de repère. Je rejette tout ce qu'il refuse, comme exagéré; car la voix intérieure ne supporte que les paroles dont le sens est secrètement en accord avec l'être vrai." (C 6, pp.169-170 (1916)).
13. "Hugo a les mots, et il n'a pas la voix" (Ibid.).
14. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.8.
15. Ibid.
16. C 6, pp.169-170 (1916).
17. C 7, p.451 (1919-20).
18. "Cette voix plus proche de l'interne que dans le système moderne romantique ... / C'est la voix vraie sublimée." (Racine notes (Appendix A), p.8).
19. Ibid., p.14.
20. La Poésie de Paul Valéry.
21. Langage et Poésie chez Paul Valéry.

22. E C.
23. Guiraud.
24. Sørensen, La Poésie de Paul Valéry.
25. See Guiraud, p.167. Sørensen refers to a Mallarmean preciousness (op. cit., p.201).
26. Guiraud, p.168.
27. See Au Sujet d'Adonis, O C V, I, pp.494-495.
28. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.6.
29. Gaston Cayrou, Le Français classique (hereafter Cayrou). All the dictionary definitions in this chapter are taken from this work unless otherwise indicated. The initials A. F. R. in Cayrou's text refer respectively to the Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française (1694 edition), to F.A. Furetière, Dictionnaire Universel (1690 edition), and to R.P. Richelet, Dictionnaire Française (1680 edition). As the work referred to is a dictionary, page references are only given for annotations.
30. Cayrou, notes, p.142.
31. "Quel coup de foudre, ô ciel!" (Phèdre, IV, 5, l.1195). It is Thésée's voice, raised in anger (voix redoutable, ibid., IV, 4, l.1168) which has revealed Hippolyte's love to her and reawakened her own passion.
32. Dictionnaire du Français classique (hereafter D L).
33. Valéry's own comment on this is interesting : "Racine dit enfin en propres termes (préf. de Ph) ce qu'il faut pour nous instruire qu'à son époque l'excellence d'une tragédie se connaissait à l'enseignement de vertu" (Racine notes (Appendix A), p.18).
34. Phèdre, V, 6, l.1516.
35. Cayrou is here quoting the Dictionnaire de l'Académie (1690).
36. Cayrou, note, p.420.
37. Racine describes Joad's sensations thus : "Mais d'où vient que mon coeur frémit d'un sainteffroi? / Est-ce l'esprit divin qui s'empare de moi? ..." (Athalie, III, 7, ll.1129-1130), while we see Calchas, possessed by the god, le poil hérissé (Iphigénie, V, 6, l.1744).
38. See Chapter IV for a discussion of the resemblance between the Serpent of the Ebauche and Racine's Mathan. Mathan, too, is possessed by jealous rage (Athalie, III, 3, especially lines 923, 955-960).

39. "Le ciel brille d'éclairs, s'entr'ouvre, et parmi nous / Jette une sainte horreur qui nous rassure tous ..." (Iphigénie, V, 6, ll.1783-1784). We have noted the effect on Calchas, le poil hérissé (ibid., l.1744).
40. "Ami, peux-tu penser que d'un zèle frivole / Je me laisse aveugler par une vaine idole ...(?)" (Athalie, III, 3, ll.919-920).
41. "J'offrais tout à ce dieu que je n'osais nommer ..." (Phèdre, I, 3, l.288).
42. H.
43. Guiraud, p.215.
44. See Le Prince et la Jeune Parque, O C V, I, p.1495, "Elle respirait ..." etc.
45. See Jean Hytier's reference to Lawler's suggestion of the ant, and his own gloss on that suggestion (O C V, I, Notes, p.1687).
46. An instance of this perhaps is the word siffle in L'Ebauche d'un Serpent (l.235), when we remember that siffler is slang for immoderate drinking, and the Serpent's "Je te buvais, ô belle sourde" (l.145).
47. C 6, 560 (1917).
48. C 6, 560 (1917).
49. D L.
50. The capital letter for this word (Ennemie) in the 1953 Gallimard edition of La Jeune Parque (La Jeune Parque commentée par Alain), seems to us to reinforce this idea.

CHAPTER VIII

LES FIGURES DU STYLE

Les Figures du Style

L'ancienne rhétorique (qui existe encore) regardait comme des ornements et des artifices ces figures et ces relations que les raffinements successifs de la poésie ont enfin fait connaître comme l'essentiel de son objet; et que les progrès de l'analyse trouveront un jour comme effet des propriétés psychiques réflexes — par exemple, la partie pour le tout car la partie est suffisante et les réflexes [passage unfinished]¹

This passage, written in 1917, shows the extreme importance Valéry attached to the formal devices of rhetoric, the figures. They were far from being purely ornamental, "empty rhetoric", as we should say, but reflected profound psychological truths.

Valéry had, in fact, been occupied with the idea of reality behind the formal rhetorical devices as far back as 1895,² and entries in the Cahiers for 1900-1901 show his continued interest.³ His exploration in the domain of rhetoric in 1917 was therefore not new, but a letter to Pierre Louÿs in the same year, is evidence of a renewed interest in the formal devices. He has been investigating the definitions of Aristotle (whom Racine also would have consulted), but finds him insufficient:

Où trouve-t-on ces définitions des figures de rhétorique, et quel est le livre à consulter sur l'ancienne théorie de la rhétorique?

J'ai souvent eu l'envie de reprendre cette analyse antique mais d'abord faudrait-il la connaître et je ne sais où la trouver. J'ai la rhétorique d'Aristote ou il n'y a rien ...⁴

A marginal addition, "A ne pas laisser sans réponse" underlines Valéry's deep interest in the subject.⁵

This renewed interest in the early definitions of rhetoric comes at a time when, as we know, Valéry had undertaken research into early poetry, and when his exploration of that poetry had centred

itself upon Racine. We should expect, then, to find that he had studied Racine's poetry from the point of view of its use of the rhetorical technique of his time, as well as from the point of view of its prosody. For, if Racine's use of rhetoric was yet another example of his mastery of the rules and conventions governing poetic language, and of his power to make of it an instrument for conquering his public,⁶ then his rhetoric was a means through which Valéry could succeed in two of his aims — to subdue language, and to make of it an instrument to achieve the effect he wanted on his public of élite readers: "Posséder par la rhétorique le DROIT d'asservir la langue,"⁷ and through this means to take complete possession of his readers' minds.⁸

Remarks in the Cahiers show that Valéry had studied Boileau for his influence on Racine.⁹ He would also have found Boileau's prescriptions in the field of rhetoric,¹⁰ and a passage from the Cahiers for 1916¹¹ suggests that he may have read Boileau's defence of the Récit de Thérémène (and perhaps agreed in part with those who criticised the Récit). If he did so, however, another passage for the same year suggests that he had also noted Racine's obedience to Boileau's definition of the highest style of rhetoric, the truly sublime, that style which was not to be confused with the merely pompous or "noble". In this passage, an extended eulogy of Racine, Valéry implies that the voice of Racine was faithful to that instinct which rejects all false oratory, and reproduces only the pure tones of poetry:

C'est l'instinct de la poésie pure qui a fait rejeter [...] le grand nombre de mots et de sujets qui la ramène de temps à autre vers le noble et l'universel [...] ¹²

This leaning towards the generalised and oratorical, in fact,

was the tendency Valéry was always to deplore in Corneille (certainly a master of rhetorical argument), for Corneille's rhetoric was determinedly public, and certainly "noble".¹³

Valéry's considered judgement on Racine's rhetoric emerges in 1918:

Dans Racine l'ornement perpétuel semble tiré du discours et c'est là le moyen et le secret de sa prodigieuse continuité, tandis que, chez les modernes, l'ornement rompt le discours.¹⁴

and he reaffirms it in 1937:

Tout l'art est dans les figures du style ou de la syntaxe.¹⁵

Whether Valéry absorbed the principles of Boileau or not, if he applied Racine's use of those principles to his own work, there should be evidence of it in La Jeune Parque and Charmes. Has such evidence been noted?

Valéry's own use of the rhetorical figures has been discussed at some length. We refer, in particular, to the studies by Sprenson¹⁶ and by Guiraud,¹⁷ and to the article by Jeannine Jallat.¹⁸ Brémond,¹⁹ for his part, analysing Racine's use of apposition, invites by inference a comparison with Valéry's use of the device (for he is examining Racine in the light of Valéry's ideal of pure poetry). Guiraud takes up this indication in his own analysis of Valéry's use of this figure. Sprenson, however, only refers to classical syntax in general in his analysis of Valéry's figures of rhetoric, while Jallat cites Poe and Mallarmé as Valéry's models. Wide-ranging and perceptive as the existing studies of Valéry's rhetoric are, those I have been able to consult do not appear to include any direct comparison between Racine and Valéry. What now follows is an attempt to institute such a comparison for some of the more important figures.²⁰

In our study of the figures of rhetoric as used by Racine and Valéry, we may be allowed, it seems to us, to pass over what might seem the sine qua non — the content, inventio, of the work of art. We will therefore begin with the ways of expressing the content, the elocutio. With this, as a dramatic poet, Racine was deeply concerned; and as a follower of the precepts of Boileau, concerned with the highest register of rhetoric, the truly sublime. Valéry, too, was aiming at this register, and was above all preoccupied with form. Both poets were very much concerned with the power of language to move and persuade; and the function of the sublime, in rhetoric (as distinct from the pompous), was, above all, to move — to persuade the auditor into feeling the emotion the poet is expressing through the medium of his poems. It therefore seems appropriate to start our enquiry into elocutio with the Grandes Figures, the figurae sententiarum, described by the Abbé d'Aubignac as especially appropriate to the expression of real feeling, and to tragedy.²¹ These include apostrophe, irony, exclamation, hyperbole, and interrogation, but we are here concerned chiefly with exclamation, apostrophe, and interrogation, whose importance in Valéry's poetry is emphasised by Sørensen,²² by Guiraud,²³ and by Morier.²⁴

Simple exclamation, the "Ah!", the "Hélas!" or the "Dieux!" are too common to all tragic poetry to be particularly significant, except insofar as they are very much part of the classical convention in the expression of emotion (R R, 167). Nevertheless we note that the Parque does exclaim, in classical manner, "Grands Dieux!" (1.279), the Narcissus, "Dieux!" (III, 1.44), and both exclamations are signs of intense emotion. A more significant form of the exclamation, however, is the single-line sentence classed under this heading,

because of the intense emotion it expresses. Such a sentence is Phèdre's cry:

Hippolyte est sensible, et ne sent rien pour moi! ...
(Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1203)

Such lines abound in the work of both our poets, used as markers for moments of the greatest dramatic and emotional importance,:

Mais je tremblais de perdre une douleur divine! ...
(LJP, 1.97)

moments of perception,:

Mon oeil noir est le seuil d'infemales demeures! ...
(Ibid., 1.161)

Illumination, largesse! ...
(La P, 1.225)

Il vit de vie, il ne me quitte pas! ...
(CM, 1.114)

or for moments of deepest despair:

Le soleil ne peut rien contre ce qui n'est plus! ...
(F du N, II, 1.76)

The border-line between exclamation, apostrophe, or invocation is barely discernible, for apostrophe and invocation often entail exclamation. The definition of invocation should perhaps be kept for the most solemn moments, appeals to the gods,²⁵ such as Esther's to her Deity:

... O mon souverain roi,
Me voici donc tremblante et seule devant toi! ...
(Esther, I, 4, 11.247-248)

The Parque too invokes her gods, the immortal stars:

Tout-puissants étrangers, inévitables astres ...
Je suis seule avec vous, tremblante, ayant quitté
Ma couche ...
(11.18, 24-25)

The Pythia appeals to her Maitre immonde (1.31) and to a divine power, Puissance créatrice (1.131); the serpent of the Ebauche to his sun-god (1.31). But the characters of Racine do not apostrophise only their god, or gods, but their circumstances, themselves, or the other, be that other their dearest opponent or their most beloved child. Phèdre apostrophises the cause of her ills, and her enemy Venus:

O haine de Vénus! O fatale colère! ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.249)

She apostrophises herself, Moi jalouse! (Ibid., IV, 6, 1.1265); and Thésée exclaims:

O mon fils! Cher espoir que je me suis ravi! ...

(Phèdre, V, 6, 1.1571)

In precisely the same way, we find the Parque apostrophising her circumstances:

O paupières qu'opprime une nuit de trésor ...

(1.111)

or the Narcissus, his fountain (source of his ills):

Heureux vos corps fondus, Eaux planes et profondes! ...

(I, 1.29)

Similarly, the Pythia addresses her fatal gift, Don cruel! (1.31) and the serpent of the Ebauche evokes the Sun and its creations in stanza 4 (for it is the sun which has created the universe of illusion to which the serpent is exiled). Such appeals serve not only to mark the depth of the characters' emotions, but to describe the nature of the situation which has aroused them — sometimes to sum it up, as in Andromaque's:

O cendres d'un époux! ô Troyens! ô mon père!
O mon fils, que tes jours coûtent cher à ta mère! ...

(Andromaque, III, 8, 11.1045-1046)

We find the same qualities in the Parque's apostrophe to the tear:

Larme qui fais trembler à mes regards humains
Une variété de funèbres chemins;
Tu procèdes de l'âme, orgueil du labyrinthe ...

(11.283-285)

This descriptive quality of the apostrophe is also turned to use when Racine's characters invoke the self. We find it in Phèdre's exclamations in Act IV, scene 6, "Moi jalouse!" (1.1265), "Misérable!" (1.1273), and in her apostrophe to her other self, Oenone, "monstre exécration" (1.1317). In this case, it is the quality of monstrosity which is underlined by the address to the combination of self and circumstance, and Valéry uses the same device of apostrophe to give information about his character in the Parque's address to her double self:

Adieu, pensai-je, MOI, mortelle soeur, mensonge ...
Harmonieuse MOI, différente d'un songe, ...

(11.101-102)

and again in her address to the serpent, which is both monster and beloved:

Reptile, ô vifs détours tout courus de caresses, ...

(1.78)

He is of course emphasising the ambivalence of the Parque's attitude to the serpent, just as the Parque's "Sombre lys!" (1.407) emphasises her double nature. We find a similar descriptive function in the Narcissus' address to his other self:

Cher trésor d'un miroir qui partage le monde! ...

(II, 1.98)

and to his body:

O mon bien souverain, mon corps, je n'ai que toi! ...

(Ibid., 1.87)

The same applies to the Pythia's eulogy of her body, forme préférée (1.81),

to the serpent's: "MOI! ... des astres le plus superbe" (Eb d'un S, 1.66), and to the poet's "O mon silence! ... Edifice dans l'âme!" (CM, 1.17).

It will have been noticed that the example of the invocation to the self from Phèdre was also an imprecation. This is often the case with Racine's characters, though the imprecations are by no means limited to the self. Wife curses husband,²⁶ father inveighs against son,²⁷ lover denounces lover²⁸ — but the range of actual insults is limited.²⁹ Some of the more frequent were traître, lâche, perfide, flatteur, misérable, and of course, monstre and cruel — as Valéry observed, there was a series of stock adjectives:

Il y a un stock de qualificatifs clichés de dépréciation
[...] Ainsi, Egoïste [illegible word] méchant, gredin
(cruel, disait Racine) [...]³⁰

The Parque in fact, employs very similar terms. She calls herself lâche (1.421), reptile (1.423), speaks of treachery, le plus traître de l'âme (1.43); the serpent's menace is the acme of cruelty (1.60). The same limited range serves Valéry in Charmes. In the Fragments du Narcisse, the image is bel et cruel (II, 1.115); in La Pythie, Don cruel describes her gift of prophecy, and the Narcissus also apostrophises his body as "Corps misérable!" (III, 1.47).

But if the range of actual insults is stereotyped, Racine's development of the theme takes imprecation into the range of the grandes figures, in that it demonstrates the intensity of the characters' feelings (towards themselves or the other), tells us how they feel towards the object of the imprecation, and is intended to make us also feel the same detestation and horror as has been aroused in the character. We see this in Phèdre's description of

herself in Act IV, scene 6, where the word, misérable, is only the cliché de dépréciation, but the description is of poetic intensity, and the same is true when Phèdre curses Oenone and her activities. Malheureuse and Monstre exécration are extended and explained. This is the technique Valéry uses, of which the Parque's dismissal of the serpent is an excellent example. The serpent is already a monstre, a reptile (11.75, 78), and the Parque's "Fuis-moi! Du noir retour reprends le fil visqueux!" (1.84), further classifies the serpent as unclean (visqueux), and illustrates the horror it inspires, while the rest of her denunciation illustrates the character of the serpent and of its actions, its menacing fascination (danses massives, 1.85), its stealth (coule, 1.86), its fostering of evil (couve, ... mal, 1.87), and the fatal effect of its attack, as oppressor of innocence:

Et que dans les anneaux de ton rêve animal
Halete jusqu'au jour l'innocence anxieuse! ...

(11.88-89)

Similarly, the "Faute éclatante!" with which the serpent insults his faithless Sun-God is explained by the rest of the stanza, which elaborates the treachery of the sun. The terms the poet of Le Cimetière Marin uses of the idea of immortality, his imprecatory exclamation:

Maigre immortalité, toute noire et dorée ...

(1.103)

clarify its nature of deadly deception as well as his attitude towards it. Further, the amplification of the list of insults in Racine and in Valéry makes it clear to us that both poets are inveighing against substantially the same crimes. Weakness of will (lâche), treachery (traître, perfide), of the self or of the other,

deceptive attraction (flatteur), impurity (poison), and monstrosity — the unnatural — (monstre). The total effect of the opponent's hateful actions is summed up by the blanket term, cruel.

If apostrophe and invocation may often be grouped under exclamation, we find that this too can be the case with interrogation. This is often preceded by the Quoi! of surprise and shock — notably, at the beginning of so many of Racine's plays, as Peter France points out (R R, p.169). The question which follows can be either rhetorical, or a genuine demand for information, Oenone's:

Hélas! Seigneur, quel trouble au mien peut être égal? ...

(Phèdre, I, 2, 1.143)

or Albine's query to Agrippine:

Quoi! tandis que Néron s'abandonne au sommeil
Faut-il que vous veniez attendre son réveil? ...

(Britannicus, I, 1, 11.1-2)

Dramatically important, as a device for informing the spectator plausibly about a situation, the question is also emotionally important, setting the tone of the play: Agrippine is, in fact, awaiting the awakening of the monster, which she alone, at the moment, is able to perceive: "La mère de César veille seule à sa porte." (I, 1, 1.4). The question indeed is a powerful emotional marker — an indication of the troubled mind (R R, p.173). One need only cite the multiple questions in Andromaque (V, 1) or Phèdre (III, 5) as Hermione interrogates herself, and Thésée questions his entourage, to be convinced of this. Phèdre, indeed, is one long series of questions,³¹ each of which is dramatically and emotionally important, and each of which leaves the audience avidly waiting for the next terrible answer. The 'real' questions — "Qui m'a trahi?" (III, 5, 1.980) — further the plot, but even the apparently rhetorical

questions

Dieux! que ne suis-je assise à l'ombre des forêts!

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.176)

which express the passion/^{ate}quality of the figure, also allow the audience to analyse the nature of the character and sum up his or her dilemma:

Où laissai-je égarer mes vœux et mon esprit? ...

(Ibid., 1.180)

Both Guiraud and Sørensen are eloquent on the importance of interrogation in Valéry's La Jeune Parque. The poem, Guiraud says, is essentially a series of questions,³² while Sørensen devotes four pages to the figure,³³ beginning his analysis of Valéry's rhetoric with it. Its importance in La Jeune Parque is very clear from Sørensen's remark on the opening lines:

[...] dans cette première question, tout le contenu du poème est comme dans les langes, et de question en question, de réponse en réponse, [...] la Parque arrive enfin à une réponse qui semble la satisfaire [...]³⁴

He sees the greater number of the questions as "real", and regards the query "N'entends-tu pas frémir," etc., as the first rhetorical question of the poem. An ear attuned to Racine's use of the device might perhaps find an earlier example:

Qu'es-tu, près de ma nuit d'éternelle longueur? ...

(1.80)

and perhaps also find the same note as that sounded by Andromaque's impassioned "Dois-je oublier Hector?" expanded in Act III, scene 8, in the Parque's self-reproach:

O m'aurait-il fallu, folle, que j'accomplisse
Ma merveilleuse fin? ... ?

(11.381-382)

The "real" questions, as Sørensen's analysis indicates, set the drama on foot: "Qui pleure?" (1.1), "Jalouse, ... Mais de qui [...]"

(1.46). The others persuade the spectator of the intensity of the Parque's emotion, of her dilemma, "Quelle résisterait [...]?" (1.243). Or they illuminate her character, as in the rhetorical question she addresses to the serpent (1.80), which shows her view of herself (mistress of her fate), and also her need to convince herself of this. A series of agitated questions underlines the extreme points of her disorder:

Mais blessure, sanglots, sombres essais, pourquoi?
Pour qui, bijoux cruels, marquez-vous ce corps froid ...

Ou va-t-il sans répondre à sa propre ignorance ...
Ce corps dans la nuit noire étonné de sa foi? ...

(11.299-300, 301-302)

Valéry's use of interrogation does not end with La Jeune Parque.

We find analogous uses in Charmes:

Quoi, c'est vous, mal déridées!
Que fîtes-vous, cette nuit [...]?

(Aurore, 11.31-32)

Quels secrets dans son coeur brûle ma jeune amie [...]?

(La Dormeuse, 11.1-2)

Here, as in the Pythia's series of questions, beginning "Qui me parle?" (11.41-50), her "Qu'ai-je donc fait," (1.121), all initiate the drama or move it on. The rhetorical and decorative type convince the reader of the intensity of the emotion — the questions posed by the Narcissus are almost all of this nature,

Dites, ne suis-je pas celui que vous croyez,
Votre corps vous fait-il envie? ...

(I, 11.78-79)

but the "Qu'as-tu?" of Part I, 1.128 is dramatically operative, and is as near as the Narcissus can get to convincing himself (and us) of the separate existence of the image. Again the two questions at the end of Poésie, rhetorical in form and feeling:

Que seras-tu sans mes lèvres?
Que serai-je sans amour? ...

(11.39-40)

nevertheless sum up the poet's dilemma. With the rhetorical flavour of the question

Et vous, grande âme, espérez-vous un songe [...] ?
Chanterez-vous, quand serez vaporeuse?

of lines 97 and 100 of Le Cimetière Marin, we are again in the domain of the rhetorical question which illustrates a facet of character, here the illusions of the would-be heroic (very like those of Hippolyte); but the poet's final question:

Amour, peut être, ou de moi-même haine? ...

is of the same kind as the Parque's final:

... Alors, n'ai-je formé, vains adieux si je vis,
Que songes? ...

(11.495-496)

It releases the ultimate answer, which is really implicit in the question, and this answer, as so often with Racine, is acceptance.

A final use of the question, in Charmes as in La Jeune Parque, is to convey the impression of complete mental disarray. Thésée's series of agitated questions was referred to at the beginning of this chapter, but an even more striking example, noted by Peter France (R R, p.173), is the series of questions in the scene portraying Oreste's madness (Andromaque, V, 5, 11.1625 et seq.). Valéry uses this technique to the same effect in La Pythie — the series of questions occurring at moments of the Pythia's greatest frenzy in stanza 5, "Qui me parle," "Quel écho me répond," "Qui m'illumine," "Qui blasphème?" and again, as her crisis approaches in stanza 19, "Quelles cavernes ... ?" "Est-ce mon sang? Sont-ce les neiges / Rumeurs des ondes?" (11.41-50 and 181-184).

