Camille Mauclair, life and work 1890 - 1909.

Alan M. Marchbank.

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Camille Mauclair, life and work 1890 - 1909.

Summary:

CHAPTER ONE relates all the known facts concerning Mauclair's parentage and family circumstances, his childhood and adolescence, from his birth in 1872 until 1890, the date of his entry into the Symbolist milieux. His early friendships, activities and first published work are described.

CHAPTER TWO concerns his life in the period 1891 to 1893 when he was most of all one of the younger generation Symbolists. The growth of his contributions to the Symbolist reviews is described, as are his important friendships with other writers and artists both young and old. His life at this time is often examined through unpublished letters, especially those, of paramount importance, which he wrote to Gide and to Mallarmé. His involvement with Paul Fort's 'Théâtre d'Art' and Lugné-Poe's 'Théâtre de l'Oeuvre' is outlined. Equally significant facts concerning his material circumstances, his financial worries and his ill health are considered.

CHAPTER THREE: His early ideas, seen primarily in reviews, are discussed: his poetry and views on contemporary poets; his work in prose, short stories or 'contes'; his ideas on, and activities in the theatre; and his theories expressed in essays on individualism, idealism and anarchism.

CHAPTER FOUR: Bound up with the early years was the production of Mauclair's first separate works: the small but significant Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé; the larger volume of symbolist theorising, Eleusis, causeries sur la cité intérieure. This chapter sets
out what is known of the genesis of these works, analyses their content and relates them to earlier writing by Mauclair.

CHAPTER FIVE advances the description of Mauclair's life from late 1893 until 1897. The central event of these years was a sentimental crisis which involved Mauclair, Maeterlinck and Georgette Leblanc. The evidence to support this interpretation of events is set out, and the suggestion is made, supported by comments from correspondence, that this crisis was a determining factor in Mauclair's decision to abandon the outer trappings of Symbolism and to turn to new styles of life and writing.

CHAPTER SIX analyses the articles and books published by Mauclair between 1894 and 1898. The former reflect the gradual changing of their author's attitudes, whereas the latter, because of publishing delays, are largely a product of the Symbolist years. The poetry of earlier years is to be contrasted with the content of Sonatines d'Automne, the early stories are to be compared with those of Clefs d'or. Couronne de Clarté is Mauclair's most extensive work of symbolist inspiration, and, it is suggested, is closely linked to Gide's Voyage d'Urfé. The influence of such figures as Mallarmé, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Verlaine is to be seen, and the results of the sentimental and artistic crises described in Chapter Five begin to make themselves felt. Mauclair's later moral stance was becoming evident and is first stated in L'Orient vierge.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Having dealt extensively with Mauclair's Symbolist period and subsequent disenchantment, in this chapter two novels are studied: Le Soleil des morts (1898) and L'Ennemie des rêves.
(1899). They state in romanticised form "le mal nerveux de l'époque" and "l'étude des remèdes" - the dilemmas and partial solutions of the younger generation, as Mauclair understood them. Since the first is held to be a 'roman à clefs', space is spent summarising possible identifications of the characters.

CHAPTER EIGHT: As there was certainly a turning point in Mauclair's life in 1897, this chapter describes what is known of him afterwards, from 1898 until 1909. His attitude towards the Dreyfus Affair is examined because of the significance he clearly thought it had in the moral life of France as well as in the 'système d'idées' which he maintained he was elaborating in the many essays written at this time. Mauclair is seen through the eyes of many contemporaries by studying the documents (for the most part unpublished) assembled by G. Jean-Aubry for his short biography of Mauclair (1905). The tenor of Mauclair's life in these years is described from other sources, but most important of all is the analysis of the breakdown of his friendship with Gide.

CHAPTER NINE explores the enormous volume of work produced between 1898 and 1909. We observe the fluent affirmation of Mauclair's moral idealism, set out in his 'système d'idées'. Increasingly however, the conflict becomes apparent between the pressures of the vocation, leading to books of sincere artistic endeavour such as L'Art en silence, and the pressures of the 'métier', leading to innumerable articles of varying quality and to hasty volumes of art criticism and the like. Creative work, the novels, Les Mères sociales and La Ville lumière, or the poetry, Le Sang parle, also receives examination in detail.
CHAPTER TEN is devoted to Mauclair's art criticism in the period encompassed by the previous nine chapters. This examination of a distinct theme is given to provide a résumé of Mauclair's ideas throughout the studied period, and to underline the often divergent development of Mauclair's standards and attitudes and the attitudes and standards of the time in which he lived.

The CONCLUSION brings to light some information concerning Mauclair's life and work between 1909 and the time of his death in 1945.
The purpose of this study is to bring together as much as possible of the information available today about Camille Mauciar's life, and to relate it to his published work in the years 1890 to 1909.

This collection and examination of material and information has been undertaken because, despite numerous passing references to Mauciar in books and memoirs dealing with the Symbolist period, no careful study has yet attempted to define the character of the man or his work.

The paradox is that Mauciar is an unknown figure, and reference is made to some of his works, but no otherwise an unknown figure, provides the principle justification for this study. How much was he a symbolist? What exactly did he write? Was he still a symbolist when he died? What were his circumstances, what events shaped his life? The answers to these questions will show that Mauciar's contribution to his period has been underestimated. Even if he still remains eclipsed by better-known figures, one will at least know why. The basic material for a relative reappraisal of the man is given here.

This study is essentially a survey. It does not set out to re-tell the story of "laMode symboliste". For once Mauciar is placed firmly in the centre of the stage.

In doing this, certain difficulties have been encountered. On the one hand the lack of information hitherto available on his life has led critics to neglect him, and has obscured the existence of many possible manuscript sources. It is to be feared that such information has been lost because its importance or relevance to wider issues was unsuspected.
The purpose of this study is to bring together as much as possible of the information available today about Camille Mauclair's life, and to relate it to his published work in the years 1890 to 1909.

This collection and examination of material and information has been undertaken because, despite innumerable passing references to Mauclair in books and memoirs dealing with the Symbolist period, no careful study has yet attempted to define the character of the man or his work.

The paradox that Mauclair's name is often used, and reference is made to some of his work, but that he is otherwise an unknown figure, provides the principle justification for this study. How much was he a symbolist? What exactly did he write? Whom did he know, what were his circumstances, what events shaped his life? The answers to these questions will show that Mauclair's contribution to his period has been underestimated. Even if he still remains eclipsed by better known figures, one will at least know why. The basic material for a relative reappraisal of the man is given here.

This study is essentially a survey. It does not set out to re-tell the story of "la mêlée symboliste". For once Mauclair is placed firmly in the centre of the stage.

In doing this, certain difficulties have been encountered. On the one hand the lack of information hitherto available on his life has led critics to neglect him, and has obscured the existence of many possible manuscript sources. It is to be feared that much information has been lost because its importance or relevance to wider issues was unsuspected.
On the other hand, though there is an over-abundance of published material, not all of this has received bibliographical attention, and much of it is difficult to consult because it is available only in one or two libraries.

In both cases then, there are not always standard works to which reference may readily be made. It has therefore been deliberate policy to provide details of the extent of work in reviews and to include substantial passages of quotation in order to give some evidence of the basic texts, as well as to let Mauclair himself speak. There is little point providing a paraphrase if the original is unknown and only to be consulted with difficulty.

Because of the amount of material involved, it was felt that to incorporate a discussion of it in the relation of the details of Mauclair's life, would over-burden and stifle the development of argument and themes. It was decided to devote one chapter to the author's life, and then, using this as basic reference material, to move on to a discussion of his work within roughly the same period.

Apart from thematic convenience, there are several important reasons for adopting the formula "l'homme et l'oeuvre". By attempting to establish a reasonable idea of 'the kind of man Mauclair was', we may begin from a relatively sound basis in an obviously subjective field. Although errors of interpretation are unavoidable, by beginning from the texts of letters and books, the elements for the interpretation will be produced for agreement or disagreement by the reader. In this way it is hoped to avoid the error indulged in so far by the rare commentators of Mauclair - the use of a small number of texts relating to a given period or subject in order to uphold the commentator's argument. Very often the implied criticism
of Mauclair is not in accordance with his basic attitudes when the selected texts are considered in relation to his work as a whole.

Mauclair is a minor figure; much of his work seems to be derivative and must be examined in relation to the work of other artists of the period. Such an examination, if attempted on purely artistic criteria would involve an amount of work far outweighing the value of the eventual conclusions. In keeping with the relative importance of Mauclair, it is best to examine his work using as a starting point suggestive elements of his life. Of primary importance amongst these are his artistic friendships. Even if knowledge of such friendships must depend on the chance availability of documents, it is hoped that by examining Mauclair's life in the way suggested above, it will be possible to establish certain 'principles' which will prove sufficiently accurate to enable the correct interpretation and inter-relation of any new material which may come to light.

* * *

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A.M.M.
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a/ Mauclair's works:
- Conf.S.M. : Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé. (1893)
- Eleusis : Eleusis, causeries sur la cité intérieure. (1894)
- SA : Sonatines d’automne. (1895)
- CC : Couronne de clarté. (1895)
- CO : Clefs d’or. (1896)
- Laf. : Jules Laforgue, essai. (1896)
- CV : L'Orient vierge. (1897)
- SM : Le Soleil des morts. (1898)
- ER : L'Ennemie des rêves. (1899)
- AS : L'Art en silence. (1901)
- MS : Les Mères sociales. (1902)
- Imp. : L'Impressionnisme. (1904)
- VL : La Ville lumière. (1904)
- IV : Idées vivantes. (1904)
- SP : Le Sang parle. (1904)
- WW : De Watteau à Whistler. (1905)
- TC : Trois Crises de l'art actuel. (1906)
- BE : La Beauté des formes. (1909)
- AI : L'Art indépendant sous la Troisième République. (1919)
- SGL : Servitude et grandeur littéraires. (1922)
- ML : Mallarmé chez lui. (1935)

b/ Reviews:
- AAL : Annales artistiques et littéraires.
- RI : La Revue indépendante.
- BAI : Essais d'art libre.
- RB : La Revue blanche.
- MF : Le Mercure de France.
- NR : La Nouvelle Revue.
- SN : Société nouvelle.
- EPL : Entretiens politiques et littéraires.
- RE : La Revue encyclopédique, becomes La Revue universelle.
- RB : La Revue bleue.
- GR : La Grande Revue.
- RR : La Revue des revues, becomes La Revue.
- Q : La Quinzaine.
- AM : L'Art Moderne.

 Authorities:
- TP : Talvart et Place : Bibliographie des auteurs modernes de langue française (1801-1927).
- CB : Collection de Mme Bonniot.
- B.N. : Bibliothèque Nationale.
- B.N.Mss : Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Manuscrits.
- B.A.A. : Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie.

d/ Others:
- PPS : Portraits du Prochain Siècle.
Until now, little has been known about Maunoir's early life and family background. This is hardly surprising, for Maunoir himself was very reticent on the subject, except when compelled to mention it, to write, for example, that he was of Irish, not Jewish birth. As almost certainly introduced into some of his novels scenario and circumstances drawn from his early years, but since these are not available here, they will be omitted from this chapter.

Eugene Louis Caroline Funet was born on the 29th of September, 1845, in the fifth arrondissement of Paris. He was the second child of Joseph Eugene Agathe Caroline Kerneis (born in Phalsbourg on January 2, 1815) and Marie Josee Cattina. Although his parents were of Alsatian origin, they settled in Paris (14th arr.) in January 1865, at the age of 18. This same year, their first son, Almond Victor Louis, was born.

This early and literary career, Eugène Funet adopted the pseudonym Maunoir, his first articles, poems, and letters are signed under that name, and all his subsequent works are known to have used the name, as related by his family since, except, presumably, for civil matters.

Some dates of Maunoir's birth are often given as 29th December 1845 (Schmitt, p. 227). The genealogist who took charge of the family archives (and who supplied some of the details given) records it as November 29th as the date of his birth. This is confirmed by a letter dated 29 November 1908, in which he declared to Max Paul: "Maunoir was born on the 29th of November, 1845, my maternal grandparents were Simon Kerneis, who was born in 1788, and who died in Phalsbourg in 1848, and Germaine Kollard, whose date of birth is not known, but who was born on 14th April, 1804."

He occasionally mentioned his brother in letters to Maunoir, Pauline, in the early 1860s, and much later to Max Paul, shortly after Max Paul's death. Max Paul did not many, and died himself in March 1929. At that time, the brothers had not seen each other. In Jean Massou reveals the last known letter to Max Paul.
Until now, little has been known about Mauclair's early life and family background. This is hardly surprising, for Mauclair himself was very reticent on the subject, except when compelled to mention it, to prove, for example, that he was of French, not Jewish birth. He almost certainly introduced into some of his novels scenes and circumstances drawn from his early years, but, since these are not reliable facts, they will be omitted from this chapter.

Camille Laurent Célestin Faust was born on the 29th of November 1872 in the fifth arrondissement of Paris. He was the second son of François Xavier Faust (born in Schalbach on the 28th September 1838), and Eugénie Agathe Rosalie Kornstett (born in Phalsburg on the 20th January 1847). Although his parents were of Alsatian stock, they were married in Paris (14th arr.) in January 1865, where, in the same year, their first son, Edmond Victor Laurent, was born.

Very early in his literary career Camille Faust adopted the pseudonym Mauclair; his first articles, poems, and letters are signed 'Mauclair', and at no time subsequently is he known to have used or referred to his family name, except, presumably, for civil

1. The date of Mauclair's birth is often given as 29th December [cf. T&F vol.xiii,p.222]. The genealogist who took charge of Mauclair's estate (and who supplied many of the details given here) recorded 29th November as the date of his birth. This is clearly substantiated by a letter dated 30 November 1922 in which Mauclair exclaimed to Mme Paul Adam: "J'ai eu 50 ans hier."

2. Mauclair's maternal grand-parents were: Simon Kornstett, who was born in Saxony in 1788, and who died in Phalsburg in 1846, and Marie Anne Deutsch, whose date of birth is not known, but who died in Paris on 14th April 1884.

3. Mauclair occasionally mentioned his brother in letters to Gide, to Abel Pelletier in the early 1890s, and much later to Mme Paul Adam, shortly after Edmond's death. Edmond did not marry, and died at Neuilly in March 1922. At that time the brothers had clearly lost contact with each other. In Les Mères sociales the hero's brother may be based on Edmond.
Since so little is known about Mauclair's youth and family circumstances, it would be wrong to infer that he set out deliberately to conceal his origins. One can however suggest that from the very first his intention seems to have been to create for himself a 'literary' personality distinct from his initial background.

This intention is reflected in the confused information of the various critics who have mentioned his origins. For example, Henri Clouard is wildly incorrect in describing Mauclair as "Nîmois, monté jeune à Paris...."; Edmond Jaloux seems to have been misled by Mauclair's early interest in the 1890s in Belgium and the 'new' writers of that country when he writes that Mauclair was born in Paris but was of Flemish origins. G. Jean-Aubry, who, at the time he wrote his biography was in close contact with Mauclair, must have had good reason for stating that he was

d'une famille dès longtemps parisienne, anté-cédence française où se mêle quelque plus lointain atavisme danois.....

Perhaps Mauclair's Danish origins come from his father's side of the family, about which nothing is known.

When Paul Léautaud wrote the 'notice' on Mauclair in *Poètes*

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1. Mauclair's family name is not however unknown; most catalogues and bibliographies mention it. T&P also give the prename of Séverin, which, if it is correct, might explain the first initial of Mauclair's most usual signature: "SMF Camille Mauclair".
4. *Camille Mauclair, biographie critique*. E. Sansot 1905, p.5. Since this is the only full-length study of Mauclair, it is of great importance. It, and the 'dossier' which Jean-Aubry assembled in order to write it, will be studied in detail in Chapters 8 and 9.
probably based his comment: "Parisien, fils de Parisiens avec des origines lorraines et danoises très lointainement" on Jean-Aubry's work. A few sentences later, however, we read this: "d'origine sémitique, M. Camille Mauclair a le génie de sa race." This comment provoked a quick reply from Mauclair, who wrote to Vallette to explain that he was not a Jew. In his Journal Léautaud considers that he did not say that, but only that Mauclair was of Jewish extraction; the affair seems to have been fairly satisfactorily concluded, but the indignation Mauclair felt seems to have lasted. No doubt it was due to this that Mauclair explained in detail in Servitude et grandeur littéraires:

Mais le fait est que je suis né à Paris de parents Alsaciens-Lorrains et que j'ai été élevé dans le catholicisme, ayant fait ma première communion en la chapelle du vieux lycée Louis-le-Grand sous la direction spirituelle du brave abbé Quentin... et reçu la confirmation du nonce du pape, Mgr di Rende, en 1884. Mon parrain était l'abbé Faure....

Although Léautaud did eventually correct his statement in the second edition of Poètes d'aujourd'hui which appeared in 1929, he did so in such a way as to leave a sting:

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1. Adolphe Van Bever et Paul Léautaud, Poètes d'aujourd'hui, Mercure de France, 1913.
2. See the entries for 6, 18, 20, 25, and 29 January 1909. From these it is clear that Léautaud had simply recopied a vague rumour about Mauclair's birth, stemming no doubt from his role in the Dreyfus Affair. Subsequently there is a large measure of personal antagonism in Léautaud's attitude to Mauclair, although he hardly knew him.
3. SGL, p.127.
l'intelligence juive, en littérature, a son intérêt. C'est le don extrême de l'analyse, de l'assimilation, la faculté de tout dissocier, pour s'approprier et reconstruire à son image. Même nullement juif, C.M. a montré de bonne heure toutes ces qualités et de façon trop évidente pour être niées.

* * *

We have just seen that Mauclair's first communion took place in 1884. Two years before this, on the 11th February 1882, his father died. Apart from the psychological effect that such an experience would have on the mind of a nine-year old, it seems that it also caused a great change in the material circumstances of his family. In 1890, writing to Pierre Louys¹, Mauclair exclaimed

...Je souhaiterais, et je serai exaucé, que la vie vous apparût, telle qu'elle m'apparut à dix ans, muée soudain de richesse en misère, entre mon père mort et ma famille hostile.

Similarly, on the 6th October 1891 Mauclair, in a retrospective mood, wrote to Gide :²

...Je m'analyse avec beaucoup d'acuité, c'est curieux. Je suis brûlé par ma vie, qui n'a été qu'une agonie, mon cher ami. J'ai beaucoup souffert, de la ruine après l'aisance, d'abord - une série de détails tristes et niais...

Of course, the cause of his family's hostility may only be guessed at - it very probably arose because of Mauclair's desire to continue his studies, rather than begin to earn a wage, in order to

1. This letter is quoted in the Catalogue of the Louý's Sale which took place at the Château d'Ecrouves in 1934 (item 48). The date is that suggested by the compilers of the catalogue; since Mauclair met Louýs at the Sorbonne [ML, p.16] the letter may belong to late 1890. However, as will become apparent when the relations between the two young men are discussed in detail, 1891 may be a more likely date.

2. All the letters from Mauclair to Gide discussed in this study are unpublished and are held in the Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet in Paris.
help family finances.

For Mauclair was a promising pupil. He himself mentions the fact that he was the holder of a bursary at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand.\(^1\) The records of the school offer more precise details:\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Classe de 8ème (externe)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Prix d'excellence (1er)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Classe de 7ème (externe)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-3ème Accessit d'excellence 1er Prix de langue française</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Classe de 6ème (externe)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2ème Prix de langue française</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The records for 1884 - 1886 are missing; it appears that Mauclair must have repeated a year (5ème, 4ème, or 3ème).\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>-4ème Accessit d'excellence 1er Prix de langue française</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Classe de 2ème (interne)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-5ème Accessit d'excellence 1er Prix de langue française</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Classe de rhétorique (interne)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-7ème Accessit des nouveaux (Excellence) 2ème Accessit des nouveaux en dissertation française</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Classe de philosophie</td>
<td></td>
<td>-5ème Accessit des nouveaux en dissertation française.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results show not only Mauclair's over-all standard to be high, but also that he already possessed the fluency of language which is evident from the first in his writing. It is equally interesting to note that in 1887, 1888 and 1889, Mauclair was awarded an 'Accessit' in Latin, (2nd, 4th, 4th, respectively); in Greek 'version' (3rd, 3rd, none in 1889); and in 'Récitation classique'\(^1\)

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1. SGL, p.9.
2. These details were supplied by the Proviseur of Louis-le-Grand. They are not quoted in full but only in such detail as shows Mauclair's overall performance.
3. Ill-health may have been the reason for this repeated year. The influence of ill-health on his work will be mentioned again.
Finally, in 1889 Mauclair gained the '6ème Accessit de dessin', and in 1890 the '2ème Prix de dessin' - evidence of another talent which will be put to use in the years to follow.

Among his fellow pupils at Louis-le-Grand, Mauclair has told us there were Edouard Herriot, Albert Métin, Albert Thibaudet and Gustave Téry. He also recalls older pupils such as Léon Daudet, Auguste Bréal, Marcel Schwob, Romain Rolland, Paul Claudel, Jean Brunhes, and Fortunat Strowski, many of whom he was to know well later in the world of Symbolist revues.

Another element of Mauclair's adolescence seems to have been a lively interest in music:

J'eus la chance singulière de ne découvrir la musique facile et bête qu'après avoir été familiarié, tout petit, avec Beethoven, Bach, Schumann, ou Liszt, au point d'avoir ignoré qu'il existait autre chose. Je n'avais pas quatorze ans [1886], que ma joie du dimanche était d'aller me jucher au "poulailler" des vieux concerts Pasdeloup. Et bien des soirs, grâce à de patientes ruses, j'allai chez Erard ou chez Pleyel, en mendiant des billets, entendre les concerts donnés par Rubinstein, Theodore Ritter, Francis Planté, Marie Jaëll, Delaborde, qui étaient les princes du piano en ce temps-là, ou par Ignace Paderewski dont la jeune gloire naissait. Plus tard ce furent Pugno et Ysaye, l'inoubliable duo des géants. Que de fois j'ai amusé Pugno en lui avouant que j'étais ce petit collégien timide qui le guettait à l'issue des concerts, à la portière de son fiacre, voulant lui parler et grelottant de peur! Quel bon rire aussi que celui du grand Ysaye lors que je lui rappelai avoir été jadis le gamin auquel

1. In SGL, pp.15-16; in Comoedia. 9th April 1926.
2. "J'ai fait toutes mes classes .... avec Edouard Herriot..." (Comoedia). In 1890 E. Herriot was awarded the 'Prix d'excellence' in the 'Classe de philosophie'.
3. In 1889, Thibaudet was in 'Rhétorique'.
4. "Gustave Téry, qui était mon rival en version latine..." (Comoedia).
5. "Romain Rolland que je revois encore, avec sa tête de Christ, et qui venait nous faire des suppléances de cours..." (Comoedia).
il avait, à la fin d'un concert Colonne, confié
l'honneur de garder son violon dont je serrais
obstinément la boîte sur mon coeur! Ces hommes
étaient pour moi des demi-dieux... 1

In May 1887, Mauclair was present at the 'Eden' to witness the ex-
citing performance which Lamoureux gave of Lohengrin. 2 He also
tells us that as a youth he would go to Saint-Clotilde to listen to
César Frank play the organ. 3 So many youthful enthusiasms which
were to develop into friendships, and rich artistic sympathies.

As regards literature, Mauclair considered that he was drawn
to the 'new' decadent or symbolist writers partly because of person-
al inclination, and partly because of chronological coincidence:

Au lycée, puis à la Sorbonne, je les avais lus
avec curiosité, avec un goût inné pour toute re-
cherche neuve, mais j'étais loin d'être initié à
toutes leurs visées. J'avais seulement l'amour
du style et de toutes les sensations raffinées,
l'attirance à tous les arts et l'instinct de
leur unité secrète, l'aversión du réalisme de
l'école de Zola, bien qu'adorant beaucoup sa
puissance. 4

It is rather important to stress the above passage, which shows that
even at the very outset Mauclair did not fully follow current trends.
Certainly, by 1891 he was fully committed to Symbolism (as he under-
stood it), but if we wish to see why he eventually rejected Symbol-
ism, then we must consider in some detail the "pre-state" of his
mind which may be discerned in his writing at the age of sixteen or
seventeen.

The distinction of a "pre-state" of mind and opinions is
quite valid, for Mauclair himself considered that his "premier vrai
morceau de prose" was the article on Banville which appeared in

1. SGL, pp.219-220.
2. Ibid., p.223.
3. Ibid., p.220.
4. Ibid., p.15.
La Revue indépendente in April 1891. He had however published his first prose in Les Annales artistiques et littéraires on June first 1889. There are therefore eighteen months of youthful ideas, dismissed by Mauclair as "des vers dignes d'un juste oubli" published in "de vagues feuilles du Quartier-Latin". These ideas are nonetheless revealing.

It seems probable that Mauclair submitted work to Les Annales artistiques et littéraires through the intermediary of Abel Pelletier, but it is not clear how they came to know each other. On the 15th September 1889 Pelletier took over the 'Secrétariat de la Rédaction' from Édouard Coutances; a few days later we learn from a letter from Mauclair to Pelletier that the two young friends had discussed in detail plans for a series of articles on contemporary painters. This series began on the 1st November, and continued until March 1890.

The first piece of prose that Mauclair contributed to the Annales was "Une Vengeance", (1 June 1889) a short story which tells of the way a young army officer insulted an old Algerian by kissing his daughter in order to win a wager of 100 francs. He then handed the five louis over to the old man with the injunction not to make a fuss. Sometime later he was stabbed to death by the old man, and in

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1. SGL, p.17; the article referred to is: "Les Modernes Athéniens - Théodore de Banville" RI. April 1891 p.1-37.
2. SGL, p.17.
3. Pelletier had been contributing to the Annales since Jan.1889.
4. B.D. Unpublished letter dated '20 September 89'. This letter will be discussed in detail in Chapter 10, since it contains a long exposé of the critical method Mauclair would like to adopt.
5. In fact one article, that of 15 Feb.1890 is left unfinished. It is however possible that the collection in the B.N. is incomplete, since it ends on the 15th April 1890, but has three more numbers, in a different format, (Oct. Nov. Dec. 1890) bound in very loosely.
each wound is found one of the louis d'or. This is a simple story but the atmosphere of the barrack-room listening with bated breath to the sergeant who tells the story is well captured. It has the air of a tale the author himself might have heard in similar circumstances.

The following month we may read a "Ballade" by Mauclair. In this he asks the question of the souls of the dead: "Where do you go when you have left the human body?" To Heaven? In the forests? In the flowers? The balance and the closing effects of the last lines are well conceived:

Âmes! Je vous entends au fond de ma conscience,
Et pourtant... Oh! Combien impuissante est ma science
Plus près, plus près encore! Âmes où vivez-vous?
Si près que vous soyez, c'est si lointain pour nous!
Ni dans l'âther doré, ni dans les fleurs charmantes,
Ni dans les verts taillis où vit l'âme des plantes,
- Combien est doux pourtant le calme des forêts?
- On ne peut vous saisir? Dites-moi vos secrets.

- Les forêts ni les fleurs, ami ne nous conviennent;
Ailleurs il faut porter votre hommage éploéré;
Notre vrai paradis est un cœur déchiré,
Nous vivons dans le cœur de ceux qui se souviennent.

Perhaps such sentiments might be inspired by Mauclair's own experience, just as one could imagine the following lines, from "Allée déserte" (15 August 1889) to be inspired by a quiet corner of the Luxembourg Gardens, or by Verlaine's "Fêtes galantes":

Bien loin, au fond du parc envahi par le lierre,
Il est un sentier sombre, et de tous ignoré;
Les feuillages épais l'ont dès longtemps muré;
- Un bout d'allée, avec un très vieux banc de pierre.
...

Qu'elle est triste, l'allée où personne ne passe!
- Il m'est doux d'y rêver parfois de temps anciens,
Et d'y chercher des pas marqués avant les miens
Par les couples assis à cette même place.

1. 1 July 1889.
Oh! le temps des marquis, en habit de satin,
Menant dans cette allée une blonde marquise!
Oh! les gais menuets et la gavotte exquise
Qu'ils y venaient danser, se tenant par la main!
...

If these poems which have just been quoted can be classed as rather typical examples of adolescent introspection, the same cannot be said about the prose-poem "Douceur et Tristesse" (1 August 1889). In it is to be found the first statement of Mauclair’s attitude towards art and the artist - and this attitude is the one which underlies his entire work:

Très doux et très triste, ineffablement triste et doux, le poète travaille, ciselant ses vers de son burin délicat et, plus charmantes que les fleurs, les strophes naissent de son cerveau inspiré, le rêve parfois lui apparaît, puis s'évanouit; et, lui, patient, le poursuit, courbé sur son labeur; et la clameur égoïste des foules se ruant vers l'or et le plaisir ne trouble pas sa solitude, car il a de plus riches et de plus désirables trésors. Il dédaigne les joies misérables et les voluptés chimériques; il chante, l'artisan superbe, mais il se consume en ses vains efforts, car l'idéal est un dieu cruel qui frappe ses adorateurs; il mourra le poète, sous l'étreinte invisible du doute qui le dévore; et c'est pour cela qu'allant la douleur au génie, le poète passe l'œil indifférent à ce qui n'est pas de son rêve, très doux et très tristes, ineffablement tristes et doux.

Très doux et très tristes, ineffablement tristes et doux, Amour, Nature, Poésie, vous l'êtes tous trois; et je songe que vous l'êtes parce que vous venez de Dieu, car Dieu est triste et songeur et l'Art est Dieu; c'est un frisson douloureux et sacré qui fait les premiers poètes; c'est pourquoi, dédaignant le rire impur et la joie grossière, poètes entêtés du Beau, amoureux extasiés, suivez votre route solitaire, très doux et très tristes, ineffablement tristes et doux.

Of course, the idea of the artist in his ivory tower, pursuing an elusive ideal, is not new. What is more remarkable is that already Mauclair lends to the artist's quest and tribulations a moral value. Although the artist must suffer, as before the "larges yeux aux clartés..."
"Éternelles" of Baudelaire's "Beauté", his suffering is a virtue, his sacrifice of materialism and gross pleasure, is not only the homage he pays to the Ideal, it is also the initiation to a higher, better plane. Even after thirty years of personal experience, and artistic observation this conception, though it had matured, remained fundamentally the same:

.. Je crois que l'art, ce silencieux apostolat, cette belle pénitence choisie par quelques êtres que leur corps fatigue et empêche plus que d'autres de rejoindre l'infini, est une obligation d'honneur....

.... Tout est grave, profond, lent, silencieux. Le bruit des villes n'est rien, la gloire n'est rien. Il y a la conscience et Dieu, leurs échanges, les menaces et les pièges de la nature et, pour s'en défendre, l'amour, l'idée que tout est passage, l'attente simple et loyale d'une unité harmonieuse et future.

* * *

Virtually nothing is known about which authors attracted Mauclair at college. In his memoirs, he adopts an amused, slightly ironic tone when he talks about his first 'griffonnages' - his pastiches of Heredia and Leconte de L'Isle; his Parnassian crisis of the "pure artist"; his penchant for Kantism, for abstract metaphysics, for 'great' music, for poetry; his antipathy for realism, journalism, Zola and the naturalists, and the novelists of the Académie - "bref, un joli chaos aggravé par la maladie livresque au plus frénétique degré."

In the midst of this "chaos", Mauclair maintains that there was one dominant idea, that of the independent artist. While it is clear that Mauclair is interpreting here his youth from the position

2. SGL, p.16.
almost of over-independence he had acquired in the course of thirty years, the text from 1889, quoted above, shows that the central idea is the same. The artist by definition is independent; if he stoops to listen to "le rire impur et la joie grossière", whether in art or life, then he is lost.

Les décadents me plaisent d'emblée parce que tout le monde les attaquait, que par conséquent ils n'avaient ni succès ni profit, et qu'ils continuaient à émettre de telles théories et de telles œuvres, c'était pour satisfaire à leurs convictions, en héros et en martyrs.¹

A few years later Mauclair was to evoke, in Le Mercure de France² his memories of the funeral of Villiers de L'Isle-Adam (on 20th August 1889), which emphasize his awe and admiration before the great men present:

Je songe à la mort de Villiers enfin... à cet enterrement que j'ai suivi, enfant, de loin, sous cette pluie inoubliable, à cette absoute à Saint-François Xavier, à ce cimetière boueux, où quelques hommes de cœur, dont mes dix-sept ans savaient le nom de la veille, Mallarmé, Jean Moréas, Huysmans, Guiches, entourant le frêle enfant du génie mort...

As a measure of Mauclair's desire to remain independent, we can consider the letter he sent to Pelletier on the 20th September 1889. In it, he explains that his series of articles will not be about "Impressionism" or "Modern Painting", but rather about "The Impressionists" or "Modern Painters"; this method will allow him to deal with the work of individual painters, to express admiration or disgust with one artist's production, without being obliged to praise or condemn all artists of a given "school", simply because one has praised or condemned that school at the outset.

¹. SGL, p.17.
². MF, Jan.1894, pp.79-80.
...car voyez-vous, mon cher, si je veux louer à leur valeur les artistes de talent, je veux aussi éreinter sans merci les équilibristes et les jongleurs. Que l'article leur parvienne ou non, je le travaillerai avec soin, car certaines choses mettent depuis trop longtemps ma patience à l'épreuve, et j'ai toujours été l'ennemi convaincu des charlatans, dont un si grand nombre bat aujourd'hui la caisse.

In other words, Mauclair is making judgements of the sincerity or the intentions of the artist; there is an evident moral preoccupation. Mauclair bases his comments on the pictures visible at the Exposition Universelle and at recent Salons. The painters he writes on are: Roll, whom he compares to Zola as the painter of human suffering; Duez, the painter of graceful, dreamlike landscapes; Gervex, whose refined Parisian imagination is somewhat akin to that of Alphonse Daudet; Besnard, "jeune poète du pinceau"; and Pelez, whom Mauclair calls "l'analyste puissant et impitoyable de la misère."

Before leaving Les Annales artistiques et littéraires, it is interesting to quote this description of Mauclair as seen by the reporter of the first "Banquet du Sou": although the description is enigmatic, it captures something of the atmosphere of the review:

Mauclair, un artiste à-s-ballades, a dit la Ballade à la Mer! Si on ouvrait le ventre de notre ami Mauclair, on y trouverait une fringale de mordre à la Poire de Normale. Mais avec, aussi, la sincérité d'un vrai talent de "jeune", qui après réflexion, aura peut-être la chance de rassasier sa fringale d'une autre pomme.

1. In his article on Besnard, Mauclair recalls the Salon of 1887, "un beau Salon dont je garderai longtemps le souvenir." (AAU Feb. 1890 p. 366)
2. The "Sou" was a society formed by the contributors of the Annales. Its name came from the monthly subscription of each member.
3. This report was published on 15th August 1889. The Ballade in question was published in the issue of 15 Oct. 1889, with a dedication to Jean Richepin.
If l'Ecole Normale is hinted at above, it was not to be for Mauclair. From Louis-le-Grand he proceeded to the Sorbonne, presumably at the beginning of the academic session of 1890-1891. Although he does mention from time to time his formal academic training — it was at the Sorbonne that he met Pierre Louÿs, and he could remember working opposite Moréas in the Sorbonne library — Mauclair seldom dwells at length on these years. For more details, we must turn to these interesting manuscript notes: J'ai fait ma licence ès lettres, deux ans de droit — mais ça, je ne veux pas qu'on le dise. J'ai quitté la Sorbonne parce qu'on me mettait en demeure de démissionner ou de ne plus écrire et je ne veux pas revenir là-dessus....

We neither know why nor when Mauclair was thus obliged to leave the Sorbonne. For the first, it is possible that his interest in Anarchism may have disturbed the authorities; for the second, it seems that in February 1894 he had not left the academic world, for he could write to Mlle Mallarmé: "Je passe lundi et mardi des examens toute la journée..." Why he should have wished Jean-Aubry to omit this information from his biography, it is difficult to say; possibly he preferred no stress to be laid on such a traditional academic training, or perhaps he simply thought it irrelevant to his

1. ML, p.16.
2. RI, July 1891: "L'étude approfondie des vieux fabliaux — et je sais combien M. Moréas les a lus, alors qu'humble collégien, à la bibliothèque de la Sorbonne, je le vis assidûment, sous la lampe, travailler et prendre des notes, à une table, en face de moi, bien souvent — cette étude lui a donné la langue et les mots qui nous surprennent aujourd'hui."
3. Dossier compiled by G. Jean-Aubry. These "Notes sur mes débuts" are unmistakably in Mauclair's hand.
4. Anarchism and Mauclair's ideas on the subject will be dealt with in chronological order in the following chapters.
5. Almost all of the letters from Mauclair to Mallarmé discussed in this study are unpublished and belong to the Collection of Mme Bonniot. The letter quoted here has the date 10 Feb.1894.
intellectual development, since, as shall be seen, his life outside the University was extremely active.

Long before his presumed entry to the Sorbonne, Mauclair had been attending regularly the "Soirées de La Plume". Between the 11th January 1890 and the 21st February 1891\(^1\) - his name no longer appears after this date - out of a possible total of twenty-eight 'Soirées', Mauclair was present at no fewer than twenty, and, during this time he recited, at the 'Soirées', about twenty poems - mostly sonnets and ballads.

Virtually nothing is known of these poems except their titles; "Amour", "Le Vaisseau", "Les Yeux verts", "Soir de bataille", "Décembre", and others. We have some idea, however, of the type of poetry Mauclair was writing from a few pieces which were published. "Cantilène",\(^2\) and "Phryné" are rather oriental, and portray sensual, enigmatic women, in the manner of Moreau. Of the two, "Phryné", which was awarded a "mention très honorable" in a Sonnet Competition organised by La Plume,\(^3\) is the more balanced:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sur de soyeuses peaux de panthères tigrées} \\
\text{Phryné nonchalamment sommeille: et, poursuivant} \\
\text{D'un incertain sourire un songe décevant,} \\
\text{Caresse la fourrure et les griffes dorées.} \\
\text{En sa prunelle sombre aux lueurs azurées} \\
\text{Un regard d'or attire et fascine, énervant;} \\
\text{Son corps est comme un lys frissonnant sous le vent} \\
\text{Et le marbre est moins pur que ses deux mains nacrées}
\end{align*}
\]

1. Details of the bi-monthly meetings (1st and 3rd Saturday of each month) which Mauclair attended are to be found in La Plume, from no.19 to no.45; in the above 'possible total' no account has been taken of holidays.

In SGL (p.20) Mauclair recalls: "Je n'ai pas eu affaire à Vanier, mais j'ai souvent récité des poèmes sur le petit tréteau où Deschamps exhibait ses "chers camarades" avec des boniments préalables".

2. 15 March 1890 (p.43).

Elle a des colliers vermeils et chatoyants
Et ses cheveux épais scintillent de brillants;
Elle rêve mystique, en une molle pose;
Près d'elle, un Africain, dont l'œil étrange luit,
Balance avec lenteur, sans le plus léger bruit,
Un encensoir d'agate où brûle un parfum rose.

* * *

So far we have examined, as it were, the external features of Mauclair's entry into the world of letters. Now we must attempt to judge what this meant to Mauclair. Unfortunately there is little contemporary material to help in showing this, but the following passages are perfectly credible:

Mon entrée dans ces milieux n'était pas seule-
ment un début dans une des régions du monde littéraire : c'était un début dans la société elle-même, car jusqu'alors j'avais vécu sans relations familiales, en boursier modeste se hâtant d'obtenir ses parchemins pour tenter en-
suite de gagner sa vie.1

Je débutais alors dans de vagues journaux où l'on me payait misérablement, mais j'étais dans le cas classique du jeune homme qui, pour "faire de la littérature", a quitté ses parents sans leur demander un centime, et il me fallait bien vivre. J'inaugurais là une série de quelques très dures années.2

In considering Mauclair's early work, it is useful to bear these statements in mind, for much of his life was determined by the conditions he describes here. There is little doubt that Mauclair's family was not well-off; in 1893, in a letter to Gide,3 Mauclair explained that the uncle on whom the family depended for financial assistance had just died, and though his brother earned just enough for himself and his mother, because of this sudden death, he is almost destitute.

1. SGL, p.19.
3. 5 July 1893.
Mauclair was therefore caught in a cross-current of pressures. Without money, he had to depend on his intelligence and talent, which his age and artistic scruples preferred to turn to the service of Symbolism, and its meagre rewards. On the other hand, he was liable to become increasingly annoyed with artists who sought over-isolation from the necessities of life, as an early letter to Louÿs shows. In this letter, Mauclair exhorted Louÿs to read Verlaine, Baudelaire, Shelley, Poe and Mallarmé; then he continued:

Et puis... sérieusement sortez, vivez et lisez Zola, et Rosny. Il vous faut connaître la vie pauvre, sortir des palais fallacieux de Régnier, pour goûter la franche, rustique et populacière vie. Pour peintres, étudiez Raffaëlli, et Degas, et Forain; laissez de côté provisoirement les Gustave Moreau, les Rops, les Besnau [?] : allez loin des enchanteurs, vers les vrais. Et après cela, surtout, ne tombez pas dans le mysticisme...

Although this advice seems to clash with Mauclair's professed innate dislike of realism, we must not forget the poets he suggests, nor the important word 'provisoirement'. It is as if he is here offering Louÿs from first-hand knowledge, how he should gain an insight into a different social world.

Finally, because of his circumstances Mauclair will be forced into that category of writers who must write to live, and who cannot always afford to seek perfection. He makes a virtue of necessity, but the presence of this necessity should not be forgotten.

**

Of Mauclair's early contacts with the established literary

1. This letter from the Catalogue d'Écouves has already been mentioned (p.5). Unfortunately it is not quoted in full in the Catalogue.
2. SGL, p.16.
3. i.e. within the limits of this chapter: 1872-1890.
and artistic world, only two pieces of precise information are to be found. The first belongs to late 1890 or early 1891:

La maison de Georges et Marie Rochegrosse a été la première maison d'artistes où à dix-neuf ans je sois entré, timide et souffrant, la première où j'ai osé lire mes poèmes de débutant sous les yeux de deux êtres profonds et bons. Ils m'ont initié à leurs songes. Je leur ai dû d'inoubliables leçons de noblesse morale, l'exemple du travail magnifié par l'amour, des heures sans prix.¹

In view of the fact that Rochegrosse was Théodore de Banville's adopted son, it would be very interesting to know whether Mauclair knew the couple before or after Banville's death (March 1891) which was followed by Mauclair's article on him in Le Revue indépendante, in April 1891. Mauclair at no time mentioned having met Banville in person.²

The second piece of information is to be found in an interview given in 1925.³ Again no date is indicated:

Alphonse Daudet est le premier écrivain illustre chez qui j'ai osé pénétrer et je garde un ineffaçable souvenir de sa bonté et de son charme délicieux. Il fut indulgent à mes livres de début...

Perhaps this contact was made through Léon Daudet, who was, as we

1. Marie Rochegrosse (a collection of essays by several authors to commemorate her death on 5th May 1920) pp.49-58. This 'plaquette' (in B.A.) has neither date nor publisher, except 'achevé d'imprimer' 30 Sept. 1922. Extract, p.57.
2. Dr. Souffrin-Le Breton has tried unsuccessfully to trace the Rochegrosse papers.
3. Liberté, 7 July 1925.
have seen, amongst the older pupils at Louis-le-Grand, or perhaps Mauclair is using the adjective 'illustre' in a restrictive sense, so that someone like Mallarmé, who was not at the time 'illustre' for the general public, has been passed over.

* * *

As regards the younger generation, the main friendship which is fairly well documented, and which may have begun before the end of 1890, is that with Maurice Maeterlinck. Mauclair tells us that not long after he had written a one-act play entitled Les Aveugles, he read Masterlinck's work of the same title. He was so full of admiration for the other man's play that he destroyed his own and wrote to Maeterlinck to say that this destruction was the most sincere homage he could pay. Brought together by a common interest in Novalis, quoted by Mauclair in his first letter, their friendship began, although it was restricted for some time to the exchange of letters, because Masterlinck seldom came to Paris. It will be seen how fruitful the friendship was to prove.

* * *

Many years later, Mauclair summed up his early development in the following words:

1. Dr. François Daudet, son of Léon Daudet, possesses a few letters from Mauclair to his father. One of these dated 6th March 1937 reads: "Je suis plus touché encore de la persistance avec laquelle vous me montrez de la sympathie, depuis les temps lointains où je vous voyez chez votre admirable père en compagnie de Marcel Schwob." Elsewhere, Mme Alphonse Daudet in her Souvenirs autour d'un groupe littéraire (Paris, 1910) in a passage under the date 'Avril 1887' includes Mauclair amongst the habitués of the Cour Grenier. Though this is certainly incorrect, the inclusion of Mauclair's name may stem from vague recollection of his presence in the Daudet home at a later date.

2. SGL, p.37; 1890 is specifically mentioned. Maeterlinck's Les Aveugles was published in June 1890.

Le hasard a voulu que je ne connusse les littérateurs qu'en dernier lieu, à la vingtième année, alors que depuis longtemps j'approchais des musiciens et des peintres.¹

This observation is important, for it means that Mauclair was entering the literary world with his mind alive to Art in all its forms.

We may best gain an impression of Mauclair before 1890 if we think of the description he gave of himself as a young boy, when he used to leave the Lycée Louis-le-Grand to walk the short distance to the Panthéon where he could gaze up at Puvis de Chavannes's murals.

His awakening mind is admirably captured in the following passage:

J'étais seul dans cette immensité de pierre fraîche, je ne pouvais me résoudre à m'en aller. J'étais un gosse qui ne savait rien de la peinture, j'annonnais le latin, et le mot "puella" me hantait devant cette blanche petite fille aux contours simplifiés, et je murmurais "puella" avec un obscur délice, cela me paraissait être un mot blanc, et du même blanc. Ce que j'ai pu rêver devant ces pages, tout en ne comprenant pas leur parti-pris de couleur fanée! Tout d'elles m'était caresse, calme, tendresse silencieuse...²

1. SGL, p.141.
2. SGL, p.151. - Mauclair wrote to G. Jean-Aubry ('Notes sur mes débuts'): "...j'ai été un an à l'atelier Gustave Moreau. On n'a pas besoin de savoir ça!" (Cf. Chapter Eight, p.588.) Why he should not have wished this to be known remains a mystery, but, in any case, his name is not to be found in the registers kept of Moreau's classes in the Musée Gustave Moreau, though it is possible that he attended them unofficially, as 'élève libre', as did Matisse. No indication has been found as to when this may have taken place.
Chapter Two: Life, from 1891 until 1893.

This chapter concerns the years 1891 until early 1894. As this is a period of considerable activity, it does not lend itself to either a chronological list of facts or to a series of thematic discussions. An attempt has been made to use both methods: first, by constructing a chronological framework following Masson's contributions to reviews; second by referring to certain articles, in order to show how these either inspired new friendships, or were the expression of friendships already formed; and third, by using the circumstantial material available to enlarge upon the setting of these first years of the life of Masson as a person. Having established this essential background, it will then be possible, in the following chapter, to move on to a detailed consideration of the work of the period.

We have seen how Masson considered his first real article to be that which he published in Béarn in Le Berry indépendant in April 1891. However, his first contribution to this review was in March, and consisted of two poems which he had already recited at the 'Soirée de la Plume' earlier in the year; he also was responsible for an adulatory review of Les Cahiers d'André Walter.

His subsequent work in Le Berry indépendant is divided into 'articles de fond' - on Béarn, Moryès, Bernard, and Béarnais - book reviews, art-criticism, and some verse.

This is how Masson later recalled his time with the review:

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This is how Mauclair later recalled his time with the review:

La Revue indépendante n'était pourtant point un organe symboliste : on y vénérait Rosny et on

"Spleen", 'soirée' of 21 Feb. 1891.
commençait à y parler d'un scandinave ignoré, appelé Ibsen ... On y était poli pour les essais de Paul Adam, de Kahn, de Tséodor de Wyzewa, de Barrès, on y gardait le souvenir du délicieux et profond Jules Laforgue mort cinq ans auparavant. On y était sympathique, aussi, à la littérature avoisinant l'occultisme, à Péladan qui m'intéressait, à Villiers de l'Isele-Adam qui m'énerveillait. C'était donc un organe de liaison entre le symbolisme naissant et la littérature de la veille.  

In the latter half of 1891, Mauclair contributed to five of the last seven issues of *La Conque*. The beginning of his friendship with Pierre Louÿs has been noted; by June 1891, it was sufficiently advanced for Gide to complain to Paul Valéry that Louÿs "est emballé pour le jeune Camille Mauclair qu'il a découvert ces derniers temps ... Vous en a-t-il parlé? Je ne pense pas, mais il est évident que nous pâlissons..."  

Gide's remark is prompted by the fact that the place he expected in the next issue of *La Conque* had been reserved instead for Mauclair. In all, seven poems by Mauclair appeared in *La Conque*.

Also in 1891, Mauclair signed 'articles de chronique' in *L'Estafette*, gave two poems to *L'Ermitage* (in September and December),

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1. SGL, p.17. It will be noticed that Mauclair has a tendency — here and elsewhere — to make the birth of Symbolism coincide with his own entry into the world of letters. An independent contemporary account of the role of the RI is to be found in the *Journal du Théâtre d'Art* of 15 January 1891 (p.18), under the title: "Les Préludes - simples documents" by Jules Méry:

"Le 31 décembre 1888 MM. Dujardin et Kahn quittèrent la Revue indépendante. Elle fut reprise par M. Francis de Nion. Mais depuis lors, elle n'est plus qu'un magazine éclectique; publication point militante, intéressante toutefois lorsque les militants des premières heures y reviennent écrire."


3. Letter (17 June 1891) *Correspondance Gide — Valéry*, Gallimard, Paris, p.95. Valéry's reply (23 June) "Observons avec intérêt l'astre Mauclair s'élever..." must be gratuitous irony since he had had no dealings with Mauclair as yet.

4. Because of difficulties in consulting this review (not in B.N; B.A. 1896 only) the extent of Mauclair's work is unknown. The texts of three articles are however available.
and some introspective musings entitled "Feuillets vierges" to La Revue blanche, also in December.

In 1892, Mauclair was still on the staff of La Revue indépendante. This came to an end, however, in the middle of the year, because of a disagreement between Mauclair and Georges Bonnamour (the editor) over some affair of rivalries within the staff. Details of formal resignation were not announced until the January 1893 issue of Mercure de France, there it is stated that Abel Pelletier, Maurice Beaubourg and Camille Mauclair had together left La Revue indépendante. The reason given is that Bonnamour had altered an article by Abel Pelletier on Saint-Pol-Roux.1

However, sometime beforehand Mauclair had already turned to the Mercure, for his first article here, "Notes sur l'idée pure", appeared in September 1892. He was to remain with the Mercure until the end of 1897, and much of his most interesting work appeared there. Later Mauclair recalled that his admission to the staff of the Mercure seemed at the time immensely important, as it no doubt was:

Il me semblait alors essentiel, en signe d'un véritable avancement littéraire, d'être admis à écrire au Mercure de France : en fait, je n'ai plus trouvé cela si important plus tard, mais c'était la seule revue sérieuse, bien faite et durable qui, par la volonté d'un groupe d'hommes de talent, surgit de la multitude de feuilles versicolores, incohérentes et éphémères propageant alors "la jeune littérature".2

Mauclair's other principal activity in 1892 was a short but intense spell as secretary to Les Essais d'art libre between February

1. The following month in MF Bonnamour denied that this was so. The article was probably the pretext to resolve a strained situation.
2. SGL, p.39. As will be seen below, Mauclair is here looking back with disdain on the very reviews to which he also contributed.
and December.  He contributed important articles on Maeterlinck, Barrès, Idealism, and Individualism, plus a large number of reviews of books and periodicals.

At the beginning of 1892 two articles by Mauclair appeared in Zo d'Axa's anarchist paper *L'Endehors*; in February, July and September he wrote three short stories for *La Grande Revue - Paris et Saint Petersburg*; during the year three poems were published in *La Syrinx* which Joachim Gasquet directed in Aix-en-Provence; and in the March issue of *Les Essais d'art libre*, he had the unusual task of thanking Paul Redonnel, editor of *La Chimère* "d'avoir retrouvé en une vieille valise de très anciens vers donnés par moi en un moment de confiance naïve, sans m'en aviser"!

On the 19th March 1892, Mauclair wrote to Gide:

> Tu es bien gentil de ne pas trop m'inventiver pour les petites horreurs anti-artistiques que je donne au Figaro et qui vont continuer hélas! J'avais accepté cette besogne sous le voile de l'anonymat, pour, tout simplement gagner un peu de quoi vivre, et on m'a fait la douce plaisanterie de mettre mon nom. Alors j'ai accepté carrément bien que très blessé, et il y a infiniment de sourires hautains autour de moi en un moment de la part des gens bien vêtus. Mais j'ai un peu le cynisme des autres gens...

Clearly not all of Mauclair's work at this time was happily conceived or executed. Under the heading "Petits supplicies parisiens", he offered to the reader of *Le Figaro* little light facetious pieces, comparing the piano to an animal, a fiacre to a scarabee beetle, or describing the duel, the 'vélocipédiste', or the reporter.  

1. In MF March 1892, among 'Nouveaux confrères' we find the EAL; Edmond Coutances is given as 'directeur', Pelletier as 'rédacteur en chef', Mauclair as 'secrétaire'. All three had worked on the AAL.

2. B.D. unpublished letter; a few days beforehand Gide writing to Valéry [13 March] pointed out that Mauclair was writing in the Figaro.

3. 12, 19, 26 March, 23 April, 10 Dec. respectively. Also short story "L'Âme frêle", which was re-published in *Clefs d'or* (1896).
such article signed by Mauclair and Maurice Beaubourg under the name of 'Mivoque' attracted the attention of Nadar, who found it "très remarquable et fort gai", and was prompted to write to enquire about the possible collaboration of 'Mivoque' to Paris-Photograph.

To complete the review of Mauclair's work in 1892, there are two contributions to La Revue blanche, and one to the Belgian review Floréal. One of Mauclair's articles in Le Figaro (entitled "L'Ame frêle", pleased Clément-Janin, and was published again in Le Publicité française illustrée in October.

In 1893, Mauclair gave a long series of poems to La Revue blanche, these were later reprinted in Sonatines d'automne. His most important work was of course in Mercure de France. This included articles on Gide's Voyage d'Uriën, on Maurice Beaubourg, and Armand Point.

Among the minor reviews of 1893 are to be found L'Ermitage which published several pieces of poetry by Mauclair in February and July; Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires, with "Ex-Voto", (25 February), a poem later published in Sonatines d'automne; and L'Art littéraire which, though it was short-lived, printed both prose and verse in June, September and November. What is probably Mauclair's first article of music criticism appeared in L'Académie française in February, under the title "Morceau sur la Neuvième Symphonie".

Clearly this list may not be exhaustive. Its purpose however is to show how actively Mauclair was involved in the world of the

1. "Vers et prose pour Noël" - a series of pastiches of Daudet, Zola, Coppée, Barrès and others.
3. April and July.
4. May/June.
5. Mauclair's final article in the RBche was published in Feb.1894, but is dated 19-20 December 1893.
young, symbolist reviews. While *La Revue indépendante* and *Le Mercure de France* are by far the most important, many interesting side-lights are available in the smaller reviews.

**Mauclair's best documented friendships are with Gide and Mallarmé. These are especially important because each complements the other, showing Mauclair's relationship with some one of his own generation, and with an older established writer who was particularly admired by that generation.**

Mauclair has often recalled how, not long after he had written a very favourable review of *Les Cahiers d'André Walter* in March 1891 for the *Revue indépendante*, he received a visit from the grateful young author of the "anonymous" and "posthumous" Cahiers:

> C'était André Gide, ressemblant alors au jeune Frantz Liszt dans la lithographie de Devéria. Des cheveux longs, disparus depuis comme les moustaches, encadraient un visage pâle et maigre d'adolescent menacé par la phtisie. Les yeux, un peu bridés à la chinoise, brillaient d'un éclat fiévreux. La voix était cuivrée, l'accent sarcastique. La tenue était celle d'un jeune bourgeois riche avec quelque sévérité calviniste.

Their friendship did not immediately flourish, probably because of the slight jealousies which Mauclair's friendship with Louÿs inspired. Nevertheless, when Gide wrote to Valéry on 17 June 1891, he mentions the "charmant article" which Mauclair had devoted to his book.

Only a few days later, on the 26th June, Mauclair wrote a

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1. SGL, p.18; ML, p.23; F. Lefèvre, *Une heures avec Camille Mauclair*. Gallimard, 1924. The extract quoted is from ML. The description is often quoted, with or without acknowledgement, as in E.Starkie: *From Gautier to Eliot* (1960), p.92 where no source is given.

2. *Correspondance Gide-Valéry* (p.95).
very polite respectful letter to Gide to ask if he might pay him a visit on the following Tuesday. We may assume that a meeting had preceded this first letter of Mauclair's, for on the Monday before the proposed visit, Gide sent this description of Mauclair to Valéry:

J'ai vu l'illustre Mauclair : il m'a quelque peu effarouché avec un air de vouloir haper les monades des gens. Il a l'âme, je crois bruyante et raboteuse. Au reste, je puis me tromper. Il doit venir me voir mardi soir; je crois qu'il est né pour Louis. 1

Evidently there was still an element of pique in Gide's opinions.

It is unlikely that this new friendship could have become established before Gide left for his long holiday in Belgium and Holland, during which he met Maeterlinck. It is not until the 16th of September that we find Mauclair next writing to Gide, at La Roque. In reply to Gide's previous inquiry as to what he is doing, Mauclair explains that his time is taken up with rereading Les Cahiers d'André Walter, enduring a period of ill-health, writing the final draft of a three-act play, making notes for a study of Besnard, writing sonnets and some prose, or listening to his brother play Schumann, or 'quelque glose sur des vers de Mallarmé'. He ends his letter thus :

Mon très-cher confrère et ami (au fait il ne faut pas m'appeler autrement, en vérité) je vous serre les mains avec la conviction d'un confrère en Hegel, en Mallarmé, et en Wagner. 2

He then adds two sonnets, with this precise intention :

À André Walter, pour acquérir sa définitive amitié.

These sonnets are interesting not only in themselves, but because they were to appear not long after in La Conque. 3 It is not known whether these sonnets were given to Louis to publish with

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2. Letter of 16 Sept. 1891.
Gide's approval or not, but the fact that they were indicates that Mauclair at least felt some bond between himself, his old, and his new friend. Indeed in the letter which accompanied the sonnets, he talked of "notre Pierre Louys" whom he had not seen between Louys' return from Bayreuth and his departure for Brittany. ¹

This allusion to Louys' travels is interesting, because on the 19th September, (three days after Mauclair's letter to Gide) Valéry had come up to Paris, but of course found that Louys was no longer at home. He wrote to tell Gide of his disappointment. Gide's reply was to explain that Louys, "pour ménager une puérile surprise" had not told Gide of his trip to Brittany until he had actually arrived there - by which time it was too late to warn Valéry. Meanwhile, Gide continues, using the closing words of the letter he must just have received from Mauclair:

Je vous recommande un confrère, un vrai, en Mallarmé et Wagner auquel j'écris en vous quittant, auquel je parle de vous. Il s'appelle Camille Mauclair. Louis t'en a-t-il parlé? ²

The letter of recommendation which Gide promised here could not have reached Mauclair before he sent off his next letter to Gide on September 26th. In this Mauclair was clearly thanking Gide for the request to enter into closer friendship - he adopts the familiar form of address - and he concluded:

Au revoir, ton amitié si charmantement devenue intime m'a touché profondément. Je te serre les mains et je souhaite ton retour ou une lettre,

¹. On Sept. 1st 1891, Louys, writing to Valéry, mentioned the fact that he had just received several letters, including "huit autres pages paraphrées Mauclair", [ms. in private collection]. In view of the hint of irony in Louys' letter, this long epistle may be the strangely patronising letter of advice from Mauclair which was mentioned in Chapter 1 and given the date 1890 in the Château d'Écouves catalogue of the Sale of Louys' papers.

parce qu'il y a en moi une grande soif d'amitié, et que je me désaltère rarement au désert de ma vie banale.¹

Only a day or two before, Valéry had exclaimed to Gide:

Ami, j'ai plus que besoin, faim d'une très longue épître....²

What an extremely interesting and close-knit web of affections is suggested here between Gide and Valéry, because of Louîs' absence, and between Gide and Mauclair, because of the latter's dull life, due to illness.

The meeting between Valéry and Mauclair which took place on the 6th October further complicated matters. Mauclair's description of the event to Gide was quite matter of fact, - though he goes on to give a revealing insight into his position between Gide and Louîs:

J'ai vu Paul Valéry chez Louîs. C'est un charmant timide, dont les vers sont exquis et doux. Il est comme eux ; je ne crois pas lui avoir déplu malgré ma tête sinistre. (…) Avec Louîs je suis gai, et il ne sait rien. [about Mauclair's illness] Il est plein de douceur et de courtoisie, je l'aime. Mais pas tant que toi, parce que toi… tu as écrit des choses qui me donnent la fièvre.³

In complete contrast, Valéry's angry letter of the same date (6th October) to Gide is intended as a reproof. It appears that by meeting Mauclair, Valéry was able to find out that Gide had written similar letters to them both. (This is perhaps hardly surprising when one reads the appeals for letters from both men which Gide must have received within twenty-four hours):

J'étais furieux - je suis plus calme mais triste d'avoir entendu proférer le mot de Folie - à propos de certaine page de vous, intime et hallucinée adressée à M[auclair].

Ainsi, à tel et tel autre vous êtes écrire de telles paroles et tellement appréciées! Jaloux, puis navré - car enfin c'est votre droit - c'est

1. Letter of 26 Sept. 1891.
Gide's carefully conciliatory reply to this outburst says much on his attitude towards his many friends:

.. tu sais bien que mon âme est en chaleur sans cesse; il faut qu'elle se rassasie. Ne lui en veuille pas trop de ce qu'elle va mendier partout des tendresses....

... Et sache que je t'aime assez pour que tu me laisses aimer un peu les autres.

Car je t'aime beaucoup, tu le sais bien.2

Mauclair did not mention Valéry to Gide again in his letters. In April 1892, however, he considerably perplexed Valéry by dedicating the sonnet "Pentacle" to him in La Syrinx.3 Valéry explained to Gide that he had nothing to dedicate in return, and that in any case he did not wish to do so.4 However, the "Air de Sémiramis" which bears a dedication to Mauclair is perhaps a belated reply - or perhaps it is Valéry's thanks to Mauclair for helping in having L'Introduction à la méthode de Léonardo de Vinci published in La Nouvelle Revue in August 1895. We must rely on Mauclair alone for this last piece of information,5 but at the time it was true that he was in a position to offer such help to Valéry. In view of the fact that there is as little to oppose as to support it, his other statement - "Dès que je connus Valéry, nous nous plûmes..." must simply be accepted at its face value.

1. Correspondance Gide-Valéry, letter 65; it is the editor of this volume, Robert Mallet, who suggests the name Mauclair as that meant by Valéry's 'M'. In the light of evidence put forward here, this interpretation must be correct.
3. This review prints the month, but not the year; this may be added by Valéry's letter to Gide [op.cit., no.95] which is dated by the editor as "Fin d'avril 1892".
4. See preceding note.
5. Given in ML, pp.28-29. In SGL Mauclair says nothing of this.
As regards Louÿs, Mauclair's friendship with him does not seem to have remained as firm as it was in 1891, though for some time they must have been quite close. In May 1892, when Louÿs was assembling material for a thirteenth 'numéro secret' of La Conque, in a letter to Valéry he mentioned the fact that Mauclair had sent him three good sonnets for it. In June, in another letter to Valéry he gave a list of the seven close friends who were to receive one of the only seven copies which were to be printed of this special issue; Mauclair's name is sixth on the list. After that time, though they must have remained in touch, as is indicated by details of letters given in sale catalogues, both men developed along lines which made each increasingly dissatisfied with the other's work.

At first sight it seems an easy matter to define the date when Mauclair first met Mallarmé: his first letter in the Bonniet Collection is dated May 2nd 1891, and is a request for permission to visit the older man, alone, in order to discuss his first artistic attempts. Mondor quotes Mallarmé's reply, dated May 5th; it is an invitation for Mauclair to come to see him on the following Friday [8th May] at two o'clock.

At this juncture, it is useful to add a detail from a letter from Mauclair to Abel Pelletier, written on May 4th:

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1. This information comes from unpublished letters in the possession of Mme Rouart.
2. See Bibliography; Manuscript material.
Morice [whom Mauclair had just met at a Carrière Exhibition] va me mener chez Mallarmé. C'est une curiosité que j'ai, et cela peut être utile.  

While this neither proves or disproves the validity of the previous indication of a meeting on May 8th, it does suggest that Mauclair was less than frank with Pelletier where Mallarmé is concerned, for although he must have just written the letter introducing himself mentioned above, he says nothing about it. Also, the rather indifferent tone he adopts to Pelletier contrasts strangely with the intense letter to Mallarmé.

Perhaps in Mallarmé chez lui one might expect to find a clear account of these events. This is not so. Mauclair states that he had sent Mallarmé "un article d'admiration juvénile et naïve" written for La Revue indépendante. Mallarmé's reply was an invitation to visit him - a simple note on a visiting card. Unfortunately, the text of the note given by Mauclair is not that quoted by Mondor as the first invitation from Mallarmé. Nevertheless, a page later Mauclair recalls that "un mardi de mai 1891 je me présentai donc, en compagnie de Pierre Louÿs, à l'appartement du poète", - and such a meeting would coincide with the romanticised version we can read in Le Soleil des morts, where André de Neuze (Mauclair) is introduced to Calixte Armel (Mallarmé) by Luc Dérandes (Louÿs).

The date which both accounts mention is May 1891. At that date, however, Mauclair had written very little for La Revue indépendante, and nothing which specifically refers to Mallarmé, whereas

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1. Letter dated 4 May 1891 , B.D.  
2. ML, pp.15-17.  
3. It must be remembered that Mauclair is writing more than forty years after the event. Also, in ML he tells us that a fire in his home had destroyed many of his papers; he could therefore be confusing this note with a similar one, which had been destroyed. Later in ML there are patent mistakes in the dating of Mauclair's own books.
a little later he did write an article "Notes sur un essai de dramaturgie symbolique" in which he showed his unbounded admiration for Mallarmé. As we learn from Mauclair's letters this was in fact submitted to the poet in manuscript in October 1891 before being published in *La Revue indépendante* in the following March. If Mauclair did not in fact meet Mallarmé until late 1891, this fact may explain the information given in *Servitude et grandeur littéraires*:

> Ce fut André Gide qui, reçu chez le maître, lui confia mon désir et peu après un billet bref, lapidaire et charmant me remerciant d'un article fervent, me conviant à venir un mardi soir - un de ces mardis déjà fameux - rue de Rome.\(^1\)

Mauclair did not know Gide well until late 1891, so that this description could not apply to May of that year.

In fact, the first mention of Mallarmé to be found in Mauclair's letters to Gide occurs on 26th September 1891, but this is more of a literary appreciation than a reference to meeting him. On the 23rd October Mauclair wrote to Mallarmé; his letter begins:

> Je vous ai dit dernièrement que j'avais à vous entretenir d'une question littéraire. Après reflexion, je préfère vous en écrire.....

A little further on he says this:

> Un mot de vous, mon cher maître, me frappa lors de notre première entrevue...

It is therefore evident that Mauclair has met Mallarmé, possibly for the first time.

Two further pieces of information support this supposition of a first meeting not in May but in October. In the Bonniot Collection there is a second letter which is undated, but which, by its handwriting, must be posterior to the other letter of presentation of May. This letter begins:

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Mon ami le poète Pierre Quillard me fait part d'appréciations élogieuses que vous avez bien voulu émettre indulgents sur moi. Depuis longtemps j'ai le désir profond de vous rendre visite, et vous m'y avez jadis engagé. On m'a dit que le mardi soir vous avez coutume de recevoir quelques jeunes hommes parmi lesquels je compte des amis. Souffrirez-vous que la semaine prochaine je vienne vous voir? Bien que n'ayant personne en ce moment autour de moi pour me présenter à vous, je chercherais l'excuse de mon incorrection dans mon désir de vous remercier d'une approbation qui m'est précieuse plus que je ne saurais dire sans être suspect de flatterie.1

"...et vous m'y avez jadis engagé..." - does this phrase refer to the letters of May, and was Mauclair prevented from keeping his appointment at that time? It seems likely, especially as on the 24th October Mauclair added this post-scriptum to a letter to Gide:

J'ai vu Mallarmé : étrange, masqué, sans volonté aucune, sensitif, peu philosophe, mais si contradictoirement humain, et artiste, et dolent, et pauvre en vérité - que j'ai des défaillances qui aiment la sienne.

Why should Mauclair have written this to Gide if it was not inspired by a first meeting? As a description it has something of a first impression.

While there is insufficient datable material for one to be dogmatic and say that a meeting did take place in October 1891, the strangely confused chain of events does seem to indicate that Mauclair was prevented from visiting Mallarmé in May. Is it possible that he was at first not unduly anxious to join the worshippers at the 'Mardis', and subsequently left the details obscure?2

Whatever the answer, the importance of Mauclair knowing

1. This letter also discounts the intervention of either Louÿs or Gide.
Mallarmé is two-fold. There is the influence, moral and artistic, of Mallarmé himself, and there is the influence of the Mardis and of those Mauclair was likely to meet there.

It is obviously quite impossible to define whom Mauclair might have met at which 'Mardis'. The lists of those he could remember, though not in any sense exclusive, are of use to indicate how his circle of acquaintances grew. Apart from Gide, Louys, and Valéry, whom Mauclair had already met, he recalls Henri de Régnier, André Fontaines, Mocqel, Vielé-Griffin, Stuart Merrill, Dujardin, Alfred Poizat, the actor Gravollet, Edmond Bonniot, Theodore Duret, Odilon Redon, Whistler, Arthur Symons, Stéfan George, George Brandès, Byvanck, Schwob, Claudel, Verhaeren, Maeterlinck, Morice, Quillard, Fénéon, Louis le Cardonnel, Moréas, Debussy and Wilde. It would be surprising if Mauclair had known all of these men, one should not forget that this refers to the period until Mallarmé's death in 1898, and that Mauclair has certainly included names of artists - Stéfan George, Byvanck, Brandès, for example - seen from a distance. He admits too that some - Redon, Schwob, Claudel and others - did not come very often. There is also a small group of names of those who no longer visited Mallarmé during the time Mauclair knew him - Kahn, Ghil, and Wyzewa, although Mauclair did get to know them elsewhere. As for many another young man, it is the potential of such meetings which is most important.

In order to add depth to the rather lifeless list of names given above, it is possible to examine Mauclair's friendships with certain of those named, especially when these fall in the period under discussion.

1. Much of ML (passim) is an amplified version of SGL, pp.26-38.
On 25th September 1892, Mauclair wrote to Gide:

Veux-tu dire à mon cher Henri de Régnier que je l'aime beaucoup, que j'ai ici tous ses vers, que nous les lisons dans les admirables crépuscules sur la forêt, et que je me passionne de plus en plus pour son œuvre. Lue devant la nature, elle m'est d'une douceur infinie. Dis-lui, n'est-ce pas? Il est de mes quelques uns du côté du coeur.¹

In his memoir Mauclair says that he met Régnier at Mallarmé's home.²

From the outset he seems to have appreciated the distinction, tact, and elegance of this 'grand poète', this 'rare lettré'.³ That this esteem was returned - and lasted for many years - is indicated by the very favourable reviews of Mauclair's books given by Régnier in Le Figaro after the First World War.⁴ In one of these reviews, in March 1924, Régnier remembered meeting Mauclair in Berthe Morisot's 'salon-atelier' in the rue Villejust. Since Berthe Morisot died in early 1895, then this meeting, which indicates that Mauclair had entered another artistic circle, belongs to the early years. Indeed, a letter to Gide of December 1893 tells us that Mauclair was at that time giving 'leçons de littérature' to Berthe Morisot's niece and daughter, an activity which may have continued for some time. Much later he wrote:

C'est par Mallarmé que j'ai connu madame Eugène Manet... Elle aimait sincèrement Mallarmé, et à cause de lui elle fut excellente pour moi.⁵

It seems possible therefore that Mallarmé helped Mauclair find the employment of 'tutor'.

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¹. In August 1892 Gide had visited Belle-Isle and met Régnier there. Mauclair's reference to 'nous' is to himself and the Rochegrosse family, with whom he was staying. (Cf. p.50).
². SGL, p.34.
³. PPS, "Henri de Régnier" by Mauclair. In La Syrinx of Feb. 1892 Mauclair dedicated his "Motifs de Rêve" to Régnier.
⁴. In 1917 Mauclair dedicated his Charles Baudelaire to Régnier.
⁵. SGL, pp.154-156.
The effect on Mauclair of Berthe Morisot's interest in him and the opportunity of being present at the gatherings in her home must have been considerable. It is even probable that he revised his early disparaging opinions about the Impressionists under the influence of what he heard there.

One must remember however, that Mauclair had come into contact with several of the younger writers before becoming an habitué of the Mardis. This is the case of Vielé-Griffin, the editor of Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires, for on the 26th August 1891 Pierre Louÿs told his brother Georges of an argument between Mauclair and Vielé-Griffin.¹ Mauclair probably already knew Schwob; he certainly knew Maeterlinck; he had met Morice at an exhibition of Carrière's paintings in May 1891; and Louis Le Cardonnel had written to him on the occasion of his article on Banville in La Revue indépendante of April 1891.² Nevertheless, one meeting or letter hardly constitutes a friendship and so renewed contact in the special atmosphere of Mallarmé's salon was probably at the root of many of the artistic affinities shown by Mauclair during the nineties and later.

* * *

Among Mauclair's friends of the older generation was Albert Besnard. The article which Mauclair published in La Revue indépendante of October 1891 - "Albert Besnard et le symbolisme concret"³ was not his first on the painter, for it was preceded by another

¹. Catalogue Écrouves, item 37 : "Je doute pourtant que Mauclair ait traité Griffin d'une façon aussi grossière, ou aussi obscène que Leconte de Lisle l'est par Verlaine."

². Louis Le Cardonnel, Noel Richard, Didier 1946, p.25. Also quoted : letter Mauclair to Le Cardonnel, 22 June 1891 (p.88).

³. On the 17 Sep. Mauclair told Gide that he was preparing this study; on the 26 Sep. he told him that it was finished. RI Oct.1891, pp.6-30.
in *Les Annales artistiques et littéraires* in February 1890. It did however bring Mauclair an invitation from Besnard to call on him at the Hotel de Ville where he was retouching the ceiling of the "Galerie des Sciences". This is how Besnard later described his own feelings towards the young critic:

> Il y a une quinzaine d'années Camille Mauclair écrivit sur mon œuvre des pages d'une critique si lucide et d'une impartialité si rare que j'en fus touché au point de désirer le connaître. Et lorsqu'il m'apparut frêle comme un jeune rameau, je me sentis pris pour lui d'une amitié où il entrait un peu de gratitude et beaucoup d'admiration pour une intelligence si désireuse déjà de se manifester et si digne d'être apprécié.¹

Subsequently, Mauclair also visited Besnard's home where he met old or new friends such as Jules Chéret, Rodenbach, Puvis de Chavannes, Alfred Roll, Aman-Jean, Paul Adam, and others.²

This then was the beginning of another important friendship which was to be given its fullest expression, after several articles, in the volume *Albert Besnard, l'homme et l'œuvre*, published in 1914.

* * *

Since the destiny of the theatre in the hands of the younger generation was one of Mauclair's primary concerns in the years 1890-1894, it is reasonable to assume that in his adolescent years he must have become increasingly aware of the renewal of interest in the theatre, such as Antoine's *Théâtre-Libre* (1887), and Bodinier's *Théâtre de l'Application* (1888).

² SGL, p.163. Here Mauclair tells how a critic, on seeing his first book *[Eleusis, 1894]* on the Besnards' table, advised Mme Besnard to conceal such "compromising" literature!
Even if Mauclair's interest in drama is simply a reflection of the literary climate of the day, he did more than follow a current trend; he made an active contribution to the renaissance of the theatre in the 1890's. This contribution has been generally underestimated.

In the previous chapter it was shown that Mauclair was probably writing to Maeterlinck by the end of 1890. He could not have failed to notice the effect of Mirbeau's article on *La Princesse Maleine*, the article which made Maeterlinck famous in Paris almost overnight, and similarly one can imagine him reading avidly Vallette's article in the newly-founded *Mercure de France* congratulating the Press for having once at least recognised an unknown writer of talent.

In May 1891 Mauclair wrote his first pages on Maeterlinck; they consisted of a review of *L'Ornement des noces spirituelles de Ruysbroeck l'Admirable*. He greatly admired Maeterlinck's translation and introduction, and looked forward eagerly to his next work—perhaps he was aware of what this was to be from his correspondence with the author.

There is nothing to suggest when Mauclair and Maeterlinck actually met for the first time; although his play *L'Intruse* was performed by the Théâtre d'Art on 21st May 1891, Maeterlinck was unable to be present because of the death of his younger brother Oscar. It is however possible that he was in Paris for the rehearsals, either in May (it was the first performance of any of his works) or in August, when the same company performed *L'Intruse*.

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again at Asnières. In any case, the play was given an unexpectedly warm reception. Paul Fort, the director of the Théâtre d'Art, had placed it at the end of the programme which included works by Verlaine, Morice, and Mendès; it was to be omitted if time ran short. Since, as we shall see, Mauclair was fully aware of the activities of the Théâtre d'Art, we may think of him attending the performance, and studying the Gauguin canvases hung in the foyer.

Just as Huret's *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* no doubt stimulated new interest in Maeterlinck, and led Percheron and Retté to enlist Lugné-Poe's help in persuading Fort to stage *L'Intruse*, so echoes of the fuss in Brussels over the Triennial Prize for Dramatic Literature sustained enough interest in Paris for Lugné-Poe to be able to persuade Fort to perform *Les Aveugles*, the play which had moved Mauclair into writing to the author, on the 11th December 1891.

This performance was interesting for other reasons; Mauclair wrote a short note on the play in the programme, and he joined Retté and Merrill as translators of *La Geste au Roy*, being responsible for the first part, *Fierabras*. Maeterlinck was present at this performance, when he met Lugné-Poe. Since Mauclair was ill about this time, it

1. In 1940 Maeterlinck told Gertrude Jasper (Adventure in the Theatre, p.61 and note 10) that he was in Paris for the rehearsals.
2. The evening was conceived as a Verlaine-Gauguin benefit performance; profits were so slight that Gauguin received nothing, and Verlaine very little.
4. MF Jan.1892, p.83: "Stuart Merrill a traduit en vers sonores un fragment choisi de La Chanson de Roland; Alphonse Retté, qui s'est écarté du texte dans Berthe au grand pié, a écrit des vers qui ont plus été appréciés; quant à ceux de Camille Mauclair dans Fierabras, ils n'ont point étonnés." Cf. RI Dec.1891: "La traduction élégante de Camille Mauclair, Alphonse Retté et Stuart Merrill."
5. Also performed: *Théodat* (R. de Gourmont); *Le Concile féerique* (Laforgue); *Le Cantique des Cantiques* (adapted P.N. Roinard).
is possible that he was not able to be with the two others. It would be interesting to know if this is so, because Maeterlinck discussed with Lugné-Poe the production of the play he had almost finished. This play was *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which Mauclair was to help bring to the stage fifteen months later.

The programme of the December performance included an ambitious list of plays from which the Théâtre d'Art would choose its next productions. Among them we read: "L'Inaccessible," drame en trois actes, en prose, de Camille Mauclair". This work was probably the most complete expression of Mauclair's initial interest in the theatre, although in March 1891 he had had a shorter one-act play called *L'Halluciné* accepted for eventual production by the Théâtre d'Art.\(^1\) As his letters to Gide show,\(^3\) Mauclair had greater hopes of seeing the second, longer work on stage at the beginning of 1892. Then the project had to be postponed, until April, because Mauclair was ill. Unfortunately, after a disastrous performance of works by Bois, Schuré and Mory, Paul Fort was obliged to abandon the Théâtre d'Art, largely because of administrative incompetence.

The 'Conférences d'Art' continued for a little, however, and on 30 April 1892 Mauclair talked on "Maurice Maeterlinck et le théâtre idéaliste".\(^4\) He had already, in February 1892 published a long article on "L'Art de Maurice Maeterlinck" in *Les Essais d'art libre*. His next important contribution to knowledge of the Belgian writer in Paris was heralded by the publication, in July 1892 of *Pelléas et*

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1. Also announced as "sous presse" in *La Conque* Dec.1891 - reflection no doubt of an understandable desire to 'get into print'.
2. Announced *La Plume* 1st March 1891.
3. 17 Sep. 1891; 30 Jan. 1892.
Mélisande,¹ at which point it is convenient to turn to other of Mauclair's activities in early 1892.

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That Mauclair should write to Claudel in early 1892 was partly due to his interest in the theatre of the "new generation", but mostly because of the influence of Marcel Schwob, whom he had met on the staff of L'Echo de Paris.² Mauclair's admiration for Tête d'or, given to him by Schwob, was considerable. In January he wrote to Claudel³ to tell him that La Revue indépendante would be glad to receive his "manuscript" for inclusion in the February issue. He continued:

Qu'au moins vous sachiez quel enthousiasme m'a fait lire ce drame extraordinaire à mes amis de la Revue, et quelle sympathie vous attend parmi nous : quelque chose de plus vous attendrait chez moi si nous pouvions nous rencontrer plus souvent dans la vie et si mon amitié ne vous semblait point indiscrète.⁴

Claudel was however more reticent. In February Mauclair wrote to him again, to express his surprise that he had not yet sent the promised 'fragment de drame' to La Revue indépendante and that although he had 'authorised' Charles-Henry Hirsch to give the Revue a note on Tête d'or,⁵ he had made it known to Mauclair and others (no doubt through Schwob) that he did not wish the planned "revelation" of his work to the public to take place.

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1. P & M announced MF June 1892; reviewed (P. Quillard) MF