ency seen in so many great artists to escape somehow from the limitations of conventional speech, either by an attempt to recover the artless and effective form which the language possessed in its origins, or by elaborating a new and highly personal diction — the latter tendency finding extreme form in writers like Milton or James Joyce, whom a modern critic recently compared as both having used a language "based on English." This natural urge to give new force and freshness to speech by the discovery of metaphors can be pursued in cruder fashion by the community as a whole, as Shelley suggests when he states that "Every original language near to its source is in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem," and it may perhaps be conceded that the vast majority of our words, even though no longer possessing a metaphorical value, originated in this way.

But we are not obliged to follow him in maintaining that words which have lost their figurative value and those which, as the arbitrary symbols of reason, have never had it, are thereby "unfit for all the nobler purposes of human intercourse." The statements of philosophy may appear cold indeed when set beside the vital utterance of poetry, but it must be remembered that the infinite variety of the latter is owing to the nature of its object, which is below the level of the intelligence. The philosopher, in Blake's epigram, is likened to the dog which lets go of the bone to grasp at its shadow in the brook only to lose both; while the poet is content to hold firmly to the reality. But the truth is that neither the one nor the other ever have their hands on it: more properly the poet might be compared to a man tasting some exotic fruit and attempting to tell us what it is; the best he can manage is to say what it is like; that it resembles this and reminds him of that and so on interminably, each new comparison a delightful hint of the nature of the reality but never actually attaining it, for the reason that it is a sensation and not wholly communicable. The scientific thinker has really seized upon something and has made it his own; hence he can tell us in fixed and final terms what he understands. Unfortunately, although his concept may be irrefutably true, it too is partial and unsatisfying, at least for the vast majority of men. We shall have occasion later to treat more precisely of the relative dignity of poetry and speculative science, but for the present it should be clear that, while the terminology of the latter may be abstract and bloodless, in this domain no other is possible, and, if the value of language rest in its power of conveying truth, the discourse in which this serves cannot be considered among the less noble of human enterprises.

## IV. POETIC INTUITION

But poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting: they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion. Hence all original religions are allegorical, or susceptible of allegory, and, like Janus, have a double face of false and true. Poets,

according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators or prophets; a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events; such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not. The grammatical forms which express the moods of time, and the difference of persons, and the distinction of place, are convertible with respect to the highest poetry without injuring it as poetry; and the choruses of Aeschylus, and the Book of Job, and Dante's Paradise, would afford, more than any other writings, examples of this fact, if the limits of this essay did not forbid citation. The creations of music, sculpture, and painting are illustrations still more decisive.

Up to the present Shelley may be interpreted as using the term poet in a general sense to designate the creative worker in any branch of the fine arts. Now, for the first time, he makes the claim, so often repeated in this essay, that to the poet must go the credit for every human achievement requiring creative thought. In the present paragraph, however, this view is boldly offered as a necessary assumption with no attempt at explanation or defence. He will assert this doctrine again more than once, sometimes with an explanatory remark or two, but never offers anything like a reasoned discussion of it until much later in his essay. Examples like this, of a lack of orderly development in the poet's thought, make things difficult for anyone who would like to carry out a thorough study of his work without appearing to pull it to pieces. Our best plan in this case will be to put off consideration of the problems raised by this radical claim until his more explicit statement of it shall have been reached.

His observations on the relation of poetry to religion are worth a glance if only because they suggest once more a principle often invoked in our discussion, namely, that any object of thought which is impossible or very difficult for man to apprehend, whether it be obscure of itself or "dark with its own exceeding brightness," will invite expression through metaphor or allegory. Things invisible to mortal sight can be suggested to our minds only through being likened to that of which we have some experience. The task of creating such similes is, in Shelley's opinion, the office of the poet, who thereby causes a form of religion to come into being, with its superficial and misleading message for the vulgar, who grasp only the literal meaning of the myth, and its more profound, if exceedingly mysterious, significance for the enlightened.

With some trepidation we now approach the observations on the poet as legislator and prophet, which introduce a problem of notorious difficulty, namely, the nature and value of poetic knowledge. The statements found here offer additional trouble again because of an awkward context, since they seem to presuppose the splendid praises of poetic intuition found in the last pages of Shelley's work, the point being that the merits of poetic knowledge cannot be appreciated until something is known of the manner in which it is achieved. Here he makes the claim that, through his art,

the poet is able to reach universal truth, and therefore fully deserves the titles of prophet and legislator which were granted to him in ancient times; but it seems of little use to ask whether a poet's conclusions are reliable before considering how they have been reached, although we must look much farther on in Shelley's essay to learn what he has to say on this point. In the present chapter, therefore, we will first try to understand a little how the poetic mind works, making use of the later passages from our author to which we have just referred, and after that we may inquire whether this process of the imagination can be trusted as we trust a process of scientific reasoning. Our general conclusion will be that it is in this very creative process of the artistic mind that art most imitates nature and, because of the naturalness of its special mode of consideration, enjoys a certain advantage over science, which relies upon deliberate calculation. However rare the true poetic mood, it is nevertheless the most normal and natural to man, since it calls into play all his faculties and answers to the needs of his whole nature. The conclusions towards which he is guided in this mental state may be unaccountable, but they deserve confidence none the less, the same acceptance we grant to the mysterious achievements of nature.

We may first note briefly the value Shelley here assigns to poetic insight. The poet, he declares, knows the present state of things far better than the rest of men. His knowledge is not that of science or erudition; it is rather of a contemplative nature: he "beholds the present as it is." By such power of vision he becomes first a legislator, able to discern the existing causes of disorder and to prescribe reforms; then, like the doctor who, from the actual condition of the patient, can predict death or recovery, the poet, in contemporary conditions, is able to read the symptoms of what is to come and hence has foreknowledge of the future. Nothing miraculous is implied in this foresight; it would seem to be simply the extension of a natural endowment of the poetic mind. However, a final remark, apparently designed to give its ultimate cause, declares that the poet "participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one" — a phrase which, if found by itself, would seem a pretension to quasi-mystical privilege.

That the poet enjoys a special power of perception of some kind can hardly be the subject of controversy. Nevertheless, our author so often indulges in hyperbole in such matters, that it might be well at least to remark that the evidence is not entirely on one side. Some sadly misguided predictions have been made by great artists, the case nearest to hand, and an especially pathetic one to our twentieth-century mind, being that of Shelley himself, who led his fellow-Romantics in faith in human goodness and in a confident hope of progress. But it is perhaps misleading to relate the poetic vision exclusively to political and social affairs, as Shelley's humanitarianism inclines him to do. In spite of certain striking examples of political perspicacity and foresight in poets like Wordsworth and Heine, it is probably unfair to expect the artist's special insight to prove itself in matters not closely related to his work, it being rather in the domain of art itself that we should look for more numerous and more

rewarding instances of the mysterious faculty in question. This power may be described as a swift, effortless grasp of experience and an unerring interpretation of it. Great portrait painters, for example, in a ten-minute sketch, seem able to convey a perception of character which friends of the subject may have reached only after long intimacy. Again, within the brief limits of a novel or play a writer will sometimes display an understanding of national character, of a land and its people, which neither the reading of volumes of history nor a long sojourn in the country might enable us to equal. And what lesser genius does for a given place or period, the greatest, in epic and tragedy, can achieve for the whole of humanity resident in the universe. How is it, then, that without research or investigation, while still perhaps young in years, and without apparent effort, nor proportionate expenditure of time, the artist can produce interpretations so profound and permanent?

Whatever the ultimate secret of this power, there is manifestly something unconscious and natural about it. The precision and truth of the masterpiece are not won by a process of calculation and test. In Shelley's words, "A great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in the mother's womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process." The artist seems to be right as nature herself is right, and we must turn in this direction for further light on a difficult problem. The inerrancy of nature is one of her most vivid characteristics: the life of plants and animals, for example, though obscure and limited, is clearly in sympathy with the vast scheme of things and leaves little room for mistake. The plant does not misapprehend the direction of the light; the lowest of brutes recognizes its food or offspring with relative infallibility. This sure movement towards the good can scarcely be understood, or even spoken of, except by assuming that such creatures do not guide themselves, but are in the grip of forces which participate somehow in the nature of intelligence, and by which they are urged on to the goal of their own welfare. That nature acts for an end is a proposition little in favor nowadays, when our science of nature has become so cut off from the overwhelming mass of immediate and natural evidence which supports her apparent purposefulness. It is obviously impossible to enter into a full discussion of the question here, but let it at least be suggested that, if we are to account for an attribute of poetry, a human art, we must move into the poet's own world. Mechanical and material causes do not go far towards explaining the vital processes even of mere biology; and the application of them to problems of the moral and intellectual life of man will advance us still less. After all our emotions, hopes and aims have been reduced to combinations of chemicals and electrical impulses, poetry will continue to be written, and to demand explanation:

> To the child, the sea is angry, for it roars;
> Frost bites, else why the tooth-like fret on face?
> Man makes acoustics deal with the sea's wrath,
> Explains the choppy cheek by chymic law, —

To both, remains one and the same effect
On drum of ear and root of nose, change cause
Never so thoroughly: so our heart be struck,
What care I, —

Now the difficulty with which we are dealing consists in this: that, while poetry is the activity of a being capable of deliberation, and is consciously carried on, it possesses an inevitability and sureness akin to those of natural processes and not present in the same degree in human actions which are more wilful. If the apparently purposeful yet unself-conscious movement of nature can help us better to understand these properties of art, it should be worth while to consider what parallel it has in human life.

Because of its untroubled sureness, irrational life has always had a certain enviable superiority in the eyes of man which has inclined even philosophers at times to seek in that quarter the antidote for restlessness of the spirit. What suits our purpose is merely to note that man himself in certain circumstances can attain, or better, slip back, into something like it; the most vivid instance, perhaps, being the state of dream. The word has no sooner been uttered than it calls to mind a good deal of familiar evidence; this strange state having been used metaphorically by a host of poets to describe their power of vision or its effects. Like dream, the poetic mood seems not to be enjoyed at will; it is rather something which comes over the poet, "arising unforeseen and departing unbidden." Similarly the two are transient and unstable in character. But, in spite of these defects, and although in dream particularly the mind appears to have sunk into a condition where it is played upon by influences which it cannot rationalise nor control, in both instances there is enjoyed an extraordinary vividness of perception not known at any other time, and also — although this is far more rare and uncertain in dream — a special insight which deliberate mental processes cannot achieve. Nor need we go beyond our normal waking life to find impressions of an unaccountable sort, held with great sureness, yet arrived at almost unconsciously by processes resembling those of nature and dimly suggestive of the high poetic vision. Our intimate understanding of the character of friends, of our own country or countryside; the confident knowledge of those who have spent their lives close to nature in the care or pursuit of living things; even the acquisition of good taste in art, as we saw above; all these forms of knowledge represent the assimilation of experience by gradual and unconscious means, which finally achieves what might be called a sure feel of things, rather than a reasoned conviction about them.

But of course poetic contemplation is only remotely comparable to actual dreaming, being on a far higher and more truly human plane, and is immensely more sensitive, quick and penetrating than the kind of intuitive perceptions shared by the common run of mankind. The poet seems to have the special privilege of a mood wherein mind and body are permitted to function as one, in an harmonious and effortless union which supposes the relaxation of the control of reason and the achievement of a "wise passiveness." Swiftly and vividly by this gift he can do what the

rest of us achieve obscurely and hesitantly over the years — embrace and assimilate a vast amount of experience, seizing it in its entirety, without selection, prejudgment or wilful design, in order to give it intelligible expression. His thinking seems to take its direction from nature herself, moving irresistibly towards its goal as do irrational things towards their proper ends, under an impulse that is part of the vast impulse of the universe. The artist may well be said to imitate nature, then; he imitates her because he cannot help it. In how deep a sense such imitation is to be understood is revealed in the words of St. Thomas:

> For if an instructor in some art carry through a work, the pupil who would acquire the art from him ought to attend to that work of his in order that he himself may proceed in the same fashion. And accordingly the intellect of man which derives its intellectual light from the divine intellect, must of necessity in that which it fashions be formed through contemplation of things made by nature, in order that it may operate in the same manner. Whence the Philosopher declares that if art might work the things of nature, art would manage them just as nature does; and, conversely, if nature might fabricate the things of art, she would proceed just as art does.[1]

In this extraordinary passage, we should note how the language emphasizes the nature of art as a dynamic and vital process, and how plainly it represents the artist, not as attempting to duplicate one of nature's finished products, but as learning to function like nature, to proceed as nature does in the formation even of those things which she cannot make. As St. Thomas remarks elsewhere,[2] "if artificial things, like a house, were made by nature, they would be made according to that order in which they are now made by art." This is the basic principle, then, to which we are seeking to add, with Shelley's help, certain additional propositions not all so readily acceptable. The first, which is really implicit in the statement by St. Thomas, is merely that true art must pre-suppose an intense and deep awareness of nature, a sense of her being and direction far beyond that of ordinary men. The next is that the actual power of imitating nature in the profound manner described has something passive and involuntary about it, so that it is neither to be acquired nor exercised at will. Finally there is the claim which instigated this discussion, that the knowledge which art may involve or produce has genuine universality and may well enable its possessor sometimes to read the future in the present.

Taking for granted that the poet must enjoy a certain deep communion with nature, that his blood must "beat in mystic sympathy with nature's ebb and flow,"[3] before he can imitate her in the manner referred to above, let us now ask why such power of feeling and entering into the life of things

[1] *In I Politicorum*, Prologus.

[2] *In II Physicorum*, lect.13, n.3, — In connection with these two citations, it may be noted that there are thus at least two distinct ways in which art is imitative of nature: The first and more profound is that according to which art proceeds as nature does, following a natural creative process. The second arises from the fact that the image must show a certain truth to nature, not the rigid adherence to fact of a scientific statement, of course, but a kind of sane acceptance of the universe as it stands, which prohibits us from calling poetry mere falsehood. In a second instalment of this article considerable space will be given to an explanation of the differences between art and science in their relations to nature, in the course of which the principle just enunciated will receive fuller support.

[3] *Alastor*, 1.651.

is the privilege of the few and is not to be acquired. The reason which seems most likely is that most men have not the extraordinary gifts of sense, or have them not in that delicate balance with those of intellect, by which the poet is characterised. They are either without unusual sensuous perception, or find themselves in this respect at one of two extremes: having so fallen victim to physical impulse that from certain points of view they no longer appear to act as rational beings; or having so dominated and thwarted the senses in the struggle of economic or political life, or in the interest of virtue, as to no longer give heed to anything for which they see no reason. Now, for the artist, it would seem inevitable that the sense-powers should be of the highest importance; for the human mind could scarcely learn to follow in its own workings the vital courses of nature without surrendering the arbitrary governance of reason and holding itself in readiness to catch, through the senses, her slightest sound or movement. We should notice carefully that this will not imply the submission of intellect to sense, but the submission of intellect to nature itself through sense; and it is so thorough-going in great poets that they are inclined to speak of themselves as losing their own identity in the process. Thus, by a strange coincidence, both Shelley and Keats compare the poet to a chameleon[1] and the latter makes also the striking observation: "A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity — he is continually in for and filling some other body." And we catch some notion of how remote from average experience, how incredibly intense and alert, yet passive, are the poet's senses from the description found a little further in the same letter — "When I am in a room with people, if I ever am free from speculation on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of everyone in the room begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated." In short, it is as if the poet had become nothing but an eye, being concerned neither to investigate nor alter, but merely to see, and having in himself lost all but an instrumental value. The achievement of this attitude, and above all the expression of its result, are not of course attributable so much to superior keenness of the external as of the internal senses; and it is by consideration of the special gifts of the poet in this latter respect that we may most vividly come to see that he must be born and not made. The enormous power of visual and auditory memory characteristic of great artists, their vast and vivid scope of imagination, their unerring practical judgment, are all so far above the capacity of average man as to seem mysterious and inexplicable; and it is the possession of such powers no doubt which renders a man susceptible to being caught and drawn along by nature's vast stream of life and beauty and is the factor which determines a great mind to turn in the direction of art rather than in that of science.

[1] SHELLEY'S words are as follows: "Poets — the best of them — are a very camelonic (*sic*) race: they take the color, not only of what they feed on, but of the very leaves under which they pass" (To the Gisbornes, July 17, 1821). He has also the following striking remark: "The poet and the man are two different natures; though they exist together, they may be unconscious of each other and incapable of deciding on each other's powers and efforts by any reflex act" (To John and Maria Gisborne, July 19, 1821).

It should hardly be necessary to warn the reader that this emphasis on its sensuous aspects should not be permitted to give rise to the impression that poetic genius does not demand intelligence as well. The essential point is that poetry is the expression of a dual nature, so that neither the power of feeling by itself nor the power of thought by itself can produce it. Intellect alone is not a nature at all, but merely a faculty resident in the total nature of man, so that its operations can neither imitate nature nor even be called natural; while the power of sense perception alone again does not constitute human nature. In the poetic mind both powers are able to work in that subtle balance which, though rarely realised, must be considered the most normal condition of man; and it might be suggested, by way of illustration, that this necessity of harmony between the two, rather than of any unusual strength in one or the other, perhaps explains how there can be minor poets, that is, how the authentic gift of poetry can be present in men with inferior power of abstract thought. Any disturbance of this balance will result in a tendency, either to didactic analysis and explanation, or to obscure emotionalism, both of which are incompatible with art. The true poet in the act of composition, is like his work, so vital a fusion of sense and intellect as to be neither completely of thought nor of feeling; his mind and body become as one, ear, eye, imagination, reason, every faculty of cognitive nature, being absorbed in an act of poised contemplation. The perfect equilibrium of the faculties so reached may explain the trance-like quality of the state, so often described by those who have experienced it; the restless struggle of curious reason and recalcitrant sense is stilled and the entire being of the man now simply "watches and receives":

> . . . that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on, —
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.[1]

It is not difficult to believe that such an ability to suspend the wilful control of reason and to allow the mind to function as an undivided nature, is not something to be acquired by practice, nor summoned at will, even by the rare spirits who are blessed with it:

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[1] "In which the affections . . ." — the mind is led into this mood, not by immediate external influence, apparently, but by submission to the affections, to the sensuous side of our being. The eye (not to be taken of course for the mere sense of sight) is "made quiet" in that it no longer seeks or chooses its object; and "the power of harmony" which brings this about will be from within, being the harmony of operation in which mind and body now find themselves. "The deep power of joy" will be that profound well-being, that sense of a paradise regained in the vital nature of man, consequent upon the cessation of the strife among his powers; there being a serenity and contentment in poetic seeing never felt in scientific investigation, however successful.

> A man cannot say, 'I will compose poetry.' The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.

And it will be equally true that so delicate a balance cannot be expected to maintain itself for long. It is an "evanescent visitation," taking flight perhaps at the most trivial distraction; since it is no easy thing for a rational creature to preserve complete detachment in the face of even a slight annoyance. An anxious and ill-balanced prudence, too, is no doubt often the enemy of art in this respect; the moral attitudes built up by so much painful effort tending to leave a man capable of beholding a thing poetically for the moment only. "What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet."

To return at last to the question of the nature and value of the poet's knowledge, it may now be seen how he might in some measure deserve the title of prophet. Certainly the knowledge he has is trustworthy, yet of a mysterious and unaccountable nature, so different indeed from ordinary knowledge that perhaps the term should not be used at all. By submission of his whole being to nature, by learning to work with her unconscious and vital power, he comes to utter judgments and produce works best described as having simply the truth of nature. But this sort of truth is so completely untranslatable into the intelligible terms of science that we find ourselves constantly impelled to describe it as the poet himself would, that is, in metaphor. The inability to explain should not of course lead to a reluctance to accept. Good philosophy will be always ready to agree that there are more things in heaven and earth than it has dreamt of. Indeed it is the realisation of how small is the achievement of philosophy that may help us to see how that of poetry is related to it. The universe, in its complexity and obscurity, will never be completely rationalisable for man; meanwhile he has to live in it, and may well look to poet as well as to philosopher for the direction needed in actual life. The speculative thinker, then, in relation to the poet, should be thought of as somewhat in the same position as the civilized explorer dependent on primitive man for guidance through a jungle. The latter has nothing that can be called science; he does not seek to understand or change the wilderness which is his birthright; he can draw no map, perhaps not even trace a path; yet he will not lose his way, nor go hungry, nor be taken unawares by storm or season. His experience or skill — if we must not call it knowledge — may appear next to nothing when subjected to analysis, yet the advantage it gives him over the stranger of higher culture is very real indeed and the latter is wise in accepting his help. For the present, let us think of poetic knowledge as being after this fashion, although dealing with far loftier objects.

As to the validity of this special sagacity, although its best defence will lie in a simple appeal to experience, a more reasoned basis for it might be found by recalling that the poetic mind has sureness of operation simply because it is a natural force functioning naturally. That power of self-direction which places such a chasm of difference between man and the

other conscious creatures of this earth, is so constantly active that we are inclined to forget the mind in itself is a natural and harmonious whole able to work without our anxious guidance, so to speak. It is true, no doubt, that deliberate and purposeful mental effort, under the direction of wisdom, will accomplish most; but the trouble is that most of us are like poor riders, who make clumsy use of reins and spur and keep our mount in a state of restive bewilderment; the poet is the man who knows enough to give the horse its head and so comes easily and safely home.[1] A mind does not need to know how it has reached truth, after all. Of course, our metaphor is at fault in suggesting that the poet is carried onward by a power not his own, so that he would be scarcely responsible for his own success. With apologies for a vagueness that we are not able to remedy, we should insist that, while there is a strong element of the irresponsible about it, the creative mind is obviously quite conscious of what it is doing and controls itself at least negatively in that it can stop if it pleases. The great point is that this is not the detached consciousness of science; it is not predominantly self-consciousness. To return to a metaphor already employed: the poetic mind is something like the eye, which can be opened or closed as we choose, but once opened, cannot choose but see.

Two further observations may be made to strengthen our confidence in the trustworthiness of the poet's findings. First, it should be remembered that at such inspired moments as we have tried to describe, the mind is functioning at a high degree of intensity; it is rapt and undistracted far beyond the normal. The advantage of such concentration may be appreciated by returning for a moment to our comparison of the poet to primitive man and noting that the latter gathers in so much more with his senses principally because they are not hindered in their activity by the multitude of preoccupations which constantly weaken the attention of civilized persons. The savage, having little else to concern him, is capable of a patient intensity in observation comparable to that of animals, and poets. Here is Shelley describing himself,

> He will watch from dawn to gloom
> The lake-reflected sun illume
> The yellow bees in the ivy bloom.[2]

The poet not only has a superior set of sense-powers, but also the ability of exploiting them to the utmost. In those realms of being where calculation and reasoning are of no avail, in the shifting tangle of human passions and purposes, in the obscure world of sensation, the advantage is all with him. His observation will be more penetrating and above all more com-

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[1] It would seem only right to denounce, as MARITAIN does, any attempt to account for poetic inspiration in terms of mere sense. But, without falling into this error, it would appear possible to explain it as we have done, as the harmonious working of the whole mind, avoiding what might deserve to be called an opposite extreme whereby inspiration would become «*la raison surélevée par un instinct d'origine divine*». Although the writer referred to does not seem disturbed by it, to our mind this «*instinct d'origine divine*» is a threat to the sane Thomistic principle with which he begins, namely, "*Omnium humanorum operum principium primum ratio est.*" Cf. *Art et Scolastique*, p.281.

[2] *Prometheus Unbound*, 1.743.

prehensive than any other; no detail will be neglected, so that the resulting expression will rest on a broad foundation and be truly representative. Great dramatic characters are of course the best instances of this, revealing as they do an intelligible complexity that astounds us with the vast experience of human nature it supposes.

In the course of all this talk about the poet as a child of nature whose heritage is a peculiar intuitive truth, the reader may have felt a certain contradiction with which it might be well to deal before terminating the chapter. We have been insisting that the poet is passive to external influence, that he submits himself to reality and so comes to work as nature does; yet it was declared in a previous chapter (and will be again in a later) that the poet is to be distinguished from the scientist precisely because he is not concerned to study reality as it is, but rather to dominate it in his own interest, using nature's forms to suit his ends. The contradiction is, of course, merely apparent, and can offer a real difficulty only if we miss the sense of the passage from St. Thomas. If the mistaken notion be adopted that the artist's task is to make a natural object, it will indeed follow that he may permit himself no liberties with nature. But the truth is that he is led by nature to make an artificial thing, although by a process largely natural. As an incidental condition of his work, nature also supplies him with his materials, but he is clearly obliged to alter their native forms if he is to produce that new reality, beyond the power of nature, which is the work of art.

> ...Notre art cependant ne peut recomposer son monde propre, sa réalité poétique autonome, qu'en discernant d'abord dans ce qui est les formes qu'il manifeste, et en *ressemblant* ainsi aux choses d'une manière plus profonde et plus mystérieuse qu'aucune évocation directe ne le peut faire[1].

A final problem is the immediate occasion of the poetic mood; for, even though it be accepted that a rare and delicate consonance of the faculties is sufficient to account for it, there is still reason to ask what cause or stimulus brings about this happy condition. From what has been said above it should be clear that we are not inclined to suppose any but natural agencies at work, and Shelley would seem to support us in this by the remark that "this power arises from within"; and again where he declares that such "conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the most enlarged imagination." On the other hand, the experience has such an air of mystery, and so submerges the being of the poet in that of the universe, as to positively invite pantheistic interpretation, which may account for language like "it is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own" or "a poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one." None of these statements is, of course, an answer to our question; and no hint of anything more specific being offered by our author, we are obliged to leave the matter as it stands. — It is surely unnecessary to apologise for this, or to remark that it is by no means the only, or the most important, problem left un-

[1] J. MARITAIN, *op. cit.*, p.289.

solved. We have already commented on the difficulty and obscurity we have found in this investigation; and the reader should consider the foregoing pages as introductory and tentative.

## V. THE POETIC MEDIUM

Language, color, form, and religious and civil habits of action, are all the instruments and materials of poetry; they may be called poetry by that figure of speech which considers the effect as a synonym of the cause. But poetry in a more restricted sense expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man. And this springs from the nature itself of language, which is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being, and is susceptible of more various and delicate combinations, than color, form, or motion, and is more plastic and obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation. For language is arbitrarily produced by the imagination, and has relation to thoughts alone; but all other materials, instruments, and conditions of art have relations among each other, which limit and interpose between conception and expression. The former is as a mirror which reflects, the latter as a cloud which enfeebles, the light of which both are mediums of communication. Hence the fame of sculptors, painters, and musicians, although the intrinsic powers of the great masters of these arts may yield in no degree to that of those who have employed language as the hieroglyphic of their thoughts, has never equalled that of poets in the restricted sense of the term; as two performers of equal skill will produce unequal effects from a guitar and a harp. The fame of legislators and founders of religions, so long as their institutions last, alone seems to exceed that of poets in the restricted sense; but it can scarcely be a question, whether, if we deduct the celebrity which their flattery of the gross opinions of the vulgar usually conciliates, together with that which belonged to them in their higher character of poets, any excess will remain.

We have thus circumscribed the word poetry within the limits of that art which is the most familiar and the most perfect expression of the faculty itself. It is necessary, however, to make the circle still narrower, and to determine the distinction between measured and unmeasured language; for the popular division into prose and verse is inadmissible in accurate philosophy.

Sounds as well as thoughts have relation both between each other and towards that which they represent, and a perception of the order of those relations has always been found connected with a perception of the order of the relations of thoughts. Hence the language of poets has ever affected a sort of uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its influence than the words themselves without reference to that peculiar order. Hence the vanity of translation; it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principles of its color and odor, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower — and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel.

An observation of the regular mode of the recurrence of harmony in the language of poetical minds, together with its relation to music, produced metre, or a certain system of traditional forms of harmony and language. Yet it is by no means essential that a poet should accommodate his language to this traditional form, so that the harmony, which is its spirit, be observed. The practice is indeed convenient and popular, and to be preferred especially in such composition as includes much action; but every great poet must inevitably innovate upon the example of his predecessors in the exact structure of his peculiar versification. The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error. The distinction between philosophers and poets has been anticipated. Plato was essentially a poet — the truth and splendor of his imagery, and the melody of his language, are the most intense that it is possible to conceive. He rejected the harmony of the epic, dramatic, and lyrical forms, because he sought to kindle a harmony in thoughts divested of shape and action, and he forbore

to invent any regular plan of rhythm which would include, under determinate forms, the varied pauses of his style. Cicero sought to imitate the cadence of his periods, but with little success. Lord Bacon was a poet. His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm which satisfies the sense, no less than the almost superhuman wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect; it is a strain which distends and then bursts the circumference of the reader's mind, and pours itself forth together with it into the universal element with which it has perpetual sympathy. All the authors of revolutions in opinion are not only necessarily poets as they are inventors, nor even as their words unveil the permanent analogy of things by images which participate in the life of truth; but as their periods are harmonious and rhythmical, and contain in themselves the elements of verse; being the echo of the eternal music. Nor are those supreme poets, who have employed traditional forms of rhythm on account of the form and action of their subjects, less capable of perceiving and teaching the truth of things, than those who have omitted that form. Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton (to confine ourselves to modern writers) are philosophers of the very loftiest power.

In these passages, Shelley, who until now has been taking poetry to mean every work of the imagination, that is, creative thought of any kind, however revealed or expressed, for the first time sets about distinguishing the more restricted sense of the word as the expression of the imagination in a special medium, and then attempts to account for its unquestioned supremacy among the fine arts. Since the occasion is not yet suitable for a critical examination of the first position, according to which almost any noteworthy achievement of the mind would be termed poetry, we shall for the present simply make the poet's purpose our own and consider what he has to say about poetry proper and about that special medium of language in which lie the secrets of its supremacy.

Language has a material and primitive, as well as an intellectual side, and both of these Shelley seems to recognize more or less explicitly as essential to the poet. The former, which he seems to think of almost exclusively in terms of rhythm, is obviously primary and elemental, yet he treats of it only after having emphasised the abstract and intellectual character of speech. In following this order he is quite justified, since his purpose is to show how the medium of poetry causes it to take first place among the arts, and since it is obvious this superiority must result from those properties of the poet's medium which make it the immediate and docile tool of the artistic faculty. The phrase "it is arbitrarily produced by the imagination and has relation to thoughts alone" conveys the true formal nature of language, as a set of signs created and used by imagination, and which, because devised by man to fit the requirements of his own nature, forms a unique and effective instrument for art, being "a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being... susceptible of more various and delicate combinations... and.... more plastic and obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation." Poetry, therefore, stands highest, because its objects, by virtue of their medium of expression, have so much of reason and immanence about them. They cannot be externalised in matter, no matter being conceivable for such productions. The image in this art has a nearness to the mind, a degree of intelligibility, not possible to any other, the nature of words making it possible to suppress or omit the material and unintelligible and retain the intelligible to an unrivalled degree; as will be recognized in a

moment if we compare the revelation of human character seen in a fine portrait or bust with that attainable in the drama. The ancients rightly held poetry to be allied to logic, the objects which both handle and set in order being acts of the mind itself. Like logic, poetry, in virtue of the universality of reason, can dominate all being after a fashion, embracing in a way even the media of the other arts; the poet being able to treat of every sort of subject, and in his treatment to suggest pictorial or sculptural effects, outline, melody, mass and motion. Not that, in some respects, poetry does not betray certain shortcomings when compared with its rivals. The relation between them might perhaps be likened to that between the *sensus communis* and the external senses. While essentially superior to sculpture, painting, or music, poetry does stand at a disadvantage through being more abstract; its conceptions cannot be embodied as are the conceptions of these, and therefore fall short in that immediate intuitiveness characteristic of external sensation. Poetry retains so much of the stuff of thought that it cannot espouse so intimately the forms of sensible things. Yet even this defect is not absolute, since it is at the same time the means whereby the poet's work can reach more deeply into the mind, driving it from within, as it were.

But the superior abstractness and universality enjoyed by poetry is, of course, shared in an equal degree by prose, the unique position of the former consisting, not in the fact that it participates so intimately in the intellectual, but does so without sacrifice of the sensuous, and indeed while enjoying resources of sensuous power even greater than those of the other arts. Here again the poet is privileged, not only because language permits him to suggest the special effects of his rivals, but because, language being sound and movement, his native and essential instrument for speaking to our senses will be rhythm, and rhythm is the most potent of all means to this end. Through rhythm poetry can stir our blood with the power and directness exerted by only one other art, that of music, yet without suffering from that lack of explicit significance which renders the influence of music so vague and impermanent.

The rhythm of language, however, is rooted in that primitive side of it which Shelley makes no attempt to expose, and it is as a thing profoundly natural that rhythm has the great importance in poetry which he claims for it. In order, then, to appreciate how true and deep are his remarks on the relation of sound to meaning and on the basic difference between poetry and prose, it will be necessary to give some attention to the problem of what language is besides being a system of conventional signs, and to that of the nature of rhythm itself.

The material or elemental side of language, whereby is meant that part of it which is given and for which intellect is not responsible, is first of all mere sound, waves in air, devoid of any significance. If the poet had merely to impose order upon these vibrations his task would be comparable to the musician's and much simpler than it is in fact. The difficulty is that the sound the poet manipulates is not on a par with musical notes, whatever

writers like Mallarmé may have thought; it is the utterance of a living, sentient being, issued under the impulse of imagination and appetite, the stuff of groans, sobbing and laughter. In short it is not mere noise, but already bears powerful significance, although that significance is not the result of rational choice. The vast difference between voice and mere sound is manifest even in the cries of lower animals: although varying in quality all the way from the grotesque and harsh to the beautiful, these growls, croakings, gruntings, or songs, all have this in common that they are sound already subject to what might be called purposeful diversification. This quality of significant order, whereby we recognize the cause of the sound to be alive, can reveal itself in attributes too subtle for analysis, such as mere timbre, insistence, inflexion, or alterations of volume, but that which concerns the poet most of all is the special property of rhythm — probably because of its markedly dual appeal to both intellect and sense, and because of its greater susceptibility to artistic direction.

The notion of rhythm in itself is, of course, not an easy one, nor are the various rhythms traceable in vocal sound the simplest exemplifications of it. In all rhythm the basic principle seems to be that a unity can achieve variety, yet retain something of its original unity, if its division or disintegration be according to a certain order. Movement, if it be pure movement, inevitably represents imperfection and loss; it is like liquid escaping from a vessel or a body falling from a height. But should the running or falling take on a certain order; should there become detectible in it something constant and occurring with a certain regularity, then, at each beat or pause there will be, as it were, a return to the primary unity; the breakdown will no longer appear pure destruction, for in the very flight of change something is constructed or accomplished. Many biological processes, it is plain, are vivid examples of this principle. No living body merely endures; the rise and fall of breath, the beating of the heart, are, as it were, a revolt against the universal decree of change, and in these pulsations there is not merely the appearance of a return to the one; an actual process is going on, a climax and a completion being achieved each time. Our human nature is to be an orderly heterogeneity of faculties and organs designed to carry on the movement of life, to proceed and spread out in time, and it is clear that when the heart beats, the hand moves, the eye sees, each must utter in motion and time an order of its own as well as contribute to the order of the whole. Multiple and complex rhythms, therefore, must accompany the movements of at least the higher forms of life, nor could we conceive of a living body as proceeding without rhythm; the movements of the various parts, whether of each organ or of the whole, could not possibly contribute to the general end unless they fell into a certain order of time as well as of form.[1] Here is the ultimate basis of the peculiar power of the arts which are concerned with progression and move-

[1] Recent medical research has shown, for example, that two or three subordinate rhythms are distinguishable in the beating of the heart, and that these in turn are affected by the rapidity of the breath and by emotional experience.

ment. Our life is a flux and it has been well said of music, for example, that it is less the music that moves us than we who move with it.[1]

As to voice, we may well expect that, as the expression of life, its rhythm will reflect many of the basic movements of the body, as well as the fluctuations of sense-appetite and passion, and perhaps even certain rhythms of external nature which, through power of knowledge, make their contagion felt. And we are obliged to deepen the complexity of the picture by noting that human speech, unlike the utterance of the brute, is influenced, not only by that nature common to all members of the species, but also by a second nature conferred by circumstances of race and environment, so that its rhythms are affected and determined by all the peculiarities of stress, intonation, quality of vowel and consonant which characterise a given tongue, and finally by the presiding guidance of intellect as reflected in grammar and idiom. Hence the baffling complexity of the rhythms perceptible in even the simplest lyric. The poem is a living whole like its creator, the central movement and life of its being catching up all the subordinate rhythms of the various strata of life represented in it.

There should be no need to emphasize that language forms a raw material of a potent and extraordinary kind, having vitality and significance long before the artist's hand has touched it, or before intellect has decided what message it must bear. It is a sort of inarticulate music needing only a conductor, rather than a composer; or, in Shelley's own words, it is "in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem." These comparisons also make it clear that the poet must control forces which are exceedingly elusive and difficult, since the elements of speech to which attention has been drawn above are irrational and in a sense useless or even hostile. We must never forget that the essence of language is to be a sign which is not natural, but the effect of deliberate choice. The lower and natural side of language may therefore become useless or obstructive because, whereas the remote matter of speech, mere sound, constitutes a most plastic material and one well adapted to the subtle activity of the tongue, that intimate tool of reason, the proximate matter of speech is sound already determined by a nature complex and refined so as to have acquired properties mentioned above as reflective of the nature of man in general or of some race of man, and these may readily act as distractions or hindrances to a desired communication. The poet, then, is far from enjoying a pure vehicle of expression such as we find in a set of mathematical symbols; the primitive rhythms of speech, like a smell or a touch, may lay hold on sense and passion long before there is question of explicit meaning.

"Sounds as well as thoughts have relation both between each other and towards that which they represent..." The distinction between poetry and prose which Shelley is now approaching rests ultimately on this fact, that the sound rhythms of language may be independent of the movement of the thought. Reason will be primarily concerned with the march

[1] G. SANTAYANA, *The Life of Reason, Reason in Art*, London 1905, p.47.

of ideas, to which that of the sounds representative of them will seem at most incidental; so that ideal speech, according to the standards of reason, will be approached when the independent sound and movement in language have dwindled away or become quite unobtrusive, and pure thought is uttering itself in a transparent medium. But the pursuit of such an algebraic form of discourse would, of course, ignore the actual nature of man as composed of both intellect and sense. He is no pure intelligence capable of emitting or receiving concepts directly; he is an intelligence housed within a mortal form, not to be roused or reached except by a commotion at his doors. By nature his mind is passive, and a message is effective with him in proportion as it startles and fixes his attention by a vivid excitation of the only perceptive powers which can bring him knowledge from without. Consequently those properties of language which, being founded deep in nature, have most power to act upon sense and passion, are indispensable to natural man. By the prose-writer the animal undercurrents in phrase and sentence will be mistrusted and avoided as far as possible, because of their treacherous "relations between each other" in which rational choice has no share; but for the masters of a speech more truly human, for the singers who hold the ears of men rapt and spell-bound, "the perception of the order of these relations has always been found connected with a perception of the order of the relations of thoughts." In other words, — to make a bold interpretation of an uncertain passage — for poets there is no division or conflict between the rational and non-rational in language any more than between the corresponding powers in the human nature of which it is the expression. Prose and poetry take different roads here because of the difference in their respective aims. The one seeks to convey a concept, appealing to sense only because it must and to the degree that it must. The end of the other is the expression of an image, the intelligible become sensuous, the sensuous rendered intelligible. The image must be whole, perfect, intimately proportioned to the nature of man; so that it would be not enough to say that the poet uses the sensuous properties of words to support and enhance his meaning; the music of good poetry is not an ornament or device, it is simply an aspect of the meaning. Perhaps we may make our own meaning clearer by noting that poetry should not be considered to stand at an opposite extreme from prose in its attitude towards language; rather is it a mean between the latter and a kind of subhuman expression which would act on man as do the cries of lower creatures upon their fellows. This lower level is approached in verse, haunting and irresistible in sound, while deficient in intelligibility, of which the best example I can think of at the moment is the *El Desdichado* of Gérard de Nerval; the higher is represented by all that neo-classic writing which is mere versified thinking. Into true poetry rhythm and music are bound to enter, but in such a way as to be at once spontaneous and cultivated, natural and artificial, actually sharing in the expression, and appearing neither incidental nor valued for their own sake. "Hence the language of poets has ever affected" — not merely a recurrence of sound such as that which nature displays, but "a sort of uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound." Nor does Shelley hesitate to add that without such

harmony there will be no poetry, the rhythm being as necessary for the communication of what he is careful to call poetry's *influence*, as the words themselves considered apart from the order of their sound.

We can now appreciate "the vanity of translation." It is not merely that a part of the original will be lost in the process. The very nature of the poem will be destroyed, the skeletal element which can be transferred from one language to another being impossible of resuscitation in the alien tongue. For poetry, unlike prose, is not the communication of a meaning, but of a meaning that moves, or sometimes of an influence too indefinable for prose statement and to which the mind could not attend were it not attracted and held by a chime of sound. It may be objected that certain of the rhythms concerned in poetry, since they are based on mere physical nature, should be identifiable in all tongues and should not resist translation; and that the same universality should be true of any metrical order which is the work of intelligence, such as that exemplified in fixed patterns like the sonnet. But to speak thus is again to imply the possibility of a dissection of the poetic image, which is created for hearers whose nature is conditioned to an intense degree by circumstances not shared by all men, and which furthermore must reflect the individual nature of its creator. To speak only of the first of these two aspects of a poem, let it be recalled that the task of the artist is to provide an object of contemplation eminently proportioned to the human mind; the closer and more intimate that proportion, the greater his success. He must appeal then not merely to a general human mind, which in fact has existence nowhere, but to a national or racial mind. To achieve this he will exploit subtleties of accent and intonation not even perceptible to an outsider. There is no need to go so far as translation to see how disastrous will be any attempt to "transfuse" such productions into another medium: we have only to imagine some fine line of English verse read with a French accent, let us say, and a French conduct of voice, to realize how much of its effectiveness would disappear. Again, no French ear will ever fully catch the force of English accentual verse, nor even if we suppose in its possessor a good knowledge of English, could we expect these violent rhythms to give that thrill of satisfaction which they bring to the reader for whom every thought and feeling since childhood has been carried on such pulsations.

The more exact understanding of metre now within our reach will in turn make clearer where lies the precise difference between poetry and prose. An observation of the rhythms employed by poets through the ages led to the classification and standardisation of certain forms. Probably music may have helped in this task, as Shelley suggests, by facilitating the counting and naming of them. Such fixed and identifiable designs with their rules of construction constitute metre, the value and function of which is described by Shelley in terms which may at first seem a bit contradictory. Metre has arisen naturally, be it noted, and constitutes no academic imposition of precepts on the artist; its rigid designs are allowed to be of genuine help, particularly in works dealing with much action; yet they are not necessary to the poet and, more surprising still, a great poet will inevit-

ably innovate upon his models. This paradoxical condition, that fixed rhythmical forms should be a natural and useful part of the artist's equipment, and yet that great poets should find it neither necessary nor even possible fully to submit to them, can be explained on the basis of the principles already set forth. That rhythmical patterns should come into being and have a more or less wide appeal is to be expected in view of the partly artificial, partly natural, origin of poetic rhythm. To the degree that it is an artifice, any rhythm invented by a poet will tend to be as stereotyped and communicable as a formula; the rondel, triolet, ballade and similar designs, for example, being accessible to different artists of different races. To the degree that it is natural, rhythm will again tend to be generated, although to a lesser extent and more obscurely and irregularly, according to certain laws and limits. To understand this second point we must remember that, even intellectually, man is a decidedly limited being. Even in communications of an abstract kind, his feeble powers of comprehension require that there be pauses and repetitions, which become the sentences and paragraphs of prose. On the physical side, the conduct of speech will be governed to an even greater degree by the rhythmical restrictions imposed by such factors as the mere capacity of breath, by the heartbeats, by fatigue or satiety, and in short by all the determined modes and processes of sense life which make it inevitable that our vocal sounds should come forth, not in an unbroken current, nor in disparate fragments, but having shape and fixity something like that found in the cries of the different species of animals. Because of the high complexity of the physical powers of man and their participation in the life of reason, the forms of his speech will obviously be much more numerous, elaborate and flexible than those of lower animals, and his greater adaptability will also bring it to pass, as has been already noted, that their basis will lie more often and more determinately in a second nature acquired through circumstances of birth and upbringing. We may expect to find, then, that poetry in all languages and races will tend to fall into certain forms and make use of certain devices the effectiveness of which would be in some measure felt by men of every race, and at the same time that there will be modifications of these forms and new forms created to suit the ear of certain peoples.

Shelley's remark on the value of such designs, namely, that they are particularly helpful in poems dealing with much action, is worth following up because it reminds us once more of the indissolubly dual nature of art. The more violent and undisciplined the theme, the more proper for a rigid and intricate vehicle of expression; the reason being that poetic rhythm, although reflective of physical and natural life, is never purely spontaneous in growth; it is always in part the work of intellect and represents the normal desire of the thinking being to rationalise and set in order the impulses of passion and desire. Coleridge seems to be quite right in tracing the origin of metre "to the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion," as long as he be not interpreted to mean that the intellect is free to cast passion into any arbitrary design and is not rather engaged in refining and organizing rhythms

already obscurely present in nature. The objective of the artist is an intelligible image; but the more violent the passion, the more elusive and unsatisfactory it will be as an object of contemplation, so that, if poetry is to be made of it, if it is to be expressed in such a way as to be understood as well as felt, it must be, not weakened or subdued exactly, but given perspective and intelligibility by means of a rigid design. It is hardly conceivable that such designs should exist, or need to exist, in indefinite numbers, and it is therefore natural that the artist should avail himself of those already in use.

That the great poet is nevertheless driven to adapt and alter the metres of his predecessors is explained by the uniqueness of his experience, a matter already briefly mentioned in connection with the originality of metaphor, but which deserves fuller consideration. The fact to bear in mind here is that human passion is distinguished from that of the brute by its quasi-infinity. In the lower creature, emotions and desires are subject to instinct, that is, they are determined in their objects and modes of operation; but, in man, passion is caught up to a higher plane, so to speak, and participates in the unlimited potency of reason. Its objects are not given and fixed; its limits are not set; and it can readily come to deserve the terrifying metaphors often used by the great poets to describe its extreme manifestations, as, for example, that of the dark tempest forever buffeting the lost souls of Paolo and Francesca. The mere number and nature of the passions may be the same in every case, but their exercise and development being constantly subject to the direction of reason responding to the changing circumstances of daily life, each individual will come to develop a set of attitudes, tastes and feelings of his own. No matter how much he may have been regimented by education or environment, a man's emotions can never be entirely stereotyped, since they are always in some measure his own handiwork. Now, the greater the mind, the keener and more delicate its sensibility, the more likely it is to reject uniformity, to seek out its own experience and, as a result, to become the possessor of an emotional nature distinctive and rich beyond the ordinary. The task of every poet being to express something which, while not merely of sense, is inseparable from sense, it follows that, whereas the conception of a lesser genius may approximate sufficiently to those of others to be communicable in an accepted frame of sound, that of the great poet will be so utterly singular and new as not to be communicable through a design created for other purposes.

> He's all at odds with all the unities
> And what's yet worse, it doesn't seem to matter;
> He treads along through Time's old wilderness
> As if the tramp of all the Centuries
> Had left no roads — and there are none, for him;[1]

The great artist must inevitably innovate, altering the old form to suit his needs, or finding for his new thought a completely new music.

[1] E. A. ROBINSON, *Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Statford*, (from *The Man Against the Sky*. Copyright, 1916, by the Macmillan Company and used with their permission).

Yet no poet, whatever the degree of his talent, is under the necessity of using any fixed metrical form. His lines, if they be true poetry, will always move to a music which, whether obtrusive or subtle, fixed or flexible, will be decisive in its influence and inseparable from the meaning; but no identifiable pattern or measure need be present. The popular mind — although this was truer in Shelley's day than in our own — has grown so familiar with accepted forms that it assumes every poet must employ them and that everyone who employs them is a poet. But the real basis of the distinction between poetry and prose does not lie in the use or avoidance of metre; it lies ultimately in the difference between the objects of each. Poetry, not content with the apprehension of reality in "algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results," seeks to convey an "integral unity" by making an image of it in language, that is, by the construction of a new integral unity by which we shall be granted an insight into the nature of the original. The poetic image, one in itself and sensible, speaks to intellect and sense as one; there is no separating its material and formal aspects, its sound and meaning. In prose, on the other hand, there is always a certain conflict between the thought and its means of expression; the form would rid itself entirely of the matter if it could, reaching towards the inaccessible ideal of pure thought conveyed by imperceptible means. The order upon which the prose-writer is intent being that of concepts only, he has no use for those natural rhythms which so easily get the better of reason. The poet, since he has something to communicate which, being in part sensuous, is not directly communicable, will use them to bring about in us a repetition of his experience; and these primitive fluctuations and throbbings, refined by the skill of his art, then acquire an uncanny power of stimulating and sustaining thought. The prose-writer is like a man who prefers a motor-car and a smooth highway in the interests of a safe and profitable journey. The poet has tamed and mounted a splendid steed and rides him magnificently; even on the travelled highway a gallop with him is an exhilarating experience, while he can also carry us into inaccessible regions where prose does not venture.

*(To be continued)*

ANTHONY DURAND.