We have seen our two poets using the grandes figures not just to convey the essential feelings of the characters, and thus to move and delight us — "cette tristesse majestueuse qui fait tout le plaisir d'une tragédie"³⁵ — but to direct the drama and to indicate character. As poets, we should expect to find Valéry and Racine using the decorative figures of rhetoric, the tropes, but since both were dramatic poets (for the dramatic element is very apparent in La Jeune Parque and Charmes), we should expect to find that they turn the decorative aspects of rhetoric to dramatic use also.

The more important tropes to be discussed here include metaphor, metonymy, periphrasis and epithet. Not all 17th century authorities looked on metaphor with favour,³⁶ but Boileau saw it as capable of expressing passion and put it among the "sublime" figures. Further, metaphor can be used to illuminate character. A highly metaphorical style can suggest dissimulation or flattery, while the absence of metaphor can indicate sincerity — or the effect of an emotion so intense as to over-ride all artifice (R R, p.73). Théràmène's description of the monster shows us metaphor expressing emotion, Phèdre's unmetaphorical closing speech an intense sincerity and a concentration on the only object of importance remaining to her, the vindication of Hippolyte — but the effect would have been less overwhelming without the contrast given by the use of metaphor earlier on.

Again, since tragedy must occupy itself with the discussion of feeling, metaphor can diversify the aspects under which we see the inevitably recurring themes of love, hate, ambition, and revenge, giving these abstractions a physical immediacy. This effect is particularly striking in Racine's treatment of the prescribed range,

for it is often characterised by the introduction of an unexpectedly vivid word: "Et [...] de son fiel colorant la noirceur" (Athalie, I, 1, 1.46). More, the physical object and the mental act are often so locked together that a new entity is formed, partaking of the characteristics of both, as with Oenone's description of Hippolyte's intransigence:

Avec quels yeux cruels sa rigueur obstinée
Vous laissait à ses pieds peu s'en faut prosternée ...
(Phèdre, III, 1, 11.777-778)

and at least once, Racine's metaphor achieves a surrealist effect:

Temple, renverse-toi. Cèdres, jetez des flammes ...
(Athalie, III, 7, 1.1152)

As Valéry remarks, there is in metaphor an immediate transformation, an equivalent:

Si je dis: cet arbre = fumée, c'est qu'il y a un instant
et un état tels que moyennant un arbre tout se passe
pour ma perception comme si je voyais une fumée [...] ³⁷

A final function of metaphor is, as Peter France notes, to people the stage, adding the figures of gods and goddesses, monsters or demons to the restricted dramatis personae, and bringing elements of the world of nature, trees, flowers, moon or sun, etc., to the rigidly indoor environment prescribed by convention.

In Racine's metaphors, the object does indeed take on the qualities of whatever it is compared with: "Tout se passe comme si." Love is war, fire, poison, a torrent; the beloved, an enemy or a divinity; children are fruit, branch, flower — even sheaves of wheat, and as Peter France points out (R R, p.66), it is the inconspicuous verb metaphor which accomplishes the transformation. Aricie's brothers, for instance, are sheaves of wheat because they are harvested, "Le fer moissonna tout" (Phèdre, II, 1, 1.425).

Valéry's metaphors, in La Jeune Parque and Charmes are equally direct, the transformation is equally complete. The term of comparison which would give us the figure of simile, the Mallarmean comme, is hardly ever used (though it exists, just as it occasionally does in Racine). Instead, we find direct replacement. The Parque is branch (ma tige, 1.214), statue (1.158), flower, cette rose sans prix (1.216) — or the effect is obtained by apposition, as with Josabet's apostrophe:

Enfants, ma seule joie en mes longs déplaisirs ...

(Athalie, I, 3, 1.302)

This is seen in the lines Souvenir ô bucher (1.90), Iles, ruches bientôt (1.350). The same effect is obtained by using the genitive, in Racine and Valéry:

Ni que du fol amour qui trouble ma raison
Ma lâche complaisance aît nourri le poison, ...

(Phèdre, II, 5, 11.675-676)

Quand (au velours du souffle envolé l'or des lampes) ...

(LJP, 1.29)

Or the metaphor is introduced, as in Racine, by the way in which the object of discourse is seen behaving, as in Josabet's description of Joas; the child grows "Sur le bord d'une onde pure" (Athalie, II, 9, 11.778-785), as would the lily, emblem of his purity.

The metaphor can be extended. We have a rich cluster of metaphor achieved by differing means, in Aricie's speech describing herself and her brothers, in Phèdre, Act II, scene 1, to which we have already referred. We quote the relevant lines in full:

Reste du sang d'un roi, noble fils de la Terre,
Je suis seule échappée des fureurs de la guerre.
J'ai perdu, dans la fleur de leur jeune saison,
Six frères ... Quel espoir d'une illustre maison!
Le fer moissonna tout: et la terre humectée
But à regret le sang des neveux d'Erechthée ...

(Phèdre, II, 1, 11.421-424)

Here we have metaphor achieved by the use of the genitive (de leur jeune saison), by apposition (frères, espoir), and extension of the metaphor by the verb: the flowers are reaped, Le fer moissonna tout, and are thus transformed into a harvest, introducing the idea of wheat; moreover, we have the earth as a goddess (Terre), and at the same time that suspension between abstract and concrete operated by the use of the words sang, terre, in their two different contexts, descent, and physical blood; Earth-goddess, and soil. If we now turn to Valéry's lines in La Jeune Parque describing part of the Parque's Promenade, we can see how he uses and extends the pattern and achieves an even more inconspicuous transformation:

Heureuse! A la hauteur de tant de gerbes belles,
Qui laissait à ma robe obéir les ombelles,
Dans les abaissements de leur frêle fierté;
Et si, contre le fil de cette liberté,
Si la robe s'arrache à la rebelle ronce
L'arc de mon brusque corps s'accuse et me prononce,
Nu sous le voile enflé de vivantes couleurs
Que dispute ma race aux longs liens de fleurs.

(11.125-132)

The Parque, A la hauteur de tant de gerbes belles, is thus compared indirectly to the sheaves of flowers. Her skin has their colours (11.131-132). She is thus a flower, or a sheaf of corn (gerbes, 1.125). She is also the reaper, from her action, Qui laissait [...] obéir (1.126), and abaissements (1.127). She is the bended bow (the scythe, hinting at the destroying goddess), L'arc de mon brusque corps (1.130), and we can detect the two contexts, physical and metaphorical, in the race (1.132), which can apply both to the Parque's physical movement and to her descent (strictly speaking, race, like Racine's sang in the passage quoted above, is a metonymy, but the borderline is very fine).

The same procedures are apparent in Valéry's use of the metaphor

in Charmes. Aurore shows us the direct transformation, Nous étions araignées (11.38-39); use of apposition, Maîtresses de l'âme, Idées (1.33), and Être! Universelle oreille! (1.55); use of the genitive, Les berceaux de mes hasards, Oracles de mon chant (11.62, 54), and also the development of the metaphor through the verb, Nous avons tendu nos fils primitifs (11.46-47). As with Racine, moreover, the metaphor can be used to illustrate the character of the "actor" who uses it, as is shown by the metaphors Valéry uses in the passage from Aurore quoted above: the patience, receptivity, and industry of the creative writer are evoked by the spider metaphor.

If metaphor is a trope based on resemblance, metonymy is a trope based on some other, objectively real, relation (R R, p.75). The form of metonymy most relevant to our study is that defined by Du Marsais: "prendre le signe pour la chose signifié".³⁸ This can be a question of representing the immaterial by a material attribute — victory, for example, represented by laurier, palme; or marriage and love by a part of the body, main, coeur. Again, there is the metonymy through which the character is represented by a single quality, as when Hippolyte tells us:

Un moment a vaincu mon audace imprudente ...

(Phèdre, II, 2, 1.537)

There is also the closely related type where an abstract noun is taken not for one person only, but for all persons of the same type:

Mais l'innocence enfin n'a rien à redouter ...

(Ibid., III, 6, 1.996)

says Hippolyte, classing himself with the guiltless.

All these types of metonymy are poetically and dramatically effective when they are used by Racine. In the great plays, metonymy provides an elegant shorthand. It can be a passion figure where the

chosen part of the body — "Mon coeur, mon lâche coeur,"³⁹ or an abstraction, frémissements,⁴⁰ bring the state of mind of the character vividly before us, and it can also tell us something vital about the character, as in Thésée's description of his chilly welcome, the frémissements quoted above. As Peter France observes: "Usually in Racine the metonymy is not merely a superfluous simplification of the personal pronoun, but an amplification which adds something to the development." (R R, p.82). An example of this is the metonymy through which Phèdre's tears stand for her:

J'ai vu, j'ai vu couler des larmes véritables ...

(Phèdre, V, 3, 1.1442)

Thésée tells us. Here metonymy is not only a passion figure, a description of the strength of Thésée's feelings for Phèdre, in whom he believes utterly, but a point in his argument. They are the tears of a wronged and innocent woman. To Aricie, and to us, they are a sign of her guilt (her fears for Hippolyte have caused them). They are thus a description of her feelings and character, and a point in Aricie's argument. Then, too, we have here that mingling of concrete and abstract which gives the abstract (Phèdre's feelings, and Thésée's) a physical reality, as when Agamemnon exclaims, with reference to Iphigénie:

Quels lauriers me plairont, de son sang arrosés? ...

(Iphigénie, IV, 8, 1.1448)

— the counterpart to the opposite process by which the physical reality is contracted to the abstract quality of the mental event which absorbs them:

Mes fureurs au dehors ont osé se répandre ...

(Phèdre, III, 1, 1.741)

When we come to look at Valéry's use of metonymy, France's list

of Racine's metonymies cannot fail to strike a reader of La Jeune Parque and Charmes. France gives the following as the most frequent,

Royalty: trône, sceptre, couronne, diadème, pourpre, bandeau.

Priesthood: tiare, mitre, autel (lending itself to ambiguity between marriage and sacrifice - P.F.).

Captivity: chaîne(s), fers, joug.

Victory: laurier, palme.

Marriage: lit, flambeau (de l'hymen).

Parts of the body used symbolically: sang (family), Coeur (love or courage), main (hand in marriage), bouche etc.⁴¹

He adds to this list tombeau (death), la maison (family), le jour, la lumière (life), and l'aigle (Rome). He could also have added festons for sacrifice, for the function of wreaths and flowers in Racine is always to deck the victim or to lead to death.⁴²

In La Jeune Parque, we find diadème (1.182), couronne (1.215) as signs of the Parque's command over herself, and bandeau (1.212) as a sign of her (failing) physical domination over her surroundings. Racine's bandeau is also a metonymy for sacrifice, as in Iphigénie:

Mais le fer, le bandeau, la flamme est toute prête ...

(1.905)

and certainly the Parque is to be regarded as a victim (hostie, 1.338). Autel (11.210, 340) appears as a sign of sacrifice also, and of marriage, as we see from the end of the poem, for the Parque's rock, altar of sacrifice in line 340 above, is the place where her union with the Sun is celebrated. We have tombeau for death (1.72), in Valéry's analogy of sleep and death. Chaines are replaced by liens (1.34), another of Racine's all-purpose words, but one which often signifies marriage or captivity when used metonymically.

In Charmes, we find bandeau as a sign of priesthood, sacrifice, and royalty. In the Cantique des Colonnes the caryatides crowned by the bandeau (1.38) are priestesses, accomplishing a sacrificial rite (11.53-56), and in Le Rameur we have the connotations of sacrifice

as the days are destroyed (11.21-24). There are perhaps echoes of the word bandeau in the Pythia's very similar lambeau (11.109-110), sign that she has become priestess and victim.

Pourpre may perhaps be the sign of sacrifice in Valéry (as in line 390 of La Jeune Parque:

Dans quelle blanche paix cette pourpre la laisse ...

It is also a sign of royalty, as in the pourpre redoutable (F du N II, 1.34). Diadème, the sign of the royalty of the sun, is to be found in line 77 of Le Cimetière Marin.

We find an equally significant use of Racine's second type of metonymy, where a part of the body indicates the whole. This type, in both Racine and Valéry, in addition to its dramatic and poetically functional uses, suggests the dominance of the body, and the first appearance of the serpent in La Jeune Parque indicates the importance Valéry attached to this device. The Parque grasps the whole nature of the creature from its disappearing traîne (1.38) — "La partie est suffisante."⁴³ If Racine's plays are "full of isolated arms, hearts, eyes, hates, loves, acting for their owners," (R R, p.80) we find the Parque's eyes, hands heart, also representing her, as in line 161:

Mon oeil noir est le seuil d'infemales demeures ...

and again "Cette main [...] attend" (11.4-6). The forehead, Front limpide, the floating tresses, speak for the Parque (11.104-107), the breast sighs for her (1.422), the heart acts for her (1.277):

Et puis, mon coeur aussi vous refuse sa foudre!

The same device is found in the poems of Charmes, particularly in the Fragments du Narcisse:

Mon coeur jette aux échos l'éclat de noms divins!! ...

(I, 1.120)

or

L'âme, l'âme aux yeux noirs touche aux ténèbres mêmes ...
(III, 1.41)

It is lyrically extended in the apostrophe to the various parts of the body in the membres de perle, cheveux soyeux. (I, 1.124). It is to be found, too, in Au Platane, souple chair de bois (1.49), and in Le Cimetière Marin, grande âme (1.97), while in Le Rameur, the disembodied soul acts through the physical hands: "Âme aux pesantes mains, pleines des avirons" (1.3) with a quite 17th century disregard for probability.

Even more striking is Valéry's use of the metonymy in which a quality of mind stands for the whole character, and the character becomes, for the moment, that quality, as in Phèdre's "Si ta haine m'envoie un supplice si doux" (Phèdre, II, 5, 1.708). La Jeune Parque supplies various examples:

Une avec le désir, je fus l'obéissance ...
(1.134)

and we have also ma lassitude (1.69), ma belle négligence (1.81), ma faiblesse (1.305), tant d'orgueil (1.473), while the serpent is fidélité (1.53), impatience, languueur (1.79). The procedure is equally marked in Charmes: Ma prudence (Aurore, 1.19), candeur (Au P, 11.3, 15), trouble fier (Au P, 1.45), antiques jeunesses (Colonnes, 1.45), Ma tendresse (F du N II, 1.99), Un désir (Ibid., 1.100). The abstract is notably absent from La Pythie (Une Intelligence, 1.29, and une Sagesse, 1.226, would seem to be the only examples), but abstractions return with Ebauche d'un Serpent. Here we have Ma paresse glacée (1.42), Mon [...] Intelligence (1.101), candeur (1.155), simplicité (1.161), while Le Cimetière Marin gives us puissance salée (1.131). The device achieves the same ends for

Valéry as for Racine. The compression is poetically effective, and the intensity of feeling conveyed by the concentration on one part of the body, one emotion, serve the dramatist, for they make of metonymy a passion figure:

Mon coeur jette aux échos l'éclat des noms divins! ...

(F du N I, 1.120)

The figure, as Valéry uses it, describes the speaker's attitude towards the other (as with the poet's candeur, trouble fier (11.3, 45) in Au Platane), and also describes the speaker's own personality and the view he takes of himself (the serpent's paresse glacée, 1.42, and his Innombrable Intelligence, 1.101, are enlightening). Again, the figure can be used to lend weight to an argument. The Parque's faiblesse de neige (1.315), her négligence (1.81), are points she makes in favour of her own purity and artlessness, her weakness, in opposition to the serpent's duplicity or the powers of fate.

It may also be argued that the greatest value of metonymy to Valéry lay in its power to concretise the abstract, and to eliminate the particular and personal, while never forgetting its decorative value. Thus we have the snake-like reality given to the abstract fidelité: "ta fidelité qui me fuit et devine," (LJP, 1.53), or the narrowing-down of the Parque to one abstract function,

Tout peut naître ici-bas d'une attente infinie ...

(1.73)

In this way, Valéry could obtain a complete fusion of mental event and physical substratum, in the confines of the single line, attaining an incredible degree of compression. This power outweighs, perhaps, even the usefulness of its dramatic function.

Another rhetorical device, periphrasis, was in Racine's time a necessity, for, given the dictates of the langue noble, it was the

only means of introducing the dramatically necessary, but unpoetical and plebeian object — Haman's gallows are a well-known example. This aspect, however, belongs rather to our discussion on Preciosity and is dealt with under that heading.

Nevertheless, other aspects of this device are equally important from the point of view of a dramatic poet. In the hands of both Racine and Valéry periphrasis is invaluable in obtaining a flow of thought or description, especially when the periphrasis takes the form of an apposition, as has been emphatically demonstrated by Brémond, Guiraud, and Sprenson.⁴⁴ The oft-quoted lines from Phèdre enlarging on the identity of Hippolyte and Thésée is a case in point. Phèdre uses a series of appositions to describe Thésée:

Oui, Prince, je languis, je brûle pour Thésée.
Je l'aime, non point tel que l'ont vu les enfers,
Volage adorateur de mille objets divers,
Qui va du dieu des morts déshonorer la couche;
Mais fidèle, mais fier, et même un peu farouche,
Charmant, jeune, trainant tous les coeurs après soi
Tel qu'on dépeint nos Dieux, ou tel que je vous voi ...

(Phèdre, II, 5, ll.635-640)

She continues, but we need no more to demonstrate our point. This passage does not only extend the flow of ideas. It makes a dramatic point, or several; the resemblance between Hippolyte and the young Thésée, Phèdre's attitude towards Thésée then and now, the power of Hippolyte's beauty, — and it acts as a series of arguments in favour of Phèdre's case; that her love is innocent, — Hippolyte is the young Thésée — and irresistible, for who could resist a god? And, as Peter France tells us (R R, pp.93-94), this same device, avoiding the repetition of the character's name, conveys additional information about that character, and the terms in which this information is couched open up the stage to a whole world of legend.

In the lines quoted above, the description is largely concentrated on physical beauty (as Aricie's in Act II, scene 1 is an eulogy of Hippolyte's mental and moral qualities), which, again, tells us much about Phèdre and Aricie, as well as Hippolyte. As for the power such periphrases have to open up the stage, this whole passage of Phèdre, Act II, scene 5 demonstrates Racine's ability to build up an entire enchanted world in line after line as successfully as he could evoke it in a single periphrasis, such as Hippolyte's description of Phèdre:⁴⁵

La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaë ...

(Phèdre, I, 1, 1.36)

This particular theme, as Racine uses it, was tailor-made for Valéry's needs. Again and again, he employs it to ensure the flow of thought — the passage on the tear (LJP, 11.281-298) is a good example of this — but he also used it, like Racine, to make a dramatic point. It is a figure of passion in the Parque's description of the serpent: "Quel désordre / De trésors s'arrachant à mon avidité!" (11.38-39), vividly conveying to us how she feels towards it, and a figure which succeeds also in giving us a description of the serpent's physical appearance and mental qualities. It thus acts as an argument in favour of the irresistible power of desire. Moreover, in the subsequent address to the serpent (11.56-94) Valéry uses the Racinian technique of avoiding a repetition of the name of the protagonist — the serpent is bras de pierreries (1.58), ondes (1.61), remous (1.62), enfantement de [...] tresse (1.65). These periphrastic descriptions enlarge the scenery. The natural world of rock, water, sand (riches déserts, 1.64), accompanies the fabulous world (enfers, 1.68), and the Dionysian Thyrse (1.83),

brings the god on to the stage.

Examples of Valéry's use of this technique could be multiplied indefinitely, but some examples from Charmes will perhaps suffice. The plane tree in Au Platane is referred to as Ombre retentissante (1.5), Haute profusion des feuilles, trouble fier (1.45), all of which give us a picture of the tree and its qualities, and indicates the poet's feeling towards it. So also do the serpent's periphrastic descriptions of his God, and Eve, in Ebauche d'un Serpent, the Narcissus' of the fountain, and of his image, the poet's of the sea in Le Cimetière Marin. At the same time, such periphrases illustrate the nature of the characters, and are points in an argument, as we may see from the circumstances which indicate immortality in Le Cimetière Marin: Consolatrice affreusement laurée ... (1.104). They describe its real nature, and argue against accepting its delusory promises, le beau mensonge, la pieuse ruse (1.106).

The same passage, in the same poem, will serve to introduce Valéry's use of the epithet. Here, too, Valéry is taking lessons from Racine. In Bérénice, Titus exclaims:

Ma gloire inexorable à toute heure me suit!

(Bérénice, V, 6, 1.1394)

Inexorable gives us the same quality as we find in Valéry's epithets, maigre, noire, dorée, affreusement (CM, 11.103-104). There is in fact no more powerful weapon than epithet in the dramatic poet's battle to move, to convince, and to please, for it colours the whole of the surrounding context. It compresses a whole attitude, or argument into two words: the noun, and its epithet. And where the combination is unexpected, the effect is even greater. Racine's use of the oxymoron not only gives the hearer a slightly perverse

pleasure, but elucidates a situation, and makes a dramatic point. Aricie's heureuse rigueur (Phèdre, II, 1, 1.435) is an example of this. Thésée's severity (his decree against Aricie's marriage) was fortunate, because in the past it had favoured her own inclinations — yet it was an exercise of power over a prisoner. The phrase underlines the contrast between the past and the present situation (Aricie now loves), making a dramatic point, and it suggests a mental balancing-point. The character sums up the diametrically opposed qualities of a certain situation, debates the pros and cons.

These qualities are exploited by Valéry. We find examples in La Jeune Parque, as the Parque debates her situation with herself, on her point of balance between life and death. Each contrasting epithet appears to conjure up an opposing quality: riches déserts (1.64), l'esprit sinistre et clair (1.275), sombre lys (1.407), will serve as examples. This mental tight-rope act lends its brilliance to Charmes also, in the quotation given above from Le Cimetière Marin, and in the absence épaisse (1.85) of the same poem. The Fragments du Narcisse is rich in examples: clair tombeau (I, 1.62), paix vertigineuse (I, 1.71), délicieux démon (I, 1.114), are a few of them, and in Palme we have the very Racinian grâce redoutable (1.1), adorable rigueur (1.52). But they are not there, any more than the earlier devices, in either Racine or Valéry, solely to demonstrate the poet's adroit handling of his material, and this applies too to the next device, hypallage.

This device was employed — not often, but very strikingly — by Racine. The best-known example is Phèdre's reference to the dust from Hippolyte's chariot-wheels:

Quand pourrai-je, au travers d'une noble poussière,
Suivre de l'oeil un char fuyant dans la carrière? ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, ll.177-178)

It was a technique much used by the symbolists in general, as Guiraud points out: "Valéry enfin use de l'hypallage, comme tous les symbolistes, mais avec beaucoup plus de discrétion et de subtilité que la plupart d'entre eux."⁴⁶ He adds that, with Valéry, the use of the device goes beyond the usual definition and enters another dimension: "Nous sommes bien dans le domaine du sensible et l'affectif."⁴⁷ This is just what makes hypallage, in the example from Racine above, a passion figure. It is Phèdre's feelings for Hippolyte which colour her attribute, noble, and it is this quality of feeling we find so often in La Jeune Parque: sombre soif (1.40), fonds passionnés (1.66), nuit curieuse (1.153), aromatique avenir (1.397), nuages heureux (1.399). Again, in Charmes, we have the revealing bras plus purs, trouble fier (Au P, ll.41, 45), épaisseur panique (F du N, I, 1.67), brute chaleur (Eb d'un S, 1.41), while the importance of the two epithets tendre, pur — their capacity to irradiate the contexts in which they occur⁴⁸ — is supreme.

Thus we can see how the device moves the spectator, and gives him important information about the characters. It does more. It can give the abstract noun a physical existence (l'âme avare, LJP, 1.75; sinueuse amour, Eb d'un S, 1.223); but far more often, with Valéry, it reverses the process, giving to the concrete the quality of a mental event: purs environs (LJP, 1.56), tendre odeur (Ibid., 1.218), barque sensible (Ibid., 1.342), or suave linceul (La Ceinture, 1.14), l'incorruptible altitude (F du N I, 1.25), distance désespérée (La P, 1.179).

In discussing the epithet under its various aspects, we found that one of its more interesting forms was the oxymoron. This may well be because it mirrors, within the bounds of the single line, one of the most important elements in rhetoric, the principle of antithesis. It presides over the whole of the 17th century dramatic poem — from the form of its structure to the confrontation of the characters. As Valéry noted, the structure of classical tragedy resembled a trial, le type procès,⁴⁹ and in another passage where he has begun by praising Racine, he goes on to describe the resemblance: "Il est vrai que chez nous, c'était l'éloquence raisonnante du barreau et une dialectique noble qui venaient s'expliquer sur la scène [...]."⁵⁰ Nor was this, we might add, just a dialectic between the characters of a play, but a concealed contest between the author and his public. It was the glory of the poet to overcome his adversary, the spectator, and to convert him to a belief in the reality of the emotions of the characters, and so gain an invisible argument.

As an element in 17th century rhetoric, antithesis was not, of course, a device peculiar to Racine, but it is hard to think of a poet of that time who made better poetry through its use. It would be hard, too, to find a classical tragedy richer in antithesis than Phèdre, in its opposition of purity and guilt, of light and dark, speech and silence, while the fundamental opposition of principles the play mirrors is echoed in its structure, and in the syntax.

Here, as in all the great plays, antithesis, besides pleasing ear and mind with its balance, is capable of being a passion figure, a dramatic marker, and an aid to character analysis. When Phèdre exclaims:

Sers ma fureur, Oenone, et non point ma raison ...

(Phèdre, III, 1, 1.792)

her exclamation — besides illuminating her feelings — marks a turning-point in the drama, the moment of Phèdre's complete abandon to desire.

Antithesis describes character too, as we see from Aricie's description of Hippolyte:

J'aime, je prise en lui de plus nobles richesses,
Les vertus de son père, et non les faiblesses ...

(Phèdre, II, 1, 11.441-442)

Here we learn Aricie's opinion of both son and father. And her further remarks (combining metonymy and antithesis) about her aspirations:

Mais de faire fléchir un courage inflexible,
De porter la douleur dans une âme insensible ...

(Ibid., 11.450-451)

throw yet more light on her own character, as well as her attitude towards Hippolyte.

It is scarcely necessary to insist on the fundamental antitheses of La Jeune Parque — although a list of them would correspond very closely with that given above for Phèdre. The importance of antithesis to the poem may well have been suspected from Valéry's statement about it in 1917: "J'ai joué à deux doigts."⁵¹ The suspicion is confirmed by remarks in unpublished notes: "Idée générale de dualismes — (grand sujet, Amour:haine. Leur combinaison."⁵²

We have mentioned some of the fundamental antitheses of Phèdre and suggested that they are to be found in La Jeune Parque. The structures of the play and the poem have already been discussed.⁵³ But the dramatic utility of the device in the text is no less Racinian, and the device itself no less a figure of passion:

Lumière! ... ou toi, la mort! Mais le plus prompt me prenne!

(1.253)

Again, we have a dramatic marker and a revelation of feeling in the Parque's whirlwind of rejection:

Je n'accorderai pas la lumière à des ombres,
Je garde loin de vous l'esprit sinistre et clair

(11.274-275)

while the two speeches from which the quotations are taken (11.244-257 and 258-278) are in themselves antithetic.

It will have been noticed that the antitheses quoted above throw light on the Parque's character as well as her feelings. This quality also is to be found in her descriptions of the serpent, an entity of opposing characteristics: sombre soif de la limpidité (1.40), proche impatience, lourde langueur (1.79). The succession of opposing qualities the Parque ascribes to it do not only describe it, but underline her own, ambivalent, feelings towards it.

It is not too much to say, indeed, that this spirit of antithesis, so marked in La Jeune Parque, informs all Valéry's dramatic poetry from that poem onwards. It certainly pervades the poems of Charmes. Indeed, lines from Poésie suggest that for Valéry, antithesis, that so-called intellectual figure, was bound up with the essential contradictions of poetry, inspiration and control: "Je sentais, à boire l'ombre / M'envahir une clarté," (11.15-16); while a line from Le Cimetière Marin suggests that a fundamental identity, the driving force of all creation, exists behind an appearance of opposition: "Amour, peut-être, ou de moi-même haine?" (1.115).

However that may be, it is evident that Valéry uses antithesis to conduct his dialectic throughout Charmes and also that the fundamental theme of his argument is the running battle between

opposites. It may be between purity and the base:

Mais toi, de bras plus purs que les bras animaux, ...
(Au P, 11.41-42)

Le temple se change dans l'antre, ...
(La P, 1.105)

Une voix nouvelle et blanche
Echappe de ce corps impur, ...
(Ibid., 11.219-220)

Or perhaps it is the battle between dream and reality:

O forme obéissante à mes vœux opposée!
(F du N, I, 1.116)

darkness and light:

... mais rendre la lumière
Suppose d'ombre une morne moitié! ...
(CM, 11.41-42)

Or it may be the opposition of life and death, mind and matter:

L'argile rouge a bu la blanche espèce
(CM, 1.86)

However, it is rather the dramatic effectiveness of the device which concerns us in this discussion, its quality as a passion figure, underlining the intensity of emotion:

Ils se sentent des pleurs défendre leurs ténèbres
Plus chers à jamais que tous les feux du jour ...
(F du N, II, 11.78-79)

or revealing character, as in the serpent's:

Bête je suis, mais bête aiguë, ...
(Eb d'un S, 1.8)

which tells us, not just that the serpent is self-satisfied, précieux, and dangerous, but reveals his attitude towards himself, just as the roi des ombres fait de flamme describes the sun and the serpent's feelings towards it (Ibid., 1.40). Moreover, antithesis can mark a turning-point in the drama, the introduction of a factor which

destroys the apparent status quo. In Le Cimetière Marin it underlines the actual beginning of movement:

Je m'abandonne à ce brillant espace
Sur les maisons des morts mon ombre passe ...

(CM, 11.34-35)

Indeed, its constant underlying presence informs the argument of the poem from its beginning: Ce toit tranquille, palpite (11.1, 2), thus, as in Racine's plays, informing the spectator of the facts before the characters themselves have grasped their full import. It is part, too, of the characters' argument with themselves, the other, or destiny. The effectiveness of the epithet in Le Cimetière Marin has already been mentioned, and this effectiveness is reinforced by the antithesis between noire and dorée, Consolatrice, affreusement in lines 103 and 104 of the poem.

If antithesis, pattern figure though it is, can be used as a passion figure and turned to structural use, so too can repetition. It gives pleasure, certainly (the ear delights in recognising a sound), but it is also a basic element in the characters' attempts at persuasion and the poet's argument with the listener.

In Racine's plays, repetition is always a sign that the characters' emotions are deeply involved. Simple repetition, Hippolyte's J'aime, j'aime (Phèdre, IV, 2, 1.1122) or Esther's Non, non (Esther, I, 4, 1.269), suggests to the audience that the speaker is so involved that he cannot stand back and search for elegant constructions. It is a sign of utter sincerity and conviction, or of naïveté. The passage in which the speaker continually returns to the same word, or the same clusters of words, is equally an indication of intensity. Bérénice's speech in Act IV, scene 5 is the perfect instance. The constant repetition of the jour,

the que le jour, the sans que (11.116-117) show how passionately Bérénice is obsessed with the apprehension of coming loss.

Both of these types of repetition can also be seen as an effort to convince. Esther's Non, non marks a turning-point in her argument. She has shown one side of the coin — the ingratitude of the Israelites and the absolute domination of the unbeliever. Now she turns to the reasons why this domination should not be allowed to continue (Esther, I, 4, 11.269-270). Bérénice, for her part, is bringing forward the strongest argument she can find against Titus' decision to part from her — the length of time for which each must endure the cruel absence of the other.

It is, of course, not merely words, or clusters of words, which can be repeated. The same idea, or object, can be continually emphasised, as in Phèdre's speech to Hippolyte in Act II, scene 5. Here the succession of clauses which qualify Thésée (11.634-644) betray Phèdre's obsession with Hippolyte. They are points in her hidden argument and describe the characters, for Phèdre's picture of both father and son sheds light on her mind also.

The best example of the uses of repetition, and of its varied types, however, occurs in Bérénice quoted above. Here we have repetition of the question (and we have already noted the efficacy of the question as a marker of emotion), the repetition of clusters of words, and of the idea. The passage begins with the statement of the position as Bérénice sees it:

Le temps n'est plus, Phénice, où je pouvais trembler.
Titus m'aime; il peut tout: il n'a plus qu'à parler,
Il verra le sénat m'apporter ses hommages.

and then continues with a repetition of all the elements which have contributed to that power she attributes to Titus, hammered home by

the repeated Ces, cette, piled on one another:

De cette nuit, Phénice, as-tu vu la splendeur?
Tes yeux ne sont-ils pas tout pleins de sa grandeur?
Ces flambeaux, ce bucher, cette nuit enflammée,
Ces aigles, ces faisceaux, ce peuple, cette armée,
Cette foule de rois, ces consuls, ce sénat
Qui tous de mon amant empruntaient leur éclat ...

and so on, down to line 311:

Ce port majestueux, cette douce présence ...

(Bérénice, I, 5, 11.297-311)

Here all the poet's aims are achieved, for the passage, besides demonstrating the intensity of Bérénice's feelings, and giving us her view of Titus' power and worth, gives us her opinion of the opposition (subservient), and her estimate of her own power. It illustrates her character, her royal self-confidence and her faith in her lover's promises. It is also a refutation of Phénice's previous statement (itself reinforced by repetition, the emphasis of Rome, Romains) in lines 293 - 296:

Rome vous voit, madame, avec des yeux jaloux:
La rigueur de ses lois m'épouvante pour vous:
L'hymen chez les Romains n'admet qu'une Romaine:
Rome hait tous les rois: et Bérénice est reine ...

Yet, ironically, Bérénice's accumulation of the evidence of Titus' power, which is also the power of Rome, makes us aware of the real strength of the opposition. In this way, her repetition marks the beginning of the real battle, and thus contributes to the shaping of the plot.

A device so effective in Racine's hands was not likely to be neglected by Valéry, and, in fact, we find him using it for the same purposes as did Racine — for the purpose of giving pleasure to the waiting ear and mind, certainly, but for the other aims also. For the first of these other purposes, to show intensity of passion,

Valéry too uses simple repetition, the Parque's

Non, non! ... N'irrite plus cette réminiscence!

(1.406)

or the Narcissus' "J'aime! ... J'aime!" (III, 1.10), the Soleil, soleil! of the serpent of the Ebauche (1.21). We have, too, the poet's invocation in Le Cimetière Marin, "Midi là-haut, Midi sans mouvement!" (1.75).

Simple repetitions can mark argument for Valéry too. Just as Esther's Non, non, marks the turning-point in her argument (the beginnings of her counter-argument), the Parque's Non, non! (1.406) marks the beginning of her counter-argument — her denial of the dream, her movement towards reality. This is true also for the Narcissus. His declaration (III, 1.10 above) is a climactic point in his drama, the moment when he admits the truth, and the prelude to the tragic acceptance of reality.

Simple repetition, therefore, is poetically and dramatically effective. But Valéry gets even more value, as did Racine, from the multiple reduplication we noted in Bérénice — the clusters of words. "Mon coeur bat! Mon coeur bat!" (LJP, 1.254) is already an advance on simple repetition, but even more effect is obtained from the repeated quel, quelle of La Jeune Parque:

Quel repli de désirs, sa traîne! Quel désordre [...]

Et quelle sombre soif de la limpidité!

(11.38, 40)

and again, "Quelle résisterait, mortelle, à ces remous? / Quelle mortelle?" (11.243-244). We could also adduce the repeated même(s) of the Fragments du Narcisse (II, 11.111-113).

The examples of repetition we have given from La Jeune Parque fulfil the aims of repetition in general as we have defined them.

The first indicates the passionate nature of the Parque's feelings towards the serpent,⁵⁴ but also enlightens us as to the serpent's essential nature. The second instance gives us the Parque's view of herself, mortelle (an admission she has been slow to make), and of her opponent, who is invincible: Quelle résisterait. He is a god, in fact, as opposed to the mortelle with which she qualifies herself. Further, the repetition reinforces a point in her argument. She cannot be blamed for yielding to such an opponent — and, in fact, the repetition also marks a critical point in the drama: the Parque's admission comes at the moment when she is about to yield to desire.

When we come to the use of the repeated construction, we find that Valéry is equally fond of this device. His use of the repeated question as a mark of emotion has been commented upon (p.331), but he, too, exploits the repetition of the qualifying clause — the apposition, whose usefulness as a dramatic device has already been emphasised. With this device we enter the field of a third type of repetition, the repetition of an idea, for which it is ideally suited. Both of our poets have obtained great effect from the simpler types of the repetition of an idea or object — those where the character, returning to his or her obsession, obtains (and gives) a different aspect of it, as with the Parque's poison: Le poison, mon poison (LJP, 1.44), "Jalouse ... Mais de qui jalouse et menacée?" (Ibid., 1.46), or the serpent's tree:

Arbre, grand Arbre, Ombre des cieux,
Irrésistible Arbre des arbres,

(Eb d'un S, 11.271-272)

Valéry, however, like Racine, obtained his greatest triumphs in the field of extended parallelism. Here, the repetition of an idea,

translated by the repetition of a construction, demonstrates the intensity of the feelings which inspire it, while giving the maximum of pleasure through the different images in which the obsessive idea is clothed. The greater part of La Jeune Parque might be said to be built up on a series of such passages, from that on the stars, beginning "Tout-puissants étrangers, inévitables astres" (1.18), where Valéry requires six lines to celebrate the differing aspects of their glory, to the passage on the tear (11.280-298) (where the repetition of the word, the all-important larme, and of the construction, both contribute to the repetition of the idea), and to the final passage (11.495-511). Here the themes of life and death which have formed the main argument of the poem return, to be re-introduced and described under the aspects of the sea and of the sun by the emphatically reiterated Si: Si je viens (1.496), si l'âme (1.501), si l'onde (1.502).

There is naturally less scope for such extended parallelism in the poems of Charmes. Nevertheless, some of the longer poems do offer examples. Stanzas 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 of Ebauche d'un Serpent are all devoted to the same theme, the imperfection of the Sun/God; stanzas 28, 29 and 30 explore the aspects of the tree of Knowledge. In the first example, stanzas 3, 4, 6 and 7 are there to inform us, not only of the serpent's obsession with the object of his devotion, but of his character, and that of his opponent (for the tone of his variations on his theme instructs us). They are there, too, to reinforce his side of the argument. They are dramatically effective, acting as exposition, and preparing us for the moment when Eve will make her entry and the serpent display his powers. Similarly, the stanzas devoted to the tree of Knowledge, after describing and

explaining it, and exalting its powers, serve as another example of the serpent's power of destruction, and close the last act of his eternally repeated tragedy.

Again, the persistence with which the sea in Le Cimetière Marin is associated with the idea of a living, breathing being (ll.2, 15, 49-50, 60, 61, 130-131, stanza 23), enlightens us as to the nature of one of the protagonists. The repetition of the differing guises under which the idea returns, fausse captive (1.49), golfe mangeur (1.50), Chienne splendide (1.61), panthère (1.134), hydre (1.136), are arguments against, or for, the acceptance of its double nature (though it is destructive, its breath is life-giving (ll.130-131)). Lines 130 - 138, in a concerted attack upon the senses, render that acceptance almost inevitable. They mark the concluding peroration of an argument, and also, a moment of climax in the drama (just as an earlier repetition: Beau ciel, vrai ciel (1.31) had marked a moment of dramatic change, from stillness to movement).

We have now described some of the ways in which Racine and Valéry used the various devices of rhetoric. There is a sense, however, in which rhetoric is even more important to the work of both poets, for its pattern can dictate the fundamental pattern of the dramatic poem. In his analysis of Racine's use of rhetoric, Peter France notes that there is a resemblance between the structures of rhetoric and the overall structure of the 17th century play:

There is [...] a loose parallel between the different parts of a speech and the acts of a play, particularly between the exordium and the exposition, the peroration and the passionate final act [...]⁵⁵

Now this structure of the play as a whole, with its resemblance to the structure of a speech, is also reflected in the long tirades in which Racine's characters alternate their arguments, each character

in turn refuting the points made by his or her opponent. Valéry, in La Jeune Parque, seizes upon the rhetorical qualities of the tirade. The Parque's speech to the serpent (11.50-96) is an excellent example of this. It is essentially an argument between the Parque and her adversary the serpent (her other self). However, this argument, rather than being formally laid out in an open alternating discussion, as for example that between Phèdre and Oenone in Act I, scene 3 of Phèdre, or the symmetrical opposing speeches of Agrippine and Burrhus in Act I of Britannicus, is conducted, very largely through antithesis, within the structure of the alexandrine, and often of the single line. The distich

Laisse donc défaillir ce bras de pierreries
Qui menace d'amour mon sort spirituel ...

(11.58-59)

combines the Parque's argument against the serpent (menace, d'amour opposing sort spirituel) and the serpent's retort. He offers love, amour, and riches of mind, bras de pierreries. The single line can also give this opposition,

Rappelle ces remous, ces promesses immondes ...

(1.62)

where the serpent's promesses are countered by the Parque's immondes. It is the argument of the self with the other, so frequent in Racine, and the balance of the arguments is relatively equal until the Parque's peroration, beginning at line 84, dismisses the serpent's temptations. Reason, awake and triumphant (Moi, je veille), and purity (pâle, 1.90), reduce the opponent's suggestions to insubstantiality, visions (1.95). The argument terminates with this clincher, in fact:

Tant de mes visions parmi la nuit et l'oeil
Les moindres mouvements consultent mon orgueil ...

(11.95-96)

In the process of refuting the serpent's arguments, Valéry gives the Parque all the arms of rhetoric. Unfortunately for her success, the serpent has them too. The antithesis between mind and body, purity and impurity, light and dark, is the inventio, the matter of the argument. The Parque employs exclamation, combined with command, Va! (1.50-51), and with imprecation — the whole of the section beginning

Fuis-moi! Du noir retour reprends le fil visqueux
(11.84-89)

is an extended imprecation. She employs metaphor: her purity and spirituality are given visual impact with the rocs charmants (1.56), the lait des rêveries (1.57), the riches déserts (1.64), and so on. She employs metonymy, allocating to herself âme (1.54), esprit (1.70), surprise (1.63), lassitude (1.69), négligence (here, lack of ornament, simplicity) (1.81), innocence (1.89), orgueil (1.96). She further uses the sentence, which is a form of metonymy: "L'esprit n'est pas si pur — / tombeau" (11.70-72), and the more obvious

Tout peut naître ici-bas d'une attente infinie
(1.73)

thus seeing herself as spirit, and attente. For the serpent she reserves the mélange de noeuds (1.52), promesses immondes (1.62), enfantement de fureur (1.65), détours, languueur (11.78-79), and so on. To demonstrate her purity, Valéry gives her and her attributes the epithets charmants (1.56), spirituel (1.59), riches (1.64), pensifs (1.68), belle (1.81), pâle (1.90), while the serpent and his attributes are characterised as immondes (1.62), capricieux (1.77), prompt (here hasty, ready to anger) (1.77), lourde (1.79), noir (1.84), visqueux (1.84), animal (1.88). The Parque employs the minor device of litotes,

Tu ne peux rien sur moi qui ne soit moins cruel

(1.60)

and all the devices of repetition, from the moins - moins of lines 60 - 61 to the avoidance of the name, in favour of a description, designating the serpent as remous, promesses immondes (1.62), while the whole passage is nothing less than a re-statement of the same opposing ideas. Further, it gives Valéry an opportunity to display his most subtle use of the devices of rhetoric, his employment of irony. The Parque's arguments for purity carry undertones of the undesirable quality of sterility — déserts, 1.64; avare, 1.75 — her faculties of mind are perfide (1.83), her denial of life is monstrous (prodigieuse, 1.90). The serpent's animal qualities promise love, warmth (amour, 1.59; porte de feu, 1.76), and riches (bras de pierreries, 1.58). They bring creativeness (couve, 1.87) and pleasure (détours [...] courus de caresses, 1.78). The richness of implications is enormous, but all are strictly controlled within the rhetorical structure of the line and of the speech, and obtained by the use of the wide range of rhetorical figures.

The foregoing remarks may help to explain why Valéry could have found a model for his use of rhetoric in the dramatic poetry of Racine. Racine, unlike many of his contemporaries, almost always used the figures for functional purposes. In his hands, they lost nothing of their decorative value, their power to please, but their power to move, illustrate, persuade, was never sacrificed for the sake of empty word-play. As transcriptions of psychological truth (for so Valéry regarded at least one figure, the metaphor, "fragment d'un indivisible psychique, non moins réel, mais plus"),⁵⁶ they were of inestimable value to him in his need to express psychological

truths in terms of dramatic poetry. In Valéry's hands, Racine's most favoured devices convince us of the truth of the feelings which are being expressed. They convey the emotion Valéry wishes us to feel, they describe for us the characters he is depicting, and they reflect the reasoning qualities of the intellect.

Moreover, since Valéry's characters are (in La Jeune Parque at least) the varying qualities and movements of the human mind (qualities which depend upon the physical for their existence), rhetoric offered two advantages of particular value. Metonymy, as Racine used it, gave Valéry the power to personify the abstract, and its corollary, the power to project the physical being as a mental process. It is as if the emotions themselves were conducting the argument, and the characters no more than their puppets:

Une tragédie "classique" ne demande les acteurs que pour diversifier la voix, accuser les différences du ton des discours et en accroître l'effet par une "action" oratoire.⁵⁷

Rhetoric subtends their very existence: "La rhétorique est l'intervention cherchée de tout l'individu au secours de la proposition."⁵⁸

In this sense then, we can understand Valéry's assertion that the ornaments of rhetoric were essential to poetry, and mirrored the workings of the mind,⁵⁹ and it is in this sense that they reflect the whole nature of Racine's characters, and of Valéry's.

Les Figures du Style

Notes

1. C 6, 639.
2. See Jeannine Jallat, Valéry et les figures de rhétorique, Cahiers Paul Valéry I, p.153.
3. C 2, 81 (1900-1901).
4. Cahiers Paul Valéry I, (hereafter C P V, I).
5. It did in fact receive an answer. I am indebted to Dr C. G. Millan for a copy of Louÿs' reply : "Tu demandes où trouve-t-on ces définitions de figures rhétorique? [...] achète donc [...] le Vaporeau, Dictionnaire des Littératures, Hachette, 1876. Livre en retard de quarante ans mais que rien n'a remplacé."
6. Boileau's description of the effect of line 1524 of the Récit de Théràmène, an example of the art of pattern of rhetoric, bears witness to this. (Réflexions critiques sur Longin, p.11.)
7. Letter to Pierre Louÿs (O C V, I, Notes, p.1625). Again we note Valéry's insistence on the rules.
8. This had been Valéry's wish as early as 1903, when he describes his aim thus in the Cahiers : "J'ai rêvé jadis quelque oeuvre d'art — écrit. [...] Aussi bien je désirerais [...] que le lecteur malévole fut saisi tout à fait intérieurement par ces formes [of his projected work] qui devaient atteindre de suite le mécanisme même de sa pensée et penser à sa place, au lieu où il pense." (C 3, 78-79). It is still his aim in 1912, when he calls it a Napoleonic ambition : "Tel est le but napoléonique de l'écrit." (C 4, 789).
9. C 6, 350 (1916); Ibid., 758 (1917).
10. Notably the Réflexions critiques sur Longin mentioned in note 6.
11. C 7, 142 (1918). Valéry's remark : "A Théràmène, le Récit! Le grand vers hémistiché — réséqué aux porte-paroles des grandes choses et aux grands instants" reminds one of Valéry's strictures on the noble et universel in C 6, 170.
12. C 6, 169-170. This passage is an almost complete summing up of what Valéry found most admirable in Racine; later passages, which differ in detail, are often enlargements or repetitions of what he wrote here. The passage itself is quoted in full in Chapter IX .
13. "Corneille plaide, célèbre, fulmine, argumente" (C 8, 897 (1922)). See also C 15, 334, "Corneille [...] voit gros, fort, et devant témoins."

14. C 7, 210 (1918).
15. C 20, 736.
16. La Poésie de Paul Valéry, pp.221-251.
17. Guiraud, pp.191-199.
18. See note 2.
19. Racine et Valéry, pp.201-207.
20. For a definition of the figures of rhetoric, and for Racine's use of them, this study is much indebted to Peter France's Racine's Rhetoric (hereafter R R). This has been the more valuable as Valéry himself was somewhat vague in his use of the nomenclature of the figures.
21. "Les grandes figures qui sont aux choses et aux sentiments et non pas celles qui sont dans les paroles." (Pratique, pp.422-455). In other words, these are the figures which express the most real feelings, and the deepest.
22. La Poésie de Paul Valéry, pp.221 and 227.
23. Guiraud, p.193.
24. La Motivation des Formes et des Mètres chez Valéry, Paul Valéry Contemporain (hereafter P V C), p.377. Here Morier underlines the rhetorical element in Le Cimetière Marin.
25. Other examples of this are Clytemnestre's invocation of the sun (Iphigénie, V, 4, ll.1689) and Phèdre's invocation of Venus (Phèdre, III, 2, ll.813 et seq.).
26. Clytemnestre and Agamemnon (Iphigénie, IV, 4, ll.1249 et seq.).
27. Thésée and Hippolyte (Phèdre, IV, 2).
28. Hermione and Oreste (Andromaque, III, 5).
29. R R, p.171.
30. C 27, 703.
31. Théràmène's to Hippolyte (I, 1); Oenone's to Phèdre (I, 3); Aricie's to Ismène (II, 1); Thésée's to Hippolyte (III, 5); Hippolyte's to Thésée (IV, 2) — and so on to the final question, Thésée's to Théràmène (V, 6).
32. Guiraud, p.193.
33. La Poésie de Paul Valéry, p.222 et seq.
34. Ibid.

35. Valéry gives this quotation from the preface to Bérénice a line to itself (C 17, 830 (1935)).
36. D'Aubignac, Pratique, p.442.
37. C 9, 57.
38. Des Tropes, p.95, quoted by Peter France (R R, p.75).
39. This is Hermione's outburst : "Mon coeur, mon lâche coeur, s'intéresse pour lui [Pyrrhus]?" (Andromaque, V, 1, l.1404).
40. Thésée is describing his reception by his family : "Je n'ai pour tout accueil que des frémissements : / Tout fuit, tout se refuse à mes embrassements ..." (Phèdre, III, 5, ll.975-976).
41. R R, p.76.
42. The most poignant example is from Iphigénie, "De festons odieux ma fille couronnée" (V, 4, l.1694), but we could also cite the wreaths held by the Hebrew children (threatened by Athalie) or the ornaments of the temple where Athalie is sacrificed to Jahveh (Athalie, I, 1, l.303; Ibid., I, 1, ll.1-7). Even the decorative initials in Bérénice (V, 5, l.1325) will preside over the parting of Titus and Berenice, a sacrifice to gloire.
43. See note 1.
44. See Brémond, Racine et Valéry, pp.201 et seq.; Guiraud, pp.194 et seq.; Sørensen, La Poesie de Paul Valéry, pp.205, 236.
45. Another of Racine's lines quoted by Valéry in the Cahiers, once to illustrate a point of poetic technique, with reference to Mallarmé (C 21, 693), and once as an illustration for a speculation on time theory (C 29, 448).
46. Guiraud, p.197.
47. Ibid., p.198.
48. For the idea of irradiation, see Guiraud, p.198. Guiraud singles out tendre lueur in particular, but the same quality is inherent in the key adjectives pur, ombre.
49. C 29, 669.
50. C 23, 757.
51. C 6, 508-509.
52. Notes Diverses. The words "grand sujet — Amour : haine. Leurs combinaisons" are typewritten in red, the rest in black.
53. In Chapter II.

54. The serpent is associated with desire (1.38), and longing, avidité (1.39).
55. R R, pp.31-32.
56. C 5, 709 (1915).
57. C 8, 853 (*My italics*).
58. C 3, 518.
59. See the quotation at the beginning of this chapter.

CHAPTER IX

L'ESSENCE DES VERS

L'Essence des Vers

La puissance des vers tient à une harmonie indéfinissable entre ce qu'ils disent et ce qu'ils sont [...]
L'impossibilité — ou du moins la difficulté — de définir cette relation, combinée avec l'impossibilité de la nier, constitue l'essence des vers ...¹

This was what Valéry wrote in 1918, in attempting to analyse Hippolyte's most famous line: "Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur." Later in the same year, however, he puts his finger on a basic principle underlying this 'indefinable harmony', and he chose part of the Prière d'Esther to illustrate it. This passage is so important, as illuminating Valéry's concept of Racine's technique, and its possible application to La Jeune Parque and Charmes, that we quote it here in some detail:

De la régularité syllabique

Le système des vers réguliers rend possible une harmonie de genre particulier qui s'ajoute aux autres [...]. C'est la combinaison qui peut se produire, et qui le doit, entre l'égalité (grossière) des nombres de syllabes 12 = 12 = 12 et d'autre part les membres syntaxiques d'un discours suivi.

Une seule phrase se divisant en alexandrins, d'une part, le sujet avec ses compléments propres peut, par exemple, tenir un vers, une apposition un autre vers; toute une proposition, un vers, etc. En d'autres termes, l'unité vers contient ou une proposition ou plusieurs, ou une partie de proposition ...

Then, after enumerating various parts of Racine's sentences, the passage continues:

Or, la nécessité d'accomplir ces 12 syllabes donne à la [illegible word, possibly distribution] une majesté, une organisation.²

Prosody and syntax together, then, are the prosaic ingredients which, successfully combined (as in a chemical reaction), will produce the indefinable music. They must therefore be dealt with

together, and, since we have Valéry's own word for it that music must be subordinate to sense: "Musique des poètes [...] doit se plier à la condition de groupement des syllabes (mélodiques) en mots,"³ we will begin with syntax.

La syntaxe est une faculté de l'âme.⁴

This single-line statement from the Cahiers for 1918 sums up the vital importance of syntax to Valéry's portrayal of the human entity in poetry, for syntax was essential to poetry itself: "Ce qu'il y a de plus important dans un poème, c'est la syntaxe. Elle doit être, et engendrer le discours quant à l'enchaînement au "mouvement"." (C 20, 475).

Valéry's preoccupation with Racine's syntax first comes to the fore at the time when La Jeune Parque and Charmes were absorbing his thoughts. In 1915, he gives a quotation from Athalie as an example of syntax,⁵ and in 1916, we find him contrasting 17th century syntax and contemporary usage, with Racine as an example.⁶ Later in the same year, Valéry mentions Racine's adherence to Boileau's principles.⁷ It is however in 1918 that we find one of Valéry's most important references to syntax, the passage relating to the Prière d'Esther quoted above. And when we find that, towards the end of his life, not only was Valéry's interest in Racine's syntax still alive,⁸ but that he intended to devote a considerable part of his speech for the Racine tercentenary celebrations to a discussion of the techniques employed in the Prière d'Esther, the relevance of the Prayer and of both passages to our discussion becomes indisputable.

Indeed, the 1939 reference to the Prayer is in a sense a pendant to, an elaboration of the 1918 passage:

Examiner le problème de la prosodie — syntaxe.

Prière d'Esther

Les propositions se dégagent les uns des autres, s'énoncent [...] Dans l'anticipation du morceau, ce sont les conjonctions qui font les entrées des thèmes: Non, non ... Nouvelle reprise avec Pour moi ... [...]

Rôle de l'inversion: son usage est précieux comme s'écartant du cours ordinaire du langage, qui, par elle, se régénère. Le vers est subordonné à la période, chez Racine, au contraire de ce qui est chez Hugo, où le "beau vers" l'emporte. La Phrase, si harmonieuse pour Racine, n'a pas de valeur pour Hugo.⁹

It is, as we can see, the same integration of prosody and syntax into a harmonious whole, that is in question.

We have now brought evidence to show how important Valéry considered Racine's syntax in its relation to poetry. It seems natural to believe that he would have applied its principles to his own work. Is there any suggestion of this possibility in the work of Valéry's commentators?

It is indeed generally accepted that Valéry's syntax has been influenced by classical 17th century usages. Commentators, taking up Valéry's general remarks, acknowledge Racine's influence in the effect of continuity given by Valéry's constructions — Bémol, for instance, writes of the structure, ordonnance du discours, pureté continue de la ligne, but gives no examples.¹⁰ Sørensen writes of specific types of 17th century syntax used by Valéry,¹¹ but without particular reference to Racine. Brémond infers that there is a link between Valéry's continuity and Racine's, when he writes of Racine's use of appositions,¹² but dismisses the question of precise details of syntax: "Aux techniciens d'en dire plus long."¹³ Guiraud, indeed, takes up Brémond's theme and compares Racine's

appositions directly with Valéry's;¹⁴ he also contrasts certain types of the use of conjunctions in a table which includes Valéry and Racine,¹⁵ but otherwise his chapter on syntax considers Valéry's syntax in its own right, or with reference to the symbolists.¹⁶ A direct and extended comparison between the syntax of Racine and that of Valéry does not appear to have been made. The pages which follow, although their scope is necessarily limited, are an attempt to fill part of this gap.

Our two most valuable pieces of evidence with regard to Valéry's use of Racine's syntax are those quoted above — that is, his analysis of the Prière d'Esther in 1918, and the remarks in the hitherto unpublished Racine notes. The first of these throws light upon Valéry's conception of Racine's continuity, and the structural role of Racinian syntax. The second emphasises those elements of Racine's syntax which contribute to the overall structure and flow of the lines. A study of those disparate elements, mentioned in the second example, may perhaps help us to evaluate Valéry's use of the means by which Racine achieved his aims, atomes du beau;¹⁷ a discussion of these will therefore precede our consideration of the integration of these into the whole, the 1918 analysis of the Prière d'Esther.

In his 1939 consideration of the Prayer, Valéry notes down three particular aspects of Racine's syntax: formes particulières, Conjonctions, Inversion. We may perhaps be allowed to suggest that under the first heading, Valéry had intended to enlarge on the superiority of 17th century syntax, as used by Racine, over the forms of contemporary usage — a preference we have already noted.¹⁸ It is underlined in a comment made by Valéry on his own syntax,

where he singles out two of his predilections:

Archaïsmes - - me sont parfois reprochés [...] je préfère Viendrez-vous à l'horrible Est-ce que vous viendrez? Je préfère se peut comparer à peut se comparer [...] ¹⁹

That Valéry prefers certain forms of 17th century syntax, formes particulières, forms to be found in Racine, stands out plainly from a study of La Jeune Parque and Charmes — even without Valéry's own testimony and the examples to be found in his prose. We will attempt to distinguish some of these forms.

Among the most frequent examples to be found in the poems are the position of the noun and its adjective; the position of the personal pronoun; the use of soi; the use of the subjunctive, and of certain forms of interrogation; and the use of the varying forms of inversion. Minor points include the absence of the definite article, the use of certain forms of the verb, and of its agreement, the use of certain prepositions, and the use of nul. The conjunction and its use are important enough to require a separate discussion, and will be dealt with below.

We will begin with one of the more frequent instances of 17th century syntax in Valéry's work. Although the position of the adjective is by no means fixed in present-day French (especially in poetic diction), it is unusual to find it so constantly placed before the noun as in Valéry's poems. Its place, in these, appears to conform with the classical usage, as described by Grévisse,²⁰ one of whose examples indeed is taken from Racine:

De ma sanglante mort ta mort sera suivie ...

(Bajazet, II, 1, 1.557)

A similar position for the adjective is already to be found in Valéry's first draft for La Jeune Parque,

A la pressante main, ma main se serait jointe ...²¹
and is repeated again and again in this and in other poems,
"blonde pulpe" (LJP, 1.116), "vaine puissance" (LJP, 1.133),
"confuse cendre" (Au P, 1.22), "intacte nuit" (La P, 1.84),
"l'étincelante queue" (CM, 1.137), "sensibles soleils" (Le R, 1.30).

There is, moreover, an example of the 17th century placing of
adjectives both before and after the noun they qualify in La Jeune Parque:²²

Et je ne savais plus de mon antique corps
Insensible, qu'un feu qui brûlait sur mes bords ...

(LJP, 11.99-100)

The position of our next example, the personal pronoun, in
Valéry's poems is even more strikingly in agreement with classical
usage (for poetry, as we noted, allows more freedom to the position
of the adjective). We might suspect this would be so from the
quotation from Athalie in the Cahiers for 1915,²³ even if Valéry had
not later proclaimed his preference for this form.²⁴ The quotation
from Athalie is given as an example of a usage which is now
obsolete, "Me devrais-je inquiéter?" Valéry does not confine himself
to placing the reflexive personal pronoun only in this less usual
position, as in "se venait assoupir," (LJP, 1.121), "Elle se sent
surprendre" (Au P, 1.37), "Ma soif me vient abattre" (F du N I, 1.4),
but uses the same syntax with the forms le, la, lui — as does Racine:

L'occasion est belle, il la faut embrasser ...

(Phèdre, V, 1, 1.1371)

Elle calme le temps qui la vient abolir
Le moment souverain ne la peut plus pâlir ...

(LJP, 11.391-392)

Les efforts mêmes de l'amour
Ne le sauraient de l'onde extraire qu'il n'expire ...

(F du N I, 11.91-92)

Que tous les noms lui peuvent convenir! ...

(CM, 1.117)

The pronoun y is also given the same position as in Racine's work:

Le sort vous y voulut l'une et l'autre amener ...

(Andromaque, I, 4, 1.347)

... ma tendresse y vient boire ...

(F du N II, 1.99)

Valéry's use of soi is also in accord with 17th century usage. Racine's syntax, in the line

Quels démons, quels serpents, traîne-t-elle après soi,

(Andromaque, V, 5, 1.1634)

where soi replaces a subject already referred to, is followed by Valéry in La Jeune Parque: "Il colore une vierge à soi-même enlacée" (1.45), "Comme en soi-même ineffablement seul" (1.315), "Cessera-t-il longtemps de ne songer qu'à soi?" (1.323); and we find an example in the Fragments du Narcisse, "Seul! ... mais encore celui qui s'approche de soi" (I, 1.32).

Again, Valéry, as we saw,²⁵ commented on Racine's use of the subjunctive ("Dans les plus grands émois, respecter les subjonctifs"), and Phèdre certainly remembers hers:

Ah! que l'on porte ailleurs les honneurs qu'on m'envoie!
Importune, peux-tu souhaiter qu'on me voie? ...

(Phèdre, III, 1, 11.736-737)

as does the Parque: "Viens! que je reconnaisse et que je les hâisse ..." (1.197), "Et de mon sein glacé rejaillisse la voix ..." (1.200).

Valéry's heroine, indeed, employs the subjunctive with 17th century frequency and the serpent of the Ebauche, as we might expect, affects its more obtrusive forms. Following classical syntax, which uses the subjunctive to express a conditional:

Dussé-je après dix ans voir mon palais en cendre, ...

(Andromaque, I, 4, 1.286)

the serpent uses it of the creations of the Deity, which ought to praise Him: "Qui [...] / tout le jour Vous fissent louange!" (11.83-84).

Again, both the Parque and the Narcissus use the optative subjunctive without que,²⁶ as it was used by Racine:

Les Dieux daignent surtout prendre soin de vos jours!

(Iphigénie, II, 2, 1.571)

The Parque exclaims: "Et de mon sein glacé rejaillisse la voix!"

(1.200), "... Mais le plus prompt me prenne!" (1.253), and the

Narcissus expresses his desires:

Dans les errants filets de vos longs cils de soie
Son gracieux éclat vous retienne pensif, ...

(I, 11.87-88)

and again:

Naisse donc entre nous que la lumière nuit
De grâce et de silence un échange infini! ...

(II, 11.95-96)

It may well be that Valéry's fondness for the subjunctive is linked with his predilection for inversion, of which he writes (with reference to Racine): "Rôle de l'inversion: son usage est précieux comme s'écartant du cours ordinaire du langage, qui, par elle, se régénère ..." ²⁷ for both serve to distance poetic language from everyday speech:

Que béni soit le ciel qui te rend à mes vœux! ...

(Esther, I, 1, 1.2)

Que dans le ciel placés, mes yeux tracent mon temple! ...

(LJP, 1.209)

There was, however, another form of inversion which was considered particularly elegant in classical syntax: the transposition of the noun and its complement:

Pour réparer des ans l'irréparable outrage ...

(Athalie, II, 5, 1.496)

Valéry's poems show him to be an assiduous follower of Racine's syntax here, and numerous examples occur throughout La Jeune Parque and Charmes, La Jeune Parque being especially rich in them, "Mais comme par l'amour une joue enflammée," (1.150), "De l'âme les apprêts sous la tempe calmée," (1.361) are only two of such instances. We find further examples in Charmes: "Tu vois du sombre amour s'y mêler la tourmente ..." (F du N II, 1.25), "Un soir, de mon triste délire / Parut la constellation" (La P, 11.103-104), "Pique du sein la gourde belle," (L'Abeille, 1.5), "Du plaisir que tu te proposes / Cède, cher corps, cède aux appâts!" (Eb d'un S, 11.251-252), "Où sont des morts les phrases familières?" (CM, 1.88).

The example of Racine's inversion above was taken from Esther, and it is from Esther and Athalie that Valéry often quotes when he is considering Racine's syntax. In particular, it is in his analysis of the Prière d'Esther that he refers to one of Racine's Latinisms, the ablative absolute:

Ainsi je trouve sur un exemple [of the syntax underlying
Racine's alexandrines]
I. Ablatif absolu.

The French form of this Latinism was frequent in classical syntax,²⁸
and Valéry's example is not the only instance of Racine's use of it:

(Ce bandeau dont il faut que je paraisse ornée ...
Seule et dans le secret, je le foule à mes pieds ...)
(Esther, I, 4, 11.278, 280)

We find Valéry following Racine's example in La Jeune Parque (not without Mallarméan colouring):

Quand (au velours du souffle envolé l'or des lampes)
J'ai de mes bras épais environné mes tempes ...
(11.29-30)

and again in: "Le col charmant cherchant la chasseresse ailée"

(1.202). Further examples are to be found in Charmes:

... la bête abattue,
Le col tranché, le chef produit, ...
(La P, 11.56-57)

A peine sur ta poitrine
Accablé de blancs liens
Me berçait l'onde marine ...
(Poésie, 11.9-11)

Mais à peine abattu sur le sépulcre bas ...
Cette morte [...] / Frémit ...
(La Fausse Morte, 11.6-9)

Among the first of the less frequent, but not less important examples of Valéry's use of Racinian syntax, we may place his use of the simple form of the interrogation, for we have already noted his preference for this.²⁹ The 17th century preferred it, too:

"Les formes renforcées [of the interrogative] étaient peu élégantes au XVII^e siècle."³⁰ Accordingly we find Racine using the simple form,

Est-ce là, dira-t-il, cette fière Hermione? ...
(Andromaque, II, 1, 1.397)

and Valéry avoiding the later accretions (Est-ce que c'est, etc.):

"Où va-t-il, sans répondre à sa propre ignorance" (LJP, 1.302),
"Qu'es-tu, près de ma nuit d'éternelle longueur?" (LJP, 1.80), "Est-ce
mon sang? Sont-ce les neiges / Rumeurs des ondes sans merci?" (La P,
11.183-184).

Further minor points concern the omission of the definite article, frequent in 17th century poetry, and which exists in Racine:

[...] Est-ce haine, est-ce amour qui l'inspire?
(Britannicus, I, 1, 1.55)

It is used to equal effect by Valéry: "Comme chose déçue" (LJP, 1.11)

and

Amour, peut-être, ou de moi-même haine? ...

(CM, 1.115)

Modern usage also would repeat the article in front of grammatically related nouns,³¹ but we note its absence in the "Mélange de la lame et de rame" (LJP, 1.318).

Turning to the verb, we find that there are traces in Valéry of the simple form of the verb, as employed by Racine, when Pyrrhus says:

J'en ai senti la force et connu l'équité [of Oreste's reasoning]

(Andromaque, II, 4, 1.608)

Here connu has the sense of reconnu. The Parque uses the same form:

"Je me sentis connue encore plus que blessée" (1.42), "Le poison,

mon poison, m'éclaire et se connaît" (1.44). Again, in Valéry, we

find the use of faire where we should expect a repetition of the

verb,³² where Valéry writes of the tree's branches, tête superbe,

"Que la tempête traite universellement / Comme elle fait une herbe"

(11.71-72), or makes the Narcissus exclaim: "Nulle des nymphes,

nulle aime, ne m'attire / Comme tu fais sur l'onde" (I, 11.147-148).

Still considering the verb, we note that Valéry complies with Vaugelas' prescriptions³³ that the singular person should be used after synonyms and related terms, as in Racine's:

Vivez donc. Que l'amour, le devoir vous excite

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.209)

We can see this in the: "Nul démon, nul parfum ne m'offrit le péril"

(LJP, 1.427), and in Le Rameur:

Ce bruit secret des eaux, ce fleuve étrangement
Place mes jours dorés sous un bandeau de soie; ...

(11.21-22)

We close this catalogue of minor points by noting that Valéry

uses certain prepositions as in classical syntax. Parmi is an example of this; Racine uses parmi with a singular noun, although that noun is not a collective:

Mais parmi le plaisir quel chagrin me dévore
(Britannicus, II, 6, 1.699)

as does Valéry: "Parmi l'arbre, la brise berce / La vipère que je vêtis" (Eb d'un S, 11.1-2), and again, Valéry uses the word in its earlier sense of "between": "Tant de mes visions parmi la nuit et l'oeil," (LJP, 1.95).

In Valéry's enumeration of the cardinal elements of Racinian syntax, the category Conjonctions has hitherto been left undiscussed. This is because it plays a major role in the organisation of the Racinian sentence, and must therefore be discussed together with it.

For Valéry, in his search for the perfect form for his own sentence at the time when he was composing La Jeune Parque, "Toujours poursuivi par l'Idée de cette phrase musicale - parlée - en vers que je veux insatiablement faire,"³⁴ the Racinian sentence and its fusion with the verse form of the alexandrine was of capital importance. It was Racine's use of the sentence which gave his poetry the continuity of thought allied to the continuity of music, "Les propositions se dégagent les uns des autres, s'énoncent". The flow is never broken:

Le vers est subordonné à la période, chez Racine, au contraire de ce qui est chez Hugo, où le "beau vers" l'emporte. La Phrase, si harmonieuse pour Racine, n'a pas de valeur pour Hugo.³⁵

There was no break caused by over-emphasis, either. As Valéry observed in his 1942 eulogy of Racine, exaggeration was no longer effective: "les effets d'étrangeté n'ont plus grand intérêt — ils piétinent c'est l'additivité qui me plaît et non la juxtaposition."³⁶

The Racinian sentence, in its syntactical as in its musical development, was unobtrusively natural-seeming: "Il n'y a jamais juxtaposition d'effets, il y a filiation. Développement analogue à celui d'une plante."³⁷ — a comment which recalls Valéry's meditations on a passage of Bérénice in 1938, "le discours cependant s'enchaîne à lui-même, se ressemble et se dévide d'une façon organique."³⁸ This passage, comparing the development of a train of thought on its structure of regular verse, with the growth of a natural organism, also compares the finished product of the development to a work of art, a tapestry, un tissu brodé et tramé.

These comparisons must remind us of Valéry's description of La Jeune Parque. In a letter to Gide, he calls it an artificial fabric which has taken on a natural development,³⁹ while in a letter to Aimé Lafont, he calls the poem a piece of weaving.⁴⁰ His notes for the Mémoires d'un Poème return to this metaphor. Under the heading Syntaxe et règles de vers, he writes:

Trame et chaîne. Trame du vers et chaîne des compléments successifs qui aboutissent à construire une unité d'action mentale — quant à la possibilité.⁴¹

These knots in the thread, these joints of the living creature, which facilitate the movement of a train of thought from one direction to another, or serve as growth points, cannot but suggest to us the similar role of the conjunction in the syntax of the Racinian sentence. An examination of Valéry's analysis of part of the Prière d'Esther, which follows his description of the integration of prosody and syntax into a majestic and organic whole,⁴² will help us to elucidate the qualities he finds in Racine's syntax and the importance he attaches to the conjunction in its organisation. We may here usefully remind ourselves also that the Prière d'Esther is

given as one of Valéry's sources for La Jeune Parque.

In order to establish that Valéry was indeed thinking of the Prière d'Esther in his description of the alexandrine and the sentence, we compare the disarticulated jottings below with the lines of Racine. In the Cahiers, the position of these words on the page in relation to each other, and their content, are definitive:

Tu sais combien je, / Et que je, / leur table, / que même, /
Ce bandeau,⁴³ / seule, / qu'à, / Et ne. They obviously relate to the passage from the Prière d'Esther (ll.273-282):

Pour moi, que tu retiens parmi ces infidèles,
Tu sais combien je hais leurs fêtes criminelles,
Et que je mets au rang des profanations
Leur table, leurs festins, et leurs libations;
Que même cette pompe où je suis condamnée,
Ce bandeau dont il faut que je paraisse ornée,
Dans ces jours solennels à l'orgueil dédiés,
Seule et dans le secret, je le foule à mes pieds;
Qu'a ces vains ornements je préfère la cendre
Et n'ai du goût qu'aux pleurs que tu me vois répandre ...

(Esther, I, 4, ll.273-282)

Without lingering here over an exact comparison of the lines with the grammatical analysis which appears under Valéry's scattered words,⁴⁴ it is apparent from the extract itself that the speech does indeed develop in an organic fashion.

Each successive clause, radiating from the central Tu sais:

Tu sais combien je hais leurs fêtes criminelles, ...

and securely linked to it by syntax, derives its descriptive ornament from the idea of the hated celebrations, fêtes criminelles, as the detestation flowers into description (tables, festins, libations, pompe, bandeaux); as Valéry observes on the next page of the Cahiers: "Dans Racine l'ornement perpétuel semble tiré du discours et c'est là le moyen et secret de sa prodigieuse continuité."⁴⁵ The articulation is never obtrusive, but carries forward the idea (or

rather, the logically linked ideas) of adoration of the Lord, and detestation of His enemies, to the end of the unit of thought, the complete sentence. In this task, and in the movement from one idea to the next, there is, for Valéry, one superlative instrument. In 1939 he again takes the Prière d'Esther as an example, as he had in 1918. He states:

Dans l'articulation du morceau, ce sont les conjonctions qui font l'entrée des thèmes: Non, non; .. Nouvelle reprise avec: pour moi ⁴⁶

Throughout the Racine notes, Valéry links the conjunction with its vital functions, for below the heading Articulation we find the remark: "Conjonction, cette petite chose," (p.10) and again, "La modulation par la conjonction - continuité" (p.14). On yet another page of the notes we find the categorical statement: "Rôle de la conjonction / LA MODULATION" (p.8). Later still, and this time in the Cahiers, we find Valéry linking the conjunction with the qualities he found most important in Racine: "La divine continuité — et la proportion des membres de la suite. Conjonctions."⁴⁷

It is not surprising then to find that Valéry should have chosen examples from the Prayer⁴⁸ to emphasise the value of the conjunction, for a study of the passage as a whole brings out the vital importance of the conjunction in the movement of a train of thought. The Quand:

Quand, pour te faire un peuple agréable à tes yeux
Il plut à ton amour de choisir nos aïeux, ...

the Même, cited by Valéry, the Mais, "Mais c'est peu d'être esclave, on la veut égorger:", the Que, "Que même cette pompe", even the exclamation Valéry classes as a conjunction (Non, non,), which ensure the smooth articulation of the whole, serve also to ensure a passage to the expansion of an idea in ornament:

Que même cette pompe où je suis condamnée,
Ce bandeau dont il faut que je paraisse ornée
Dans ces jours solennels à l'orgueil dédiés ...

and to the transition, the modulation, as Valéry underlines, the Non, non, the pour moi.

In this way, therefore, as transitional agent, a synapse for the nerve-thread of thought, the conjunction may have lent its articulation to the utterances of Valéry's Idée vivante, La Jeune Parque. We can trace a Racinian use of the conjunction as a means of modulation, the glissement et la substitution des idées - images⁴⁹ for which Valéry strove in writing his poem. There is the movement, for example, from the state of mind in which the Parque proudly rejects the serpent, to that in which she fears to lose the treasures it represents, a state of mind already beginning with the Et of line 93: "Et brisant une tombe sereine / Je m'accoude inquiète". The transition is accomplished with the Mais of line 97: "Mais je tremblais de perdre une douleur divine" and we have another transition, as with Esther's pour moi, with the Et of line 148: "Glisse, barque funèbre ... Et moi vive, debout" — an example of the flow of a train of thought. Or again, we have the Et of line 395, where the Parque moves from the contemplation of her ideal self to identification with it:

Elle se fait toujours plus seule et plus lointaine ...
Et moi, d'un tel destin, le coeur toujours plus près ...

(11.394-395)

reinforced by the même of line 400, used precisely as Racine uses it, to develop and decorate the idea:

Même, tu leur promis, ...
Même, elle avait encore cet éclat emprunté ...⁵⁰
Même, je m'apparus cet arbre vapoureux ... etc.

It is succeeded, too, by the transition to the opposing idea, and its development, as in Esther's rejection of the idea of the triumph

of the Persians ("Non, non, ne souffre pas que ces peuples farouches" etc.); for the Parque's "Non, non! ... N'irrite plus cette réminiscence!" (1.406), although it is followed by a brief return to her obsession (1.409), introduces the train of thought which will contradict the idea of her dissolution into immortality, by leading her to the recognition of her mortal status (sein d'argile, 1.422). Exactly the same function is accomplished by the Mais: "Mais qui l'emporterait sur la puissance même," (1.410), which turns the Parque away from her renewed reminiscence: "Parmi tous les instants tu touchais au suprême," (1.409), guiding her towards the moment of recognition and reality, "Souviens-toi de toi-même" (1.415).

The conjunction, then, ensures the transmission of the chain of ideas in the Racinian sentence. The slowing-down of the movement of that sentence, danse lente,⁵¹ which also prolongs its movement from one line of verse to the next, is achieved by apposition, as Brémond pointed out:

Il faut que le verbe — le ciment du discours — trouve enfin où se caser, mais le plus tard possible. Un officier honteux et discret ...⁵²

Brémond's illustrations⁵³ of Racine's use of this device cannot be bettered although he avoids any classification of the differing types of apposition, or any specific comparison with Valéry. Guiraud, however, does institute such a comparison.⁵⁴ His example is taken from Phèdre, but an examination of the Prière d'Esther will show that Valéry could have taken it, too, as an example of this technique of Racine's, for here apposition and conjunction together illustrate it clearly. The section of the Prayer which we have been discussing begins, in fact, with an apposition: "Pour moi, que tu retiens parmi ces infidèles," and continues, after the conjunctions et que with

further examples, tables, festins, libations, going on to the long flow of cette pompe, where item after item is elaborated, and only reaching the conclusion of the sentence (or rather, part of the sentence) some three lines later, with je les foule à mes pieds. As Guiraud rightly says (but with regard to Valéry): "Il faudrait tout citer."⁵⁵ In fact, a glance at the passage on the stars from La Jeune Parque will show Valéry making a principle of Racine's use of apposition to prolong the movement as, previously, of the conjunction to extend or alter the train of thought: for from the opening, Tout-puissants étrangers (1.18) to the concluding words, éternité (1.23) the entire contents of the lines are in apposition to astres (1.18). As with the example from the Prière d'Esther, the verb merely introduces a pause, not a conclusion to the movement, for a fresh series of appositional movements succeeds the conjunction et, "et sur l'écueil mordu par la merveille" (1.25). They are transmitted by the conjunctions ou si (1.28), Quand (1.29), and the Et of line 31.

Racine, as we know, was not Valéry's only master in the use of apposition. He had much to learn from Mallarmé, and this would not be the only case where he was able to fuse two techniques. But we can perhaps better understand, from the above examples, what Valéry meant when he wrote (with reference to Bérénice) of the articulation and evolution of the alexandrine, poésie régulière: "Le discours s'enchaîne et se ressemble." The first effect is obtained through the use of the conjunction, the second through the use of the apposition, for the appositions which decorate and illustrate a person or an object are but differing aspects of the same subject, "qu'il s'agisse de Bérénice ou d'un paysage."⁵⁶

We have used Valéry's 1918 analysis of the Prière d'Esther as a basis for our discussion of Racine's syntax and its place in Valéry's work. It may be argued, however, that although Valéry has chosen a passage from one of Racine's plays to illustrate the integration of syntax and the alexandrine, he does not go on to specify in detail the particular qualities of the alexandrine as Racine uses it. Did he, indeed, regard Racine's alexandrine as particularly valuable to him, as a poet? And if so, why?

There is another passage from the Cahiers for 1916 which is eloquent on the subject, and from which we will quote here at length, for not only does it answer our first question, but it guides our steps as we seek to answer our second:

Quel est l'élément efficace (aujourd'hui, pour nous) de Racine? La mélodie — ce distique inoubliable, la langue précise et pourtant fluide. D'où la noble tendresse, la volonté heureuse et cachée. La formule fondue dans une fraîcheur artificielle — mais obtenue. Une sorte de symbolisme infiniment habile, chaque vers étant doucement universel. Inflexion de la voix digne d'une grande cantatrice.

Il a la voix et le mot. Hugo a les mots, — et il n'a pas la voix. L'acteur chez lui ou le déclamateur transpire, se rend indispensable, odieux.

La voix chez Hugo est d'un orateur ridicule ou, quand c'est très beau, non plus une voix mais la rumeur d'un orchestre. La plus belle poésie a la voix d'une femme idéale, Mdlle Âme ...⁵⁷

So wrote Valéry at the time when he needed above all to find the right music for his own Parque's voice, for her role was that of the prima donna. Her voice was the voice of a singer.⁵⁸ The poem, conforming to Valéry's early ideals, was essentially a musical composition⁵⁹ — a recitative, which gradually developed into a

two-act opera,⁶⁰ such as were the earliest operas. Valéry had even chosen his composers⁶¹ — Gluck, whose music was a prolongation of Racine's poetry,⁶² and Wagner, in whose music recitative and aria merge in the continuity Valéry admired in Racine.

But, we remember, there are other poets on that list of sources for La Jeune Parque where Gluck and Racine are prominent — other French poets, whom we know to have been of great importance to Valéry: Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Hugo, Baudelaire. We know that they must have had a part to play in forming Valéry's poem, for they had influenced his poetic development. They, too, may have contributed to the Parque's music.

Mallarmé is not indeed in question, but there are good grounds for rejecting Hugo as a model for the Parque's voice. Hugo was a modern, and for Valéry, the human voice disappears from poetry after Racine's time.⁶³ Furthermore, there is evidence in the Cahiers that Valéry sees Hugo's music as orchestral.⁶⁴ Rimbaud and Baudelaire, too, are moderns, though Baudelaire had affinities with Racine.⁶⁵ Were there then perhaps other poets of Racine's time who attracted his attention during his concentrated study of the 17th century — Corneille, or La Fontaine?

Corneille, though indeed his poetry speaks with a human voice,⁶⁶ will not serve either. His voice not only lacks intimacy,⁶⁷ but is harsh and lacking in musicality.⁶⁸ La Fontaine, now, has a singer's voice,⁶⁹ and it would be rash to exclude all possibility of his influence on La Jeune Parque⁷⁰ — yet this precursor of Racine, who perhaps lent Racine some of his accents,⁷¹ is not the perfect virtuoso. His music is uneven.⁷²

No. Only Racine, of all the poets singled out by Valéry in the

Cahiers, was the perfect singer, perfect, that is, for Valéry's Parque, his Mademoiselle Âme.⁷³ He has the human voice,⁷⁴ almost physically audible.⁷⁵ His lines have the necessary quality of truth to his own nature, thus to the nature of man in general,⁷⁶ and he expresses this truth in terms of purest melody.⁷⁷ His technique is as flawless as that of a great diva,⁷⁸ and his voice takes poetry as far as it can go on the way to becoming music itself:

Entre tous les poètes, Racine est celui qui s'apparente le plus strictement à la musique proprement dite, — ce Racine de qui les périodes donnent si souvent l'idée de récitatifs à peine moins chantants que ceux des compositions lyriques — ce Racine de qui Lulli allait si studieusement entendre les tragédies; et des lignes, des mouvements duquel les belles formes et les purs développements de Gluck semblent les transformations immédiates [...]⁷⁹

Poetry, as Valéry was well aware, cannot quite be music, la musique proprement dite, and we, as readers, have the unfortunate tendency of trying to separate sound and sense, thus widening the distance:

Nous avons coutume de séparer ce que nous entendons de ce que nous compr[enons], de passer de l'oreille aux idées et nous divisons les pensées de Phèdre de sa voix. Mais en matière de poésie, il y a équivalence, ou c'est bien de la prose [...]⁸⁰

Racine, however, defeats us, for with his poetry there is in reality no way of operating this division between sound and sense. Valéry, attempting to dissect Hippolyte's famous line⁸¹

Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur, ... cannot do so, nor can he analyse its music (harmonie indéfinissable), though, being Valéry, he returns to the attempt.⁸²

This perfect integration between sound and sense, then, is the mark of true poetry, that which brings it closest to music, and it distinguishes Racine's work. Both in its truth to the reality of

human experience, and in its harmony, which fuses meaning and music, the voice of Racine is supreme. We now begin to see how "a writer," as Valéry so cautiously puts it, can use this voice:

Un savant, au cours d'un mémoire original, invoque au passage le principe de un tel, le théorème de tel autre. Un écrivain peut évoquer, lui, au vol, l'ombre de Virgile, la voix de Racine. Ils sont devenus des moyens, comme les mots et les locutions.

(C 6, 560)

Naturally, this praise by Valéry of Racine's music has not gone unremarked, and there is a general consensus of opinion with regard to the Racinian quality of Valéry's prosody. This prosody has often been analysed yet, it would seem, from almost every point of view save from that of a direct comparison of its techniques with those of Racine.⁸³ Here again, we must note that the work of the Abbé Brémond compares the music of Racine and that of Valéry by inference,⁸⁴ and that some indirect comparisons emerge from Guiraud's searching analyses of Valéry's prosody.⁸⁵ Guiraud's work, indeed, has been of the greatest assistance in the attempt to institute a direct comparison between the prosody of the two poets which now follows.

Racine's voice was capable of perfect harmony. So much appears to be axiomatic. But what was it which gave Racine's voice this supreme music? Fortunately, Valéry himself supplies us with an answer, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter. The instrument was the alexandrine and its melody, ce distique inoubliable.

Valéry himself had always seen the alexandrine as the only

possible metre for his purposes in the days when he first laid down his poetic principles.⁸⁶ Even then, he had aimed at producing the perfect music by its means, and had even chosen the ideal form, the symphony.⁸⁷ Later, in 1917, he links alexandrine and symphony together, as formal discoveries of seminal poetic importance⁸⁸ — and this in spite of the fact that the alexandrine could appear less poetic than other metres.⁸⁹

There is, in reality, no contradiction between these judgments. They are rather an indication that the alexandrine combines the structures of both speech and music (as occurs in the operatic aria), corresponding as it does in its time-scale to the time-scale of the physiological units which support both — the units of respiration, and of the circulation of the blood — even of the effective duration of attention, whose time-scale Valéry has noted.⁹⁰

Thus, the structure of the alexandrine could lend itself both to the development of a musical composition, or of a reasoned work of thought, involving syllogisms, analyses, even discussions on public affairs, science, and morality, without losing its elegance.⁹¹

In the first part of this chapter we discussed the suitability of Racine's alexandrine with regard to its syntax, for the development of thought. Our concern here is with the musical structure, for it was this, to Valéry's mind, which ennobled the development of reason, elevating sound and sense to the level of perfect harmony. In the passage analysing the syntax of the Prière d'Esther quoted on page 386 of this chapter, he writes of this harmony and of the means by which it is produced. He writes, too, of the majesty and order imparted to the whole by the need to obey the rules of the metre. He was to amplify these remarks in 1920:

Il y a une sorte de rythme particulier à l'alexandrin qui réside dans la combinaison de la phrase et de la rime — ou dans une suite: MM FF MM FF MM FF, les combinaisons MM, ou FF, ou MF, ou FM, c'est à dire distique parfait MM, FF, distique mêlé FM, MF. Ce rythme se surajoute à tous les autres d'autres espèces. Il donne au discours un poli, un uni, incomparables dans les classiques.⁹²

This musical integration, then, is described as a quality of the structure of the alexandrine; and as early as 1891, Valéry had insisted on the importance of structure to poetry: "Avant tout la composition ou portion architectonique de l'Oeuvre."⁹³

In this architecture, the twelve syllables of the alexandrine are the basic material, the building blocks.⁹⁴ They are the means through which thought becomes language, and language, poetry; matter solid enough to be manipulated by both author and reader. We might compare them to the notes of the musical scale, perhaps. Yet these units, the twelve syllables, must accommodate themselves to the semantic units, the words, to which they are lending their music; and again Valéry takes Racine as an example of this:

Musique des poètes [...] doit se plier à la condition de groupement de ces syllabes (mélodiques) en mots [...] on ne doit pas dire

Vouismourutezauborouvoufûtelaissée.
Vous mourûtes aux bords où vous fûtes laissée [...]⁹⁵

To act as basic material, however, is not the only function of the twelve syllables. Within the structure of the line, they provide the number of beats to the bar. They also dictate the pace of the music, and its key signature, major or minor, for it is the successful combination of long or short syllables which controls the speed of the voice, and this in turn contributes to the tone of the voice, its impact, conveying the state of mind of the character.⁹⁶ Valéry again chooses his ideal line to illustrate this theory

(Hippolyte's: "Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur"), but he could equally well have chosen lines from Bérénice's plea to Titus,⁹⁷ or indeed a line from his own poem: "L'aube me dévoilait tout le jour ennemi" (LJP, 1.179).

It is not, of course, only the length of the syllables of the alexandrine which play a part in producing the rhythm of the music. The use of the cesura can give differences in rhythm, and here the flexibility of the alexandrine was supreme. It was indeed the only possible metre,⁹⁸ from the point of view of its esoteric mathematics — for the factors of the number 12 allowed of every possible variety in rhythm, and of every possible variation in the position of the cesura. Even the rhythms of prose (albeit poetic prose) which do occur in the alexandrine are subdued to its form. This excludes much a-poetic substance,⁹⁹ and this perhaps was in Valéry's mind when he remarked in later life on the link between the alexandrine and poetic tragedy (once again, Phèdre!):

Soit le sujet de Phèdre. On le propose à un sculpteur. Que fait-il? Et si ce fut par la musique qu'on le donne à traiter? Résultat inattendu: l'unité de la tragédie et l'alexandrin. Racine, enfin, considéré comme le moyen de Phèdre [...]¹⁰⁰

The commonest groupings of syllables into which poetic prose is organised by the use of the cesuras, are the 3, 2, and 4 foot units. The use of the 3 foot unit was frequent in Racine (Maurice Grammont has found more than a hundred instances of the line made up of units of 3 in Athalie). This organisation of the line is, as Guiraud points out,¹⁰¹ naturally the least expressive (unless an effect of monotony is aimed at). It is most suited to narrative or descriptive lines — perhaps of the sort which Valéry describes as indispensable to the continuity of the action, and, in a measure, almost equivalent

to prose,¹⁰² in the plays of Racine. But Racine uses the identical grouping in lines of the highest poetic intensity and feeling:

Et la mort, | à mes yeux || dérochant | la clarté
Rend au jour, | qu'ils souillaient || toute sa pureté
(Phèdre, V, 7, ll.1643-1644)

Here the units of threes have a poetic resonance of equal intensity with the more heavily accented groups of 2 - 4, as in the line quoted, or: "Déjà | je ne vois plus ", or even 1 - 5, jette un froid inconnu, with which they are intercalated. The result is that a high level of unity is achieved; the recitative glides into the aria with a Wagnerian continuity, the integration of a Gluck, and it is difficult not to see the same principle (Valéry's ideal of integration) behind a similar use of the 3 - 3, married to the 2 - 4 (or the 4 - 2), in his favourite passage from La Jeune Parque: "Que lui fait | tout le sang, || qui n'est plus | son secret?" (1.388), "Dans quelle | blanche paix || cette | pourpre la laisse," (1.389), or even to the 1 - 5, "Tant | la chair vide baise || une sombre fontaine" (1.393).

This last division, the 1 - 5, is the grouping furthest removed from the natural rhythms of the French language. Guiraud, quoting Morier, remarks that in Racine's hands, it is always a signal of intensity, used when he needs to seize our imagination, or move us through the power of the single syllable.¹⁰³ Valéry's use of the same grouping is abnormally high, as Guiraud shows by an analysis of the Fragment d'un Narcisse, and reference to La Jeune Parque.¹⁰⁴ If we examine Racine's use of the 1 - 5 grouping, we can see what opportunities it offered as a form of musical expression.

The more conventional use — the exclamation, the Dieux!, the Ah!, no doubt bear witness to a highly excited state of mind; they also serve, musically speaking, as a springboard for the voice, the

singer's "attack", and this applies equally to question, invocation, and command. They may introduce a short but significant phrase, as in Phèdre's cry:

Dieux! que ne suis-je assise à l'ombre des forêts! ...
(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.176)

or a long sustained passage, as in Oenone's argument:

Ah! s'il vous faut rougir, rougissez d'un silence ...
(Ibid., 1.185)

They may even introduce whole plays. It is interesting to observe how often a play opens with a line of this type, and Valéry has remarked on it in Athalie:

"Oui, je viens dans son temple," etc. Commencement nécessaire, ce Oui. Importance et mouvement des attaques interrogatives ... 105

This form of "attack" is used very frequently in La Jeune Parque, where indeed, it opens the Parque's aria, "Où n'aurait-il fallu, || folle, | que j'accomplisse" (1.381) and her first tirade, "Va! | je n'ai plus besoin de ta race naïve," (1.50). It occurs in some of the other forms also; exclamation: Dieux! | Dans ma lourde plaie, (1.48), Quoi! | mes yeux froidement (1.485). The preference though, is for the forms of command and denial, the repeated Viens of lines 193 and 197, the Va! | je n'ai plus besoin (1.50), the Non! of lines 265 and 276, which confirms Guiraud's remarks on the hardness and intensity of this technique in La Jeune Parque¹⁰⁶ (the staccato and forte, as it were) in contrast to the generally muted effects of the Fragment du Narcisse (the legato, piano).

However, the use of this strong accent is not confined, in Racine, to the cases cited above. It may also accentuate a word, or words, during the flow of the tirade; there is an example in that part of the Prière d'Esther quoted by Valéry in his analyses:

(Ce bandeau, dont il faut que je paraisse ornée) ...

Seule, et dans le secret, je le foule à mes pieds ...

(11.278, 280)

and there are other instances — Phèdre's "Moi, | que j'ose opprimer et noircir l'innocence?" (Phèdre, III, 3, 1.893). Thus used, the accent can be seen as a musical one, giving a certain note a higher value, or a quality of rubato which alters the timing within the normal phrase — almost an exaggeration in comparison with the normal phrasing indicated by the cesura:

Moi, | je veille. Je sors, || pâle et prodigieuse
(LJP, 1.90)

or the reversed 5 - 1, "Quelle mortelle? | Moi || si pure, mes genoux"
(Ibid., 1.244).

It seems possible that Valéry, in making so extended a use of this grouping, wished to maintain the heightened intensity, the distance from everyday speech rhythms, with unity (for where a device is so constantly employed, it stands out less). It marks the extremest use of the cesura and the secondary accent.

The cesura, however, can be used not only to accent the important word, but to ensure continuity of flow, as in the famous passage emphasising time in Bérénice:

Que le jour | recommence, || et que le jour | finisse
Sans que jamais | Titus || puisse voir | Bérénice?
Sans que, | de tout le jour, || je puisse voir | Titus? ...
Daignera-t-il | compter || les jours | de mon absence?
Ces jours | si longs pour moi || lui sembleront | trop courts ...

Here the musical idea does not really finish until the emphasis has come to rest at the end of the unit, and at the end of the alexandrine, with Titus'

Je n'aurais pas, | Madame, || à compter | tant de jours ...
(Bérénice, IV, 5, 11.1115-1117, 1120-1122)

Guiraud has pointed out the emphasis on âme in the Fragment d'un Narcisse,¹⁰⁷ and the same effect can be found in the larme - âme motif in La Jeune Parque. Here the word is first emphasised by the 5 - 1 grouping, "Très imminente larme, et seule à me répondre" (1.282) but in no case do either larme or âme occupy a position undefined either by the cesura or the secondary accent, and there is a similar movement from one position to another as in the passage from Bérénice.

We are constantly reminded that it was continuity that Valéry sought, the flowing line of Gluck, and Wagner's insensible transitions from recitative to aria. If the syllabic structure and the musical phrasing of the accents of the alexandrine, its symmetrical construction, allowed Valéry to dream of uniting the fluid and the elements strict/of music — the phrasing which overflows the division into bars — it was, to a great degree, through the functions of rhyme that he was able to achieve his aim. The rhyme, regular and internal, and the associated qualities of assonance and alliteration of the Racinian alexandrine (which by no means conforms to all the rules) are important factors in the continuity of phrasing which overflows the confines of the distich. As Valéry remarked in 1939, "La rime, qui n'est pas toujours riche, est merveilleusement amenée."¹⁰⁸ We shall understand what he means when we have examined some examples of Racine's rhyme.

Apart from the prescribed end-rhyme, Racine employs other forms of rhyme within the alexandrine, and extending beyond it, although two of these procedures, the rimes bâtelées or the vers léonin, and the rime renforcée, were frowned upon by the stricter critics of the classical period. The first of these, the homophony, of the

end-rhyme and of the cesura, the vers léonin, is to be found in Racine's works in all the forms classified by Guiraud under their different headings,¹⁰⁹ the complete:

Pourquoi, trop jeune encor, || ne pûtes-vous alors ...
(Phèdre, II, 5, 1.647)

the vocalic:

Tout m'afflige et me nuit || et conspire à me nuire ...
(Ibid., I, 3, 1.161)

the consonantal:

Triste, levant au ciel || ses yeux mouillés de larmes
(Britannicus, II, 1, 1.387)

and the form of assonance (voisine):

Le soldat étonné | dit que dans une nue ...
(Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1785)

Valéry, though determined on a more than classical strictness for his prosody, nevertheless employs the various forms of the vers léonin to no small degree in both La Jeune Parque and in the Fragment d'un Narcisse. One line in four, Guiraud estimates, is of this kind.¹¹⁰ He gives examples from the Fragment d'un Narcisse; we therefore have chosen ours from La Jeune Parque: the complete:

Que fais-tu, hérissée, || et cette main glacée ...
(1.13)

the vocalic:

Mon âme y peut suffire, || ornement de ruine! ...
(1.54)

the consonantal:

Mais, pour capricieux || et prompt que tu paraisses ...
(1.77)

and voisine:

Liant et déliant || mes ombres sous le lin ...
(1.126)

There are examples in Racine of the second type of rhyme, the rhyme of the two cesuras — a type just as strictly proscribed as the vers léonin, and just as often employed by Valéry. Here are examples of Racine's rime renforcée:¹¹¹

Je renvoie Hermione || et je mets sur son front
Au lieu de ma couronne, || un éternel affront ...

(Andromaque, III, 8, ll.963-964)

It is a method, as Guiraud tells us, of binding the two lines of the distich together.¹¹² It can also link one distich to the next:

Laissez-moi le [Astyanax] cacher || en quelque île déserte,
Sur les soins de sa mère on peut s'en assurer ...

(Ibid., III, 4, ll.878-879)

Valéry's lines follow this principle:

L'ennui, le clair ennui || de mirer leur nuance
Me donnait sur ma vie une funeste avance ...

(LJP, ll.177-178)

Yet another method of ensuring the flow of the musical idea by linking the lines of the distich is the system of 'rime enchainée', the repetition of the sounds of the end-rhyme at the beginning of the following line. Again we quote only one of Racine's instances, Hippolyte's query:

Des sentiments d'un coeur si fier, si dédaigneux
Peux-tu me demander le désaveu honteux? ...

(Phèdre, I, 1, ll.76-68)

This is a technique widely employed by Valéry, and one which is elevated to a principle when it is allied to enjambement in Guiraud's sense of the word.¹¹³ He adduces the opening lines of

La Jeune Parque as an example of this:

Qui pleure là, sinon le vent simple, à cette heure
Seule avec diamants extrêmes? ...

Now while we should not expect to find examples of enjambement in Guiraud's specialised sense widely distributed in Racine, what we do

find is the system of the rime enchaînée, with which Guiraud connects it, where the rhyme is repeated in the following lines — as, in the example quoted above, the rhymes of the first and second lines are continued by the C'est peu of the third; or, to take an example from Esther:

... à ces vains ornements je préfère la cendre,
Et n'ai de goût qu'aux pleurs que tu me vois repandre
J'attendais le moment ...

(I, 4, 11.281-283)

If Racine's sort of continuity, his marriage of syntax and music, depends on a different sort of syntax from that seen in Guiraud's enjambement, his musical continuity is obtained by means which not only unite the two parts of the distich, or one distich to the next, but may proceed even beyond that. The devices of rhyme and assonance are not confined to the end-rhymes and to the cesuras. They glide into internal rhymes and assonances. The following lines from the Prière d'Esther give us a good example of this:

(Ainsi donc un perfide, après tant de miracles ...)

Ravirait aux mortels le plus cher de tes dons
Le saint que tu promets, et que nous attendons?
Non, non, ne souffre pas que ces peuples farouches
Ivres de notre sang, ferment les seules bouches
Qui dans tout l'univers célèbrent tes bienfaits;
Et confonds tous ces dieux qui ne furent jamais ...

(Esther, I, 4, 11.265, 267-272)

This sequence of allied sounds brings us into the domain of what Valéry at one time called intrasonnance and multisonnance, giving his own lines as an example in a letter to Pierre Louÿs:

Ce que j'appelle intrasonnance est la répétition du même son dans le vers "La flûte sur l'azur enseveli module."
Et multisonnance (pardon de me citer encore) "Parmi
cette aube fine, ô pâle enchemisée"¹¹⁴

"Quant aux allitérations," he observes in the same letter, "ne pas les chercher mais se borner à les dégager élégamment." Yet, when he

refers in 1939 to Racine's alliterations as a means of obtaining continuity: "La continuité s'obtient tantôt par jeu d'allitérations, tantôt par opposition,"¹¹⁵ does it not seem probable that he is thinking of something more than the dictionary definition, something more on the lines of Guiraud's definition of alliteration in Valéry's work, which includes assonance?¹¹⁶ Something, in fact, corresponding to Valéry's own early examples of intrasonance or multisonance? Racine's use of the repetition of sounds goes far beyond the repetition of the initial letter — although he uses this to great effect: Le jour n'est pas plus pur, Le pain que je vous propose¹¹⁷ — as does Valéry. But consider Racine's

Tout m'afflige, et me nuit, et conspire à me nuire ...
(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.161)

and Valéry's

Dors toujours! Descends, dors toujours! Descends, dors!
(LJP, 1.460)

which is almost a caricature of the procedure which Valéry erected to a principle of musicality. Again, could one have a better example of multisonance than Racine's

Et la mer leur répond par ses mugissements ...
(Iphigénie, V, 6, 1.1780)

echoed by Valéry's own

Mélange de la lame en ruine, et de rame ...?
(LJP, 1.318)

The repetition undoubtedly gives continuity, and continuity of mood. What then does Valéry mean when he adduces contrast, opposition, as a means of obtaining continuity? The idea seems strange, but, in one sense in which it may be permissible to take it, less so. Referring again to Valéry's favourite quotation from Phèdre:

Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur ...

we observe not only the strong alliteration of the pas plus pur (consonantal p + vocalic u), but the contrasting jour, fond, coeur, with the allied assonances of the vowels: these latter expressing through sound the depths and tenderness of Hippolyte's nature, the former the piercing force of his impulsion towards purity. The line thus unifies the forces operating throughout the whole of the play, continuing the argument in a unique alliance of sound and sense: "Le son du sens, et le sens des sons agissent."¹¹⁸ The more one examines La Jeune Parque and Charmes (but particularly La Jeune Parque) in the light of this, the more this principle of continuity through opposition is apparent, translated by the sounds. "J'ai joué à deux doigts," Valéry writes of the composition of La Jeune Parque. It is a remark that can apply to more than to the use of the distich. Consider the qualities conveyed by Racine's line:

Et l'avare Achéron ne lâche point sa proie ...

(Phèdre, II, 5, 1.626)

where the sound and meaning are so well married by the wide-open jaws of the a sounds, the sudden seizure of the p and r sounds. The oblivion of death is suggested by the laxity of the Ach(éron), (l)âche, the oi of (p)oi(nt), (pr)oie; its harsh reality by the p, the r. The whole line is thus a unity combining these opposing aspects of death into one undeniable fact — it is for ever. The same antitheses are to be found in Valéry's

Mélange de la lame en ruine, et de rame ...

(LJP, 11.318)

where the soft m and l sounds, the yawning ame (the play on âme is of course part of the exploitation of sound), the soft ange contrast with the harsh r sounds, ruine, rame; again confusion and oblivion

are allied with cruelty and reality, because oblivion is the sting of death:

Qui de mes pieds nus retrouvera la trace
Cessera-t-il longtemps de ne songer qu'à soi? ...

(LJP, 11.322-323)

Racine's power to unify an essential antithesis and thus ensure continuity of theme, is not limited to the plays. It emerges equally from the Cantiques. In the fourth Cantique we have the following lines:

Le pain que je vous propose
Sert aux anges d'aliment ...

(11.21-22)

Here the contrast between the hard p and r sounds, and the soft nasals, ange, (p)ain, (alim)ent, in the lines linked by the repeated s, suggests the essentials of the heavenly diet — permanence and reality, as opposed to the fleeting shadow of earthly sustenance, ombre qui vous laisse / Plus affamée (11.19-20), and again, sweetness.

Here were contrasts which Valéry well knew how to use in his Palme:

De sa grâce redoutable,
Voilant à peine l'éclat
Un ange met sur ma table
Le pain tendre, le lait plat ...

(11.1-4)

Here the opposition is between the generosity and sweetness, and the sternness of the giver; between the open a sounds, grâce, redoutable, éclat, table, the soft nasals, (voil)ant, ange, (p)ain, (t)en(dre), the liquid l of plat, lait, table, to which the v and m sounds contribute their softness. The whole almost overpowers the harshness of the r sounds, the formidable combination of d and t — but not quite. The repetition and contrast of the sounds sum up and proclaim the theme of the poem, where the generosity of the sun, the harshness

of the sand-laden wind, combine to produce the sweetness of the fruit, and the whole is suffused by the power of the giver.

Continuity in music, however is not merely a question of maintaining and combining the threads of different themes (as in a fugue). It is also a question of progression from one sound to another, a change of tone. This, which Valéry called modulation, was his obsession: "L'idée de changement de ton m'a obsédé," he writes of La Jeune Parque seen as a musical work¹¹⁹ and later he is eloquent on the same idea:

... l'idée vague (chez moi ignorant de cet art [music]) et la magie du mot modulation ont joué un rôle important — dans mes poèmes. La Jeune Parque fut obsédée par le désir de ce continuum — doublement demandé. D'abord, dans la suite musicale des syllabes et des vers — et puis dans le glissement et substitutions des idées-images.¹²⁰

In meeting the second requirement, as we have seen, Valéry could well have been indebted to Racine's syntax. It seems probable that success in the first desideratum owed something to Racine's prosody — if we may take the definitions changement de ton, modulation, and gradation des sons as all referring to the same process.

This last definition was one of the headings Valéry intended to use in his Racine speech. His notes refer to: "La gradation des sons jusqu'aux sonorités des é: Une prospérité d'éternelle durée." The quotation is from that part of the Prière d'Esther from which Valéry took his examples for the combination of music and syntax in the alexandrine.¹²¹ As it stands, it is also an excellent example of what Guiraud, too, refers to as modulation: les relations entre sons concomitants.¹²² These relations can be both vocalic and consonantal, both weak and strong. The succession of e sounds in éternelle demonstrates a weak vocalic modulation, the changing

vowels of prospérité, durée demonstrate the strong. Similarly, the alternating p, p, t, and d, r in these last two words show us the weak and the strong consonantal modulation.

Guiraud has pointed out that not only do Racine and Valéry both use modulation (which one might expect would be avoided by a poet who sought to achieve unity through alliteration, as did Valéry), but that there are similarities between their use of modulation.¹²³ This applies to both vocalic and consonantal modulation.¹²⁴

It will have been noticed that Valéry, writing of Racine's modulation (gradation des sons), singles out the vowel e. In writing of himself, he has noted this predilection for this vowel: "En tant que poète, je suis spécialiste des sons e, è, é"¹²⁵, not forgetting his particular love for the e grave. Quoting his own favourite passage in La Jeune Parque (ll.341-405), he comments on its musical quality:

Quelques uns de mes vers m'ont donné la sensation de se faire par la continuité musicale [...] "O n'aurait-il fallu, etc. et "à l'extrême de l'être," etc. Ceci fait sur les e graves que j'aime tant.¹²⁶

Elsewhere, Valéry comments on the e muet as one of the special musical resources of the French language, one of its range of vowels offering subtle effects, timbres délicats:

... l'e muet qui tantôt existe, tantôt ne se fait presque point sentir s'il ne s'efface entièrement, et qui procure tant d'effets subtils de silences élémentaires, ou qui termine ou prolonge tant de mots par une sorte d'ombre que semble jeter après elle une syllabe accentuée [...]¹²⁷

In fact, Valéry's lines, like Racine's, depend upon the pronunciation of the e muet for their scansion, and hence for their poetic existence.¹²⁸ But apart from this essential role, the e muet has a special place in Racine's technique, and even more so in that

of Valéry. Although the overall distribution of this phoneme in Racine's tragedies is equivalent to its normal distribution in prose when it is a question of the expositions or the dialogues, the distribution rises when the speech "takes off": "Chaque fois, chez Racine quand la passion parle, et en particulier, quand elle éclate chez les femmes, la fréquence de l'e muet s'élève."¹²⁹ Guiraud therefore concludes that its use is a specific procedure on Racine's part, and one even more specific on Valéry's part, for with him, the overall distribution scattered throughout the whole poem (at any rate, in the poem under discussion), rises to 51% as compared to Racine's 35% to 40% when it is Hermione's fury, Phèdre's confessions, or Bérénice's complaints that are being described.¹³⁰

It would seem then, that once again Valéry is using one of Racine's techniques to obtain an overall unity of speech at a high level of musical and poetic intensity. The e muet, which lengthens so many words, can slow the pace of the line:

Presse, pleure, gémis; plains-lui Phèdre mourante ...
(Phèdre, III, 1, 1.809)

Te tire avec retard, larme, de l'ombre amère ...
(LJP, 1.293)

while it accentuates the word it terminates, Presse, larme. If its effect is added to that of the cesura, it lengthens the value of the preceding note even more:

Monstre, | que dans nos bras || les enfers ont jeté! ...
(Iphigénie, V, 4, 1.1680)

Jalouse | ... Mais de qui || jalouse et menacée? ...
(LJP, 1.46)

Or, almost invisibly present, the e muet blends one note into another:

Seule et dans le secret, je le foule à mes pieds ...

(Esther, I, 4, 1.280)

Il colore une vierge à soi-même enlacée ...

(LJP, 1.45)

The e muet, too, has the value of a rest in music. Valéry remarks on its silences élémentaires in the passage we have quoted,¹³¹ and to Valéry, silence had a musical value as real as sound,¹³² and as significant.

[...] Le silence a son rôle dans l'univers de l'ouïe. Il y a des heures, il y a des sites que marque leur silence. L'oreille se tend, s'éveille de plus en plus dans ces vides. La musique sait les placer [...]¹³³

If, then, poetry lacked a complete musical notation (for the voice of the reader could interpret the text in different ways),¹³⁴ there was at least a technique for indicating the musical rest in the system of the alexandrine, and one which could give the rest a longer or shorter value, in the existence of the e muet, combined with the syntactic cesura, or replacing it:

Songe,⁴ songe,⁴ Céphisé,⁴⁴ à cette nuit cruelle ...

(Andromaque, III, 5, 1.997)

This is the technique which Valéry uses to slow his line to a stop by accumulating the number of pauses: "Glisse⁴⁴, barque funèbre⁴⁴⁴ ...;" (LJP, 1.148), or "Conspire⁴ au | spacieux || silence⁴⁴ | d'un tel site." (F du N I, 1.47).

A final use of the e muet was to soften the clash of vowels which was forbidden by the 17th century rules governing the hiatus, and thus to musicalise the encounter. Britannicus gives us a good example:

(... une pudeur secrète)
Ne vous laisse goûter qu'une joie inquiète ...

(III, 7, 11.967-968)

which Valéry follows: "Mais, comme par l'amour une joue enflammée" (LJP, 1.150). But both Racine and Valéry knew very well how to obtain a musical accent by the shock effect of an actual encounter while keeping to the rules — often by inserting a silent consonant: Dans le san(g) innocent (Phèdre, IV, 6, 1.1272).

The voice itself dictates the accent. Valéry, who commented on one instance of the silent consonant, Imputen(t) à,¹³⁵ uses these shock tactics with marked effect in La Pythie,¹³⁶ S'arrache vivan(t) à la vasque (1.9), Haletante, ivre, (h)urle (1.3).

There was, however, no law inhibiting the encounter of vowels within a word, a form of encounter classed by Guiraud as a hiatus: "La diérèse est une forme de l'hiatus."¹³⁷ With respect to this technique, Valéry refers us to Racine's usage, in defending his prosody,¹³⁸ and defending it on grounds of musicality, un sentiment musical conscient, suivi, maintenu.¹³⁹ The line is of course line 465 of La Jeune Parque:

Délicieux linceuls, mon désordre tiède ...

and Valéry is unrepentant:

Il est exact que j'ai, de ma propre autorité et contre la coutume, opéré la "diérèse" ti-è-de dans l'intention d'obtenir un certain effet, la symétrie Déli-ci-eux, - ti-è-de [...] En somme, si j'impose ti-e-de, [...] je n'ai pas à m'inqui-é-ter d'avoir vi-o-lé la loi [...]

Quoi qu'il en soit, je suis sensible à l'harmonie de ce vers, qui est dans Esther:

La nation chérie a violé sa foi.

He could have given other examples characteristic of Racinian vocabulary: li-en, lu-eur, nu-age, éblou-i, odi-euse, which he has himself used in the creation of the Racinian music of La Jeune Parque and Charmes. Compare the following:

Mais n'étant point unis par un lien si doux ...

(Phèdre, V, 1, 1.1379)

Et dans mes doux liens, à mon sang suspendue...

(LJP, 1.34)

Entrant à la lueur de nos palais brûlants ...

(Andromaque, III, 8, 1.1000)

O ruse! à la lueur de la douleur laissée ...

(LJP, 1.41)

Déjà je ne vois plus qu'à travers un nuage ...

(Phèdre, V, 7, 1.1641)

Toute, toute promise aux nuages heureux!

(LJP, 1.399)

Mes yeux sont éblouis du jour que je revoi ...

(Phèdre, I, 3, 1.155)

Un éblouissement d'étincelles glacées ...

(LJP, 1.506)

De festons odieux ma fille couronnée ...

(Iphigénie, V, 4, 1.1694)

(Qu'ai-je donc fait qui me condamne)

Pure, a ces rites odieux?

(La P, 11.121-122)

It is worth noting that Racine does not always separate the vowels. If he wants a more trenchant effect, we have the diphthongisation of odieuse in Phèdre's "J'ai voulu te paraître odieuse, inhumaine," (Phèdre, II, 5, 1.685), or Thésée's odieuses lumières (Ibid., V, 7, 1.1602), rather than the lingering effect of Phèdre's:

(Je tremble que sur lui ta juste colère)

Ne poursuive bientôt une odi-euse mère ...

(Phèdre, II, 5, 11.593-594)

A similar effect is achieved by Valéry's use of radieux, spacieux, in L'Ebauche d'un Serpent, if we compare the two lines "Objet radieux

de ma haine" (1.71) and "ouvrit l'univers spa-ci-eux" (1.54), where the first diphthong is spat out, the second lingered over to extend the domain of the universe.

Again, in his letter to M. Clédat, Valéry refers to another aspect of the separation of the vowels, speaking of words ending in ion: "mots en tion, sion, ssion, dont la diphthongaison, comme vous le dites bien, ruinerait une quantité de beaux vers en Racine."¹⁴⁰ He could have said the same of his own lines. Separation of the vowels in these endings is a consistent procedure in La Jeune Parque (libation, 1.289; allusion, 1.407; lamentations, 1.483, and its rhyme, créations, 1.484), and is continued in Charmes. La Pythie gives modulation (1.102), constellation (1.103); L'Ebauche d'un Serpent, méditation (1.50), Allusions (1.183). A study of Charmes, as of La Jeune Parque, reveals how seldom Valéry uses these words with their long-drawn-out endings, but how musically effective they are in that form they are when he does:

Sombre lys! Ténébreuse allusion des cieux ...
(LJP, 1.407)

We can understand well why Valéry should have brought Racine to the defence of his own use of these nuances. Once again, it is a question of music, l'harmonie des vers.

There remains a final quality of the rhythm of the alexandrine as Racine used it. It was not only the perfect vehicle for tragedy,¹⁴¹ but a perfect vehicle for mirroring the microcosm and the macrocosm, man in nature. Its basis upon the physiological rhythm of the heart, of the circulation of the blood, of breathing — even of the mental unit of the period of effective concentration, l'onde d'attention, have been referred to, but there was even more. The conventions of

of classical prosody echoed the basic conditions of the natural world: "Imitation des lois du cosmos par des conventions. Ces lois sont de périodicité, etc. La "forme" les imite et les représente dans l'univers poétique."¹⁴² We can imagine the ineluctable recurrence of the twelve syllables representing the inevitable movement towards death that is implicit in Racine's Chaque moment vous tue (Phèdre, I, 3, 1.213) and Valéry's line:

Ce coeur, qui se ruine à coups mystérieux ...

(LJP, 1.376)

They are the ticks of the clock which measure out the equally relentless cycle of the diurnal and annual rhythm mirrored by the unities. And if we look at an earlier comment on Phèdre in the Cahiers in the light of Valéry's remarks on the alexandrine and the cosmos, we see that to him there was a place for chance in Racine's universe as well as a place for the unvarying demands of the poetic laws, and that here again, the laws of the alexandrine were responsible:

Critiques — K

Ils analysent sérieusement tel discours en Racine, sans songer qu'une rime favorable ou difficile a souvent fait changer tout le développement et l'apparente argumentation.

Un beau vers qui est venu — il est né, le divin enfant! — a changé les idées de l'empereur. Ce vers en commande trois autres; et leur quatrain doit se lier au reste.

Cette reine sera brune à cause d'un tel adjectif. Et ainsi de tout. Et cela est bon, verum, dignum, justum est. C'est le procédé de la Nature [...]. C'est ainsi que parlait la vraie Phèdre et non d'après un plan. Le casuel du vers corrige la certitude fautive du plan.¹⁴³

The laws, in fact, still apply: Ce vers en commande trois autres.

And it is this compliance with the rules which has made possible the unexpected, the revelation. Indeed, it can be relied upon to produce surprising and unforeseen beauties, at regular intervals:

"Le vers régulier et ses formes produisent automatiquement et même périodiquement cet effet."¹⁴⁴ This effect of the rhythm, which produces such miracles, is in a later extract from the Cahiers compared to the effect produced by the construction of a hexagon within a circle:

Le premier qui a tracé un cercle, l'a divisé par son rayon, a joint ces pointes, et vu apparaître l'hexagone convexe, et puis l'étoile, a eu le choc d'une révélation, puisque, de ces opérations successives, une figure si remarquable naissait comme par miracle, qu'il était impossible de prévoir [...]

L'esprit a de ces surprises. Le résultat passe son attente. Deux mots ensemble font tout à coup merveille. Mais il faut aussi que ce qui se forme ainsi résonne dans ce qu'il faut. L'hexagone [a marginal gloss adds l'alexandrin] répond à quelque attente latente dans l'ordre de la sensibilité et révèle à elle-même une disposition à la symétrie saturée définie par 6 points [...]¹⁴⁵

Not all, indeed, can create this miracle (or Pradon might be Racine's equal). But, given the right receptor, the true poet — perhaps Valéry's pontife hilare (La P, 1.216) — the resonances evoked by the constraints of rhythm and rhyme, belles chaînes (La P, 1.223), reveal themselves to be not only those of Nature (doucement universel), but the voice of Music herself, conjured up (dare we say it) by the voice of Racine:

Voici parler une Sagesse
Et sonner cette auguste Voix
Qui se connaît quand elle sonne
N'être plus la voix de personne
Tant que des ondes et des bois!

(La P, 11.226-230)

L'Essence des Vers

Notes

1. C 7, 151.
2. C 7, 209.
3. C 5, 639 (1915).
4. C 7, 384 (1918).
5. "Racine disait : Me devrais-je inquiéter d'un songe? — Forme devenue archaïque et artificielle" (C 5, 755).
6. "Jean Racine : Dans les plus grands sémois, respecter les subjonctifs. — La dépression et l'appauvrissement de la syntaxe (C. à d. de l'art de représenter des relations par des relations) coïncide avec l'accroissement du vocabulaire et du système descriptif ..." (C 6, 131 (1916)).
7. "Exemples de grammaire ... Boileau donne de bons avis à Racine et de mauvaises lois à des milliers d'autres." (C 6, 350 (1916)).
8. See C 20, 735 (1938); C 22, 758 (1939); C 26, 119 (1942).
9. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.19.
10. Paul Valéry, p.301. Bémol does however refer to the Racinian tone of Valéry's poetry, giving lines from La Jeune Parque and the Narcisse poems.
11. La Poésie de Paul Valéry, pp.246, 247, 248. But Sprenson does quote Andromaque with reference to inversion.
12. Racine et Valéry, pp.201 et seq.
13. Ibid., p.203.
14. Guiraud, pp.194-196.
15. Ibid., p.194.
16. Ibid., pp.190, 191, 197.
17. C 6, 758 (1917).
18. See note 6.
19. C 17, 672.
20. Le Bon Usage (hereafter B U), p.33.

21. Nadal, E C, p.222.
22. See F. Brunot et C. Bruneau, Précis de grammaire historique de la langue française (hereafter B B), (D) 123, p.156.
23. See note 5.
24. See note 19.
25. See note 6.
26. B B, (A) 508, p.498.
27. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.19.
28. B B, (E) 549, pp.520-521. Valéry's example would seem to depend upon the verb étant being understood, Étant seule, etc.
29. See note 24.
30. B B, (C) 493, p.482.
31. Ibid., (A) 139, p.167.
32. Ibid., 273, p.272. (No alphabetical index given)
33. Ibid., (A) 352, p.352.
34. C 6, 773 (1917).
35. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.19.
36. C 26, 121.
37. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.19.
38. The passage links the processes of feeling with the syntax which mirrors it : "Des formations de sensibilité et de leurs développements propres [...] Se retrouvent = cachés dans toute activité qui prolonge sans interr., et où paraissent les besoins d'une énergie étrangère à l'objet apparent de cette formation — Regularités, périodes, symétries, etc. (Ce qui est mis en évidence en poésie régulière, où, qu'il s'agisse de Bérénice ou d'un paysage, d'amour ou d'épopées, le discours cependant s'enchaîne à lui-même, se ressemble et se dévide d'une façon organique — comme un tissu brodé ou tramé dont la structure mécanique, continuité, largeur, etc, et les qualités visuelles sont liées — l'une apportant la nécessité continue des propriétés d'un système de fils, l'autre faisant de ce système, et dans les limites qu'il impose, un objet significatif [...]" (C 20, 735).
39. C G V, pp.447-449.
40. O C V, I, Notes, p.1635.

41. Notes Diverses.
42. See note 9.
43. This word looks like lambeau in the facsimile edition of the Cahiers. This may be due either to the difficulty of Valéry's script, or to a genuine slip on his part — which would make the passage even more interesting, given the occurrence of this word in La Jeune Parque (1.187) and La Pythie (1.110).
44. The analysis itself runs as follows :
... Ainsi je trouve sur un exemple [of Racine's fusion of prosody and syntax]
 1. Ablatif absolu.
 2. Proposition principale et première proposition subordonnée (A)
 3. 2me proposition subordonnée (B)
 4. Compléments directs de la proposition (B)
 5. 3me subordonnée (C) et une subordonnée à (C), (C1)
 6. Compléments directs de (C) et une subordonnée à ce complément (CC)
 7. Complément de CC ...(C 7, 209).
45. C 7, 210.
46. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.19 (my italics). Valéry is quoting here from an earlier part of the Prayer.
47. C 26, 119.
48. Not only in the Racine notes. We find an example from the earlier part of the Prayer : "Même, tu leur promis de ta bouche sacrée," set beside one from Athalie (C 22, 785).
49. C 29, 91-92.
50. See note 48.
51. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.10.
52. Racine et Valéry, p.202.
53. Ibid., pp.205-207.
54. Guiraud, pp.194-195.
55. Ibid., p.195.
56. See note 38.
57. C 6, 169-170.

77. See the passage quoted at the beginning of the chapter (C 6, 169-170).
78. Ibid.
79. De la Diction des Vers, O C V, II, p.1257. It will be remembered that in his note on the sources of La Jeune Parque Valéry refers to this affinity between Racine's poetry and music : "A l'invers de Lulli, j'ai mis des notes sur le Songe d'Athalie (C 6, 508-509).
80. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.15.
81. C 7, 151 (1918).
82. C 17, 21.
83. A complete list of these would be otiose. We refer to the bibliography for a list of those who have come our way.
84. See note 12.
85. See note 14.
86. In a letter to Pierre Louÿs, April 1891 (C P V, I, pp.43-45).
87. See note 59.
88. "Pour moi, le plus grand poète est l'inventeur d'un vers comme l'alexandrin — le plus grand musicien l'inventeur d'un type comme la fugue, la symphonie," (C 6, 554).
89. "L'alexandrin de comédie et tragédie XVII^e ne donne pas l'impression 'poétique', mais bien plutôt le curieux plaisir [...] que donne un objet bien ajusté, un tiroir exact" (C 7, 887) and, "Le strophe de 4 ne supporte pas les coupes de l'alexandrin à deux plats. La raison : elle est plus chantante. L'alexandrin coupé frôle la prose et dépouille la voix," (C 7, 72 (1918)).
90. C 9, 159 (1922). For the equivalence of the time scales of the alexandrine and of the duration of attention, see Guiraud, p.28.
91. "On est surpris de voir des paroles raisonnés, des affaires publiques et privées, des syllogismes et des analyses, tout un [word missing] de Sciences Morales et Politiques être énoncés si bien, si purement, si bien réglés et rimés," (C 7, 887).
92. C 7, 636.
93. See note 59.
94. /.....

94. A discussion of the relevance of the alexandrine to the basic structure of speech (including the physiology of its production) will be found in Guiraud, pp.28-29. The importance of the unit of respiration must be stressed when we remember Valéry's essay Le Prince et la Jeune Parque, in which he quotes the description of Rachel's breathing (O C V, I, p.1495).
95. C 5, 639 (1915). The quotation is from Phèdre's lament for Ariane (Phèdre, I, 3, l.254). Possibly Valéry is here thinking of Moreás' dictum on the well-known fille de Minos et de Pasiphaë.
96. "Car il [Racine's line] introduit lumière simple, candeur, transparence, innocence par l'heureuse alliance des monosyllabes (longs et brefs) qui obligent à une allure égale et modérée de la voix, laquelle impose le ton, l'impression, et l'état" (C 17, 21).
97. "Que le jour recommence, et que le jour finisse," (Bérénice, IV, 5, l.1115).
98. See note 59, and also the letter to Pierre Louÿs of January 25th, referring to l'ancien alexandrin and its scheme of phrasing (C P V, I, p.29).
99. Guiraud, pp.31, 33.
100. C 24, 157.
101. Guiraud, p.55.
102. "Les uns [lines] servent à la pièce même, dont ils sont les membres indispensables [...] et sont, en quelque sorte, de plein-pied avec la prose" (De la Diction des Vers, O C V, II, pp.1258-1259).
103. Guiraud, p.49.
104. Ibid., p.50.
105. C 23, 327.
106. Guiraud, p.52.
107. Ibid., p.53.
108. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.19.
109. Guiraud, pp.73-74.
110. Ibid., p.74.
111. This internal rhyme becomes even more obvious when we remember that Racine spelt the name Hermionne. See the Knight and Barnwell ed of Andromaque.

112. Guiraud, p.74.
113. "L'enchaînement de la rime [...] sert le plus souvent à unir les deux éléments du distique [...] - ce que nous avons préféré appeler 'enjambement' [...] On voit qu'il y a là un procédé de composition," (Guiraud, p.71. See also p.70).
114. C P V, I, p.44. (My italics)
115. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.19.
116. Guiraud, p.90, note 1.
117. Michel Gautier has noted the significance of the recurrence of certain phonemes in Valéry's work, notably this same group p, r, s (e.g. in the word esprit). He notes also that Racine uses the same group in his famous : "Pour qui sont ces serpents qui sifflent sur vos têtes" (Andromaque, V, 5, l.1638), and that Valéry also evokes serpents by the same group : "Au sein plus pur le serpent noir" (Equinoxe, l.24). (Architecture phonique du langage poétique, P V C, II, p.394) We could add other examples from La Jeune Parque evoking the serpent more indirectly : "L'esprit n'est pas si pur" (l.70), "Rappelle ces remous, ces promesses immondes" (l.62). Considerations of space forbid more research into such kinship between Racine's assonances and alliterations and Valéry's but there is no doubt that it would be rewarding.
118. C 17, 21.
119. C 22, 583. See also C 23, 642.
120. C 29, 91-92.
121. C 7, 209 (1918).
122. Guiraud, p.96.
123. "[...] la modulation est assez voisine chez Racine et Valéry et légèrement plus forte chez ce dernier," (ibid., p.99).
124. See Guiraud's tables (ibid., pp.98, 99).
125. C 27, 444.
126. C 21, 822.
127. Images de la France, O C V, II, p.1000.
128. P. O. Walzer, La Poésie de Valéry, p.407.
129. Guiraud, p.61.
130. Ibid. See Table II, 6, p.60.

131. See note 127. Guiraud also comments on this function :
"L'e muet est musicalement un silence, une pause plus ou moins longue" (Guiraud, p.62).
132. "Le mot, la virgule ou soupir, le blanc, tout cela s'additionne ensemble, dans tel cas un silence est aussi important qu'un mot positif." (C 2, 68).
133. Mélange, O C V, I, p.321.
134. "Les systèmes de notations laissent des portions arbitraires — lorsque la lecture pure et simple peut s'effectuer de plusieurs façons. La virtuose n'est possible que si le texte musical est incomplet " (C 2, 68).
135. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.19. Valéry's example is again drawn from the Prière d'Esther. He describes it as liaison, which indeed is at the heart of the question. He could also have chosen another example from the Prayer, Pour moi, je (h)ais : his use of the same consonant is marked in La Pythie.
136. See Guiraud, p.102.
137. Ibid., p.101.
138. See Valéry's letter to M. Clédat, printed as Les Droits du Poète sur la Langue (O C V, II, pp.1262-1265).
139. Ibid., p.1263.
140. Ibid.
141. "Soit le sujet de Phèdre. On le propose à un sculpteur. Que fait-il? Et si ce fut par la musique qu'on le donne à traiter? Résultat inattendu : l'unité de la tragédie et l'alexandrin. Racine, enfin, considéré comme le moyen de Phèdre!" (C 26, 157).
142. Racine notes (Appendix A), p.9.
143. C 6, 460 (1917).
144. M P.
145. C 23, 562-563.

C O N C L U S I O N

Conclusion

A close study of the Cahiers shows a concentration on Racine during certain periods of intense personal stress. Two of these periods appear to be particularly important for our examination of La Jeune Parque and Charmes. The first coincides roughly with that of the first world war, when Valéry's involvement with Catherine Pozzi revives memories of his earlier passion for La Rovira; it is also the time when Valéry was composing La Jeune Parque and Charmes. The second is that of World War II, where memories of the first world war colour the agony and shame of the second, acting upon a man again absorbed in a passionate love-affair, and revive memories of the composition of La Jeune Parque. Both these periods, then, were times when Valéry felt himself threatened by uncontrollable forces, by the disorder of passion, and of death; and both were times when Valéry's mind was occupied by La Jeune Parque.

From the references to Racine in the Cahiers (references whose range goes far beyond mere technical analysis), it emerges that one play is of major importance. This play, of course, is Phèdre. Its relevance to a man in love is obvious, and must have been especially so to Valéry, re-living his passion for Mme de Rovira as he followed the stages of his love for Catherine Pozzi. He too had been a young man threatened by the pursuit of an older woman (for the very force of his obsession was a threat). This relevance is confirmed by references in the Cahiers throughout the years. Even if we had not Valéry's own analysis of the effects of passion upon himself, which so strikingly follows the pattern outlined in Phèdre, we find that Valéry considers Racine's analysis of love in that play to be

accurate, with respect both to his own personal experience, and to the universal experience of passion. It was an accuracy which Valéry could only have gauged from his own feelings.

We began by establishing this link. But, interesting as this is, its importance to us, as we seek to analyse Valéry's mature voice, is far outweighed by another discovery made by Valéry. Exploring the work of earlier poets, he found not only that Racine's portrayal of love was accurate, but that it translated, as closely as was possible, the universal experience of love into poetic terms — more, he discovered that this technical achievement could be utilised. This discovery had all the force of a revelation. Acting as a release and a stimulus, Racine, absorbed by Valéry, provided him with the power to translate into poetry, and so to exorcise, the forces of disorder and death, and released him too from the domination of Mallarmé.

When, then, we come to a study of Racine's technique, Phèdre again proves to be of particular interest relative to La Jeune Parque. The structure of the play, and Racine's use of mythology, provide a series of patterns which support a poetic description of periodicity in the physical universe, and in human life (and especially in the life of the mind); the action of the play provides a pattern which epitomises (and poeticises) the processes of thought and feeling, from the impulse which initiates them to their conclusion, through a series of states of mind engendered by the first impulse, and the reactions subsequent to it. This pattern, because of Racine's decorative use of ancient mythology, is equally applicable to the scientific theories of energy, as understood by Valéry, and to the processes of physical and mental creation of which La Jeune Parque

and Charmes are the poetic translation.

The idea of patterns of action is again relevant to the two themes which next came under discussion — again, patterns engendered by an impulse. In analysing Racine's treatment of orgueil in the major plays, and Valéry's treatment of the same theme in La Jeune Parque and Charmes, a common pattern of reaction is clearly discernible. Moreover, the different characters who act out the workings of pride in Racine's plays lend their distinctive colouring to the actors in Valéry's drama of the mind, thus diversifying and decorating the underlying blueprint. This too applies to the theme of the monstre, an analysis of the theme of possession. Here Racine's monstres, driven by the super-human force of a total obsession, lend an even richer poetic ornament to the pattern of action they demonstrate, and to Valéry's identical portrait of the same force. Here again Phèdre and the symbolic monstre of Théramène's récit are particularly relevant.

Théramène's monster is an obvious symbol; but Racine's symbolism is not, in general, so obtrusive. Indeed, it would seem at first glance that Racine had little to offer to a poet so steeped in symbolism as was Valéry. However, we found that, on the contrary, Racine's use of the symbolism common to all poets (especially with respect to imagery drawn from nature) had a particular value for Valéry. It corresponds with his conception and true symbolism, in its identification of the thing symbolised with the symbol, so that the latter produces the same reactions as would the former. Further, Racine's symbols, part of the common property, can be combined with one another, and with those of other poets, adding their layers of meaning and distinctive colouring to a multivalent unit.

If we leave for a moment these general considerations, and look at the components of Racine's poetic language, we observe that these are deployed within certain well-defined limits. These limits, we find, coincide with those imposed by the code of manners and speech which we characterise as 17th century preciosity. When we examine Racine's work, and Valéry's, in the light of these constraints, and of the demands made upon language and behaviour by its proscriptions, we see that both Racine and Valéry obey these rulings, or disobey them in the interests of a particular effect, in an almost identical fashion. Both use all the resources of the permitted language to express what cannot be openly stated, and to ornament the euphemisms and evasions they employ. Further, the proscription of the particular, the inherent ambiguity of the generalised term favoured by preciosity, allow Valéry to express a number of meanings by the use of the same word. Moreover, the conventional attitude to love, as prescribed by preciosity and obeyed by Racine, provides convenient material for an extended metaphor; for Valéry, wherein the lover and the object of his desire symbolise the poet and his poem.

The bounds of Racinian vocabulary having been defined, a closer study of the words he did use (many of whose meanings differ from those attached to them by contemporary usage) shows that many of these words are used by Valéry, and that their 17th century meanings are appropriate to the context in which he uses them; these meanings however do not exclude the contemporary ones, but add a further dimension to them.

Turning next to the way in which Racine uses this vocabulary we next examined rhetoric, whose principles underlie so much 17th century literature. We found that Valéry saw the figures of

rhetoric as reflecting the workings of thought in language; and upon comparing his use of the figures with Racine's, we found that both poets employ the figures in the way most appropriate to the dramatic poet, using them to describe the personality of the characters, and to convey their thoughts and emotions to the spectator in such a way as to arouse the desired reaction. Again, the structural rules of the speech in rhetoric, such as antithesis, subtend the pattern of the 17th century play and of the tirade within the play. This is echoed in the construction of La Jeune Parque and in the construction of a tirade such as the address to the serpent.

It was difficult to consider the subject of syntax apart from that of rhetoric, since the two so often coincide. However, as Valéry regarded Racine's syntax and prosody as closely integrated, it seemed appropriate to discuss them together. Beginning with syntax, it was found that certain 17th century forms of syntax are preferred by Valéry, but, what was of major importance, that Racine's continuity, which Valéry prized above all else, depends upon the use of apposition, and, according to Valéry himself, of the conjunction. Both these syntactical elements are used in Valéry's own work precisely in order to maintain continuity, thus confirming his dictum that Racinian syntax was peculiarly appropriate to convey the flow of thought. This flow of thought, however, had to be harmonised if it were to be transformed into poetry. Here we found that Valéry saw Racine's use of the alexandrine as the principal ingredient of this harmony. Racine's alexandrine supplies many of the formal elements of vocal music in the manipulation of the twelve syllables, of the cesura, of end-rhyme, internal rhyme and assonance, and of an unusually strong degree of modulation. These constituents are

employed by Valéry in a similar manner to obtain a similar musical effect.

What conclusion, then, can be drawn from this evidence? The question of 'sources' and 'influences' is a thorny one, and we cannot do better than quote from Wellek and Warren's Theory of Literature for the criteria to be established:

First of all, parallels must be real parallels, not vague similarities assumed to turn, by mere multiplication, into proof. Forty noughts still make nought. Furthermore, parallels must be exclusive parallels; that is, there must be reasonable certainty that they cannot be explained by a common source, a certainty attainable only if the investigator has a wide knowledge of literature or if the parallel is a highly intricate pattern rather than an isolated 'motif' or word.

(Op. cit., p.258)

If we apply these criteria to the aspects of Valéry's debt to Racine which have been under discussion, some will be found to be virtually indisputable, others more speculative and suggestive. Of the first, we would argue that the comparison of Phèdre and La Jeune Parque (Chapter II) is an example, in that it demonstrates a highly intricate pattern. Again, the architecture of the Racinian alexandrine and of Valéry's, their integration of the elements of syntax and prosody, is an example of a true parallel. From no-one but Racine could Valéry have borrowed the constructions depending upon the use of the conjunction and the apposition, combined with the musical possibilities of the cesura, rhyme, and modulation. This is true also of the use both poets made of the constraints of preciousness and of elements in Valéry's vocabulary, words used in Racine's sense, in a Racinian context.

When we come to the more speculative questions of themes and imagery, our touchstone must still be the same. Valéry's portrayal

of the universal experience of the reactions of orgueil, the horror of the monstrous, follow the Racinian pattern, and are embodied in Racinian characters. With regard to imagery, too, it is not the common currency of symbolism that is significant, but the way in which Valéry and Racine use it; not the general principles of rhetoric, but the parallel between Racine's use of them, and Valéry's. As Valéry himself observes, in one of the cryptic passages in the Cahiers in which he was accustomed to disguise his self-analyses:

[...] Si on lui [Amilcar X] donne à apprendre un morceau de Bossuet, Racine, etc etc ad lib, il est incapable de le retenir — impossible. Mais il est capable d'écrire un morceau de tout autre sujet dans la forme de l'auteur donné — avec une incroyable possession de l'acte de cet auteur et non de tel produit de l'acte. ... Il a lu moins le texte que sa nécessité.

(C 21, 576-577)

It is Racine's manner, not his matter, that Valéry applies to his own uses.

None of the examples we have adduced (except the pattern of Phèdre in La Jeune Parque) are in themselves conclusive. Taken in conjunction with Valéry's references in the Cahiers, they make a strong case however for the impact of Racine upon Valéry's mature poetic manner. Yet, let us not forget that Racine is not the only poet listed among Valéry's sources. Only after the work of these other poets has been compared in detail with Valéry's shall we be able to evaluate fully Valéry's debt to Racine at its true worth. This thesis merely constitutes a step in that direction.

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A P P E N D I X A

Racine

Je vous apporte le salut et les sympathies de l'Académie Française, qui vous remercie d'abord, en tant qu'Académicien, de l'avoir conviée à se faire représenter ce soir dans cette célébration; et puis, en tant que Française, qui vous exprime tous les sentiments que les circonstances, nos traditions

Je suis venu en très petite tenue; et vous m'excuserez de cette modération vestimentaire sur le sentiment qui m'a fait préférer la simplicité à l'apparat.

J'estime que la plus sincère dévotion envers un homme de l'esprit commande une sorte d'intimité. Les profondes admirations sont muettes. Il est difficile, sans doute, de faire à Racine l'hommage d'une heure de silence puisque nous sommes réunis pour parler de lui; mais j'aimerais que nous puissions en parler, vous et moi, - tout en y pensant. Voilà pourquoi j'ai mieux aimé que cette soirée se passât comme en familiarité avec notre poète.

Vous allez voir jusqu'où je vais m'enhardir avec lui.

Ne voyez pas dans ce que je vais vous dire la moindre

[Handwritten notes and scribbles]



Peut-être la plus digne manière d'honorer - c'est à dire de ramener un grand homme, consiste à tenter de le reprendre à l'état

inanimé

Final HITLER RACHALIE

sans gloire, à oublier tout ce qui fut dit et écrit sur lui, car on n'a pas le droit, dans un tel état, de penser à son œuvre.

Voilà tout sur Racine

On a tout dit = et peut être en être
on a point d'équilibre - où l'on
a compris à force d'avoir tout entendu sur
un auteur, qu'il n'y avait rien. - un jour
et qui est ce suffit - que son œuvre suffit

Résumons en 3 mots :

Considérer "à glorie" - il est évident à quelle
du cours du jour -

Fluctuations romantiques - Romantisme

et résurgit

à travers un nouveau degré

Auteurs nationaux - espèrent être compris

et en France le recueil a fait un grand pas
vers une gloire européenne -

et donc - une définition de l'Europe

Europe d'aujourd'hui -

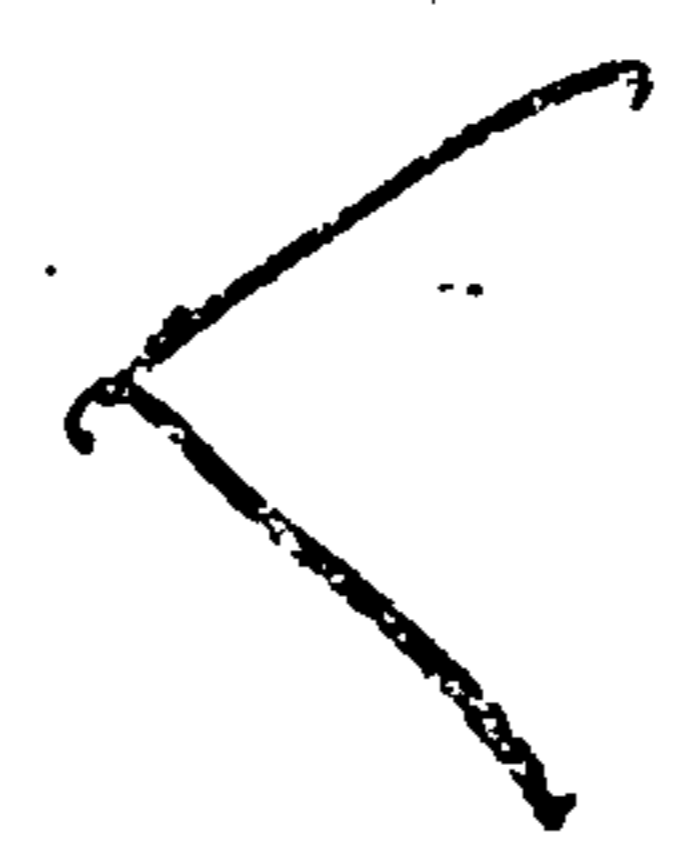
Europe de demain?


à maintenant un peu d'intimité avec
à Racine

M. H.

I

Comme vous savez dit et d'ailleurs
 que cette année ~~le~~ chargé de tout le
 service d'ici, attendu depuis
 de provision des adresses et - par ce
 fait - de notre part pour une année de plus
 à celui le plus diligent, et
 en particulier les articles qui ont été
 ainsi adoptés en raison des accidents
 par rapport de la culture européenne d'ici
par ici ? -

Le service - 

Carri en particulier - 

Personnel et de devenez, mais
un travaux plus par ici

Mais quel travaux

MM

Comment ne pas observer ici et à
celle de ces que cette année qui s'achève
au milieu des plus grandes anxiétés que
le monde moderne ait connus, cette année
chargée de formidables événements, troublée
de prévisions & annuées, livrée à toutes
les entreprises les plus barbares.

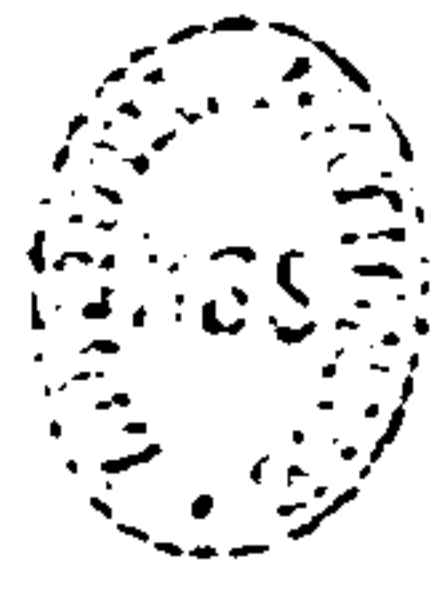
Il faut cependant dans notre poésie
une année dédiée à commémorer
et à célébrer le poète - sinon le plus
grand - du moins, et assurément, le plus
général, qui ait existé; celui en plus
nous voyons et honorons l'accomplissement
le plus parfait de la culture européenne
d'inspiration française.

quel contraste! Racine et cette époque!
Racine que dont je viens de parler ce soir
dans une noble ville que les circonstances
obligent à se hausser de defenses
mais qui même doit figurer dans
son his loire

2/ Les Carrières des hommes - Beau sujet

Carrière post-natale - !

Un grand homme est celui dont
le carrière commence après la mort -
dont le mot marque le commencement
des développements futurs !



Carrière posthume

Il a produit dans l'atmosphère d'une
 cour. Dans les conditions les moins naturelles,
 dans une langue choisie, sous l'empire
 de conventions très artificielles
 une œuvre qui après 3 siècles a
 pu nous, us enchanter -
 surmonter, aller de - tout ce qui
 vient entre elle et nous!

Lui-même ne comprendrait pas
 toutes les valeurs que us lui donnons -
 car il a fallu bien des choses, bien des
 expériences poétiques pour que certains
 des vers aient pris une résonance
 d'opéra.

Baudelaire - cet Orient désert que
 dans tout le monde on a vu!

Et enfin le vrai poète national.

4

mon historique

à attendre, peut-être un peu
volontaire - une étude moyenne
ex cathedra - aussi bien après
tout ce fait mon métier

Mais non - Je ne parlerai
familièrement de Racine -
quoique plus vrai que le vrai rôle
que tient un auteur dans notre pop. vie ?
Son œuvre prend place dans
notre les facteurs de notre existence

elle y joue le rôle d'un aliment, n'est
un besoin quelle réalisait -
le bonheur n'est un personnel volon,
un instrument d'examens - en une
stade -

Voilà donc comment
j'avais plus de 40 ans



39
14
25
43

RACINE

Mouvement de sa gloire

de la gloire

Dépouillement du nom

Sur le quai Sept. 68

De plain pied

(Mes rapports avec Racine moyen
d'être vrai en en parlant)
Découvert, plus que retrouvé
par mes problèmes

Du langage de sa poésie

Syntaxe; prosodie; musique

Comment ce système de conditions
peut créer des personnages purs et vivants

LA VOIX

Cette voix plus proche de l'interne que
dans le système moderne romantique ou
dérivé du romantique.

C'est la voix vraie sublimée

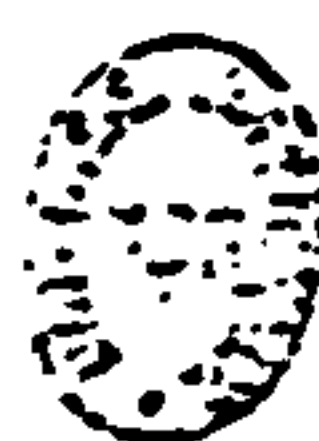
Contra Euge etc .. trop amusante
Introductions arbitraires

La voix vraie est pauvre en mots
Pouvoir de la continuité

Rôle de la conjonction
LA MODULATION

La prétendue psychologie
Rime et Stres..
Justesse

Conte glorieux
rechercher
amant en
Vochi
un L
de l'homme



LE RACINE

Forme générale

Shakespeare, les effets

Le problème n'est pas seulement (pour certains)
d'exercer une action, de saisir et de ravir
mais de porter au plus haut point la maîtrise
le contrôle de ce qui transporte..

Équitation de soi

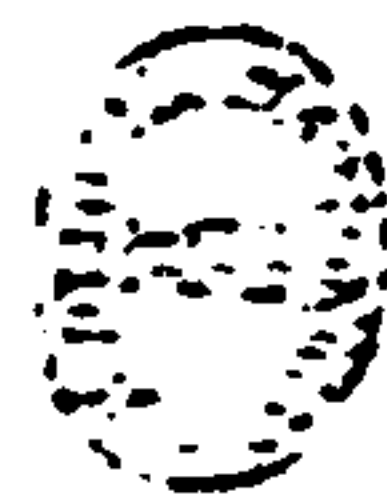
Cristal enfermant le feu

Homogénéité, pureté

Anciens..

Le "destin"
et.. les formes
fixes.

Imitation des lois du cosmos par des conventions
Ces lois sont de périodicité etc La "forme" les
imite et les représente dans l'univers poétique



De la Tragédie

Vue aujourd'hui

ce contraste bon pour Racine

Le discours Les cadres Unités

Minimum d'action

Danse lente : les attitudes:

L'articulation

Comparaison avec Shakespeare

Conjonction, cette petite chose

La tragédie est le ~~jeu~~ ~~qui~~ ensemble de transformations
 (d'ordre théâtral) qui conserve le maximum de conditions
 et des données Cf. logique - toutes unités (car ces unités
 sont des conservations)

Le VERS rigoureux! formules nettes + musique. (non vice
 Un mot qui manque et tout est compromis) *rythme et mélodie*



Dire plutôt la FRANCE est le produit des Racine et autres

Et en effet : quand nous voulons nous la représenter
que trouvons-nous? CES NOMS.

Je suis
 par l'écriture

Le problème de Racine

forme - fond. conventions -

facteurs indépendants - règles

obéy. de vie - telle chose

action dramatique.

devenir dramatique - se peut de

poser de l'employer le langage

de l'action réelle - mais elle

Y mettez celui de la



Le classique -

Le cheval - -

perfection ou fonctionnement

nature - retour après 5

exercice -

Le point elle même doit

être recourue - à plusieurs

Le volonte consciente - -



Es lewines - En. Rhein

Admission, le point de vue des

Le ~~letton~~ ^{me} ~~racine~~ car le maxime est

dit ce qui dit

Racine - et

la conclusion -

Recueil

J'ai per l'attente de mon m'm, un
desire, et ~~l'attente~~ et si un ch'cun est
en echec, approprie - aussi bien s'ensuivent
tout i fait mon me'm.

C'est, comp'ri si me permettais de m parler de
notre Reine foudroyant - Oubli par moi que le
et l'histoire

et ce qui m'ele un autre m'em, elle est
s'ensuivent - i' n'p'te pas un i'nterim
un coin tout un bureau, une chose i'ully
utile - son autre un plus des lors le
premier, le debut -

Et l'avis con l'idée m'as veu
l'homme tenu

Faire une œuvre et une manière de vivre
Conduis: Reine par mes problèmes

-- Je regardais cette page effilée et l'impression
complexe d'épave, de deuil, de tristesse,
de nature s'évanouissant - on peut tout
comprendre par m'che l'impalpable, je
révèle en elle que le texte peut se perdre dans
d'années, il l'est, comme de s'générations
n'était. Qu'un état-de travail et que je
me hâtais devant un grand Pierre
les lieux, disant mes mot. et mes
voix.

C'était saisi ou croie saisi: l'état
vivant, le poète.

Je repentis selon ce texte dans ces états
d'évolution - de substitution...

Ceci ne peut qu'être le produit que dans les
concepts auquel une forme définie d'œuvre est
attribuée

J'ai senti le problème de Reine
exister et il me tenait que si j'étais
dehors de l'évolution l'œuvre
Mais ce n'est le bien ni le temps
ni le vivant.

Recueil

Le femme coran personnel
explication de l'appt. chef.
coran le serpent au de corail plus
pise les qu'on impeller.



Racine.

Le transport d'une production à travers le temps
du de d'une constitution si d'une à une fonction
de valeur.
definition de la valeur en ces matières.
acquisition - accretissement de capital.
Valeurs de modele -

Devenu biens national
Cornille - Majo ^{et de la}
sur, sur le style ^{avec étranger}

Aspet abtrait.
Pacté abtrait

de l'espèce - la loi
de l'usage -

Les femmes de R. se détachent.
Femmes tout voir.

Profanes

Le d'œuvre
femmes imp...
plusieurs par le...
des vers
enivantes par ce...
est dit.

apropos, athé, p...
et d'œuvre.

En outre de la partie d'œuvre...
et - un...
C'est pour

478 / 516

479

Conditionnement
Produire dans les conditions les

mieux naturelles -
dans l'air d'une cour,

dans une serre. Canguis et une
condition - pretty - Bakers

medes -
un camp qui survient
après une riche guerre et
i change - Evolution

Piekt
Et tout a lui vient
entre lui et nous

une composition avec -

(Langey de Reunis)

Les arbres continuent à se parer
de leur vert tendre, de ce
vert si compressif, de
papier de l'oreille aux iris
et on divise les pensées
de Phidre de se voir -
Mais en matière de poésie, il
y a équivalence. on crée d'œuvre
est poète.

Mais en poésie d'œuvre
le poète est toujours - il s'agit
d'œuvre. mais pour l'œuvre réelle
de l'œuvre, mais pour un ouvrage
qui obéit à des conditions
d'œuvre particulières - Reunis

Tel est le poète de Reunis
d'œuvre de l'œuvre de l'œuvre
d'œuvre de l'œuvre de l'œuvre
d'œuvre de l'œuvre de l'œuvre
d'œuvre de l'œuvre de l'œuvre
d'œuvre de l'œuvre de l'œuvre

Phéole

Refac

Vitriq champion

moi composant

- idée d'élaborer les mots

- avantq des $\&$ recis lants

degré

sur une bande = poteries

Racine et circlis ok bar

le dans b. de l'homme

répéter pour naturelles -

Racine

Carrée Posthum

Racine et l'échange

thérapeut-

Heures nationales

Jugement de
valeur.

revisité son

et fait

- Valeur spécifique

Forme

"Le Clavier" et
Sport & Pleure.

- Rencontre de Racine à Racine au travail

Dans ce ^{au} ^{en} ^{de} ^{travail} ^{que} ^{de} ^{travail}

1° les circonstances de vie et légères

2° les formations initiales de personnes

et de sujets

Valeur problème -

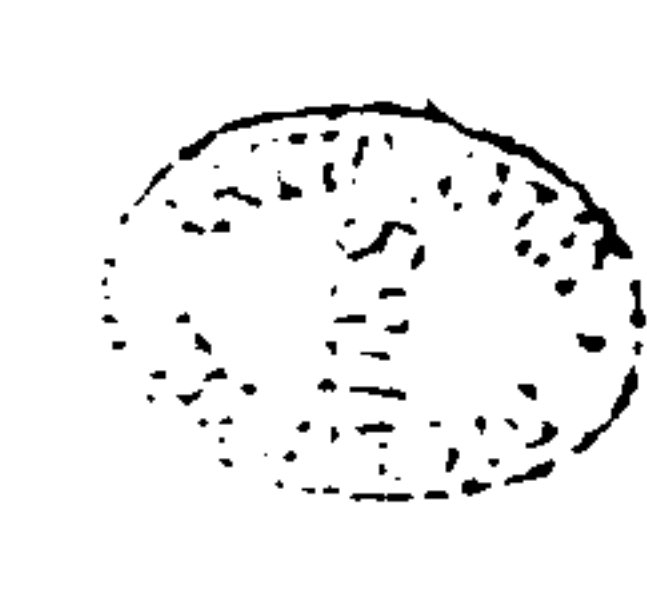
1° le volonté, le clair - 2°
et le travail



Il y a peut être de plus
fait et l'homme sont

les conditions de pensée tendent
à prendre une forme d'expulsion
(d'émancipation) "extérieurs" qui
reproduit, récapitule l'expérience
de la production

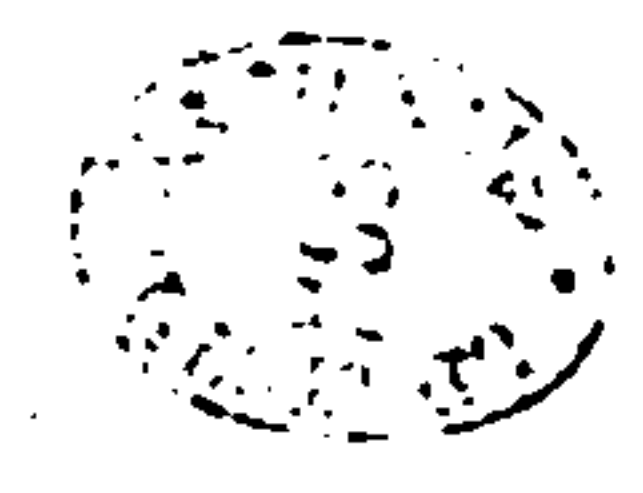
Alors le problème Forme et fond
l'indivisible - $F \rightarrow f$ -
l'indivisible - $F \rightarrow f$ -
Comme l'ont traité les classiques?



esprit Production et étude des communications

"Liberté" de la recherche nécessaire
Au contraire, la recherche nécessaire
produit l'esprit - Math. logique - etc.
peu de chose de cette nature
qui est dite "général" etc. d'importance

Revue de la philosophie
N° 10



Racine dit en prose l'homme (quel d'homme)

à qui s'en fait pour un instant au 'i' son
époque l'excellence d'un homme ~~est~~ de
connaissait à l'entente des vers
qu'on lui
Que c'est la seule ~~intention~~ de l'homme

Bonne cité
par Racine des
l'après catholique

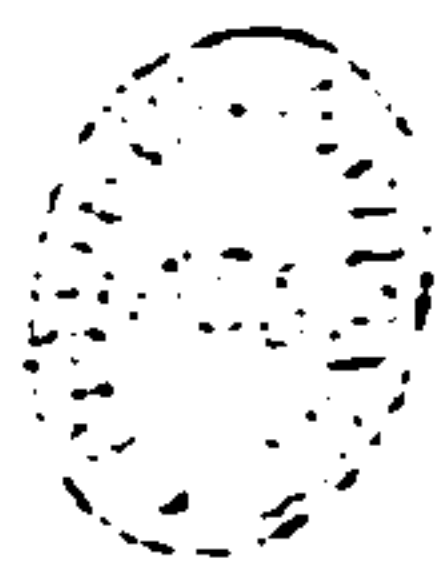
Que puis je faire de
rien de plus, car c'est
plus
que de parler de ma
reine, peut-être un peu

l'ambiguë

Ce vers de plus et l'an
elle l'écrit - un vers
de forme - "

Elegance

trouble introduit
par l'usage d'après



Racine

trouvé
Tous les jours
un ~~trouvé~~ ~~trouvé~~
par

1. 190.

Racine a inséré des morceaux lyriques dans sa poésie dramatique. Retour à l'antiquité lyrique des vers de Racine

Examiner le problème de la prosodie - la syntaxe

Prière d' Esther -

Les propositions se dégagent les unes des autres, s'énoncent.

Le mot même.

La gradation des sons jusqu'aux sonorités des é:
Une prospérité d'éternelle durée.

La continuité s'obtient tantôt par jeu d'allitération, tantôt par opposition. Il n'y a jamais juxtaposition d'effets, il y a filiation. Développement analogue à celui d'une plante.

Important à - question des liaisons.

La rime, qui n'est pas toujours riche, est toujours merveilleusement arçnée.

Dans l'articulation du morceau, ce sont les conjonctions qui font les entrées des thèmes: Non, non...

Nouvelle reprise avec : Pour moi....

Formes particulières, comme: cette pompe où...

Racine est intraduisible.

Rôle de l'inversion: son usage est précieux comme s'écartant du cours ordinaire du langage, qui, par elle, se régénère.

Le vers est subordonné à la période, chez Racine, au contraire de ce qui est chez Hugo, où le "beau vers" l'emporte. La phrase, si harmonieuse pour Racine, n'a pas de valeur pour Hugo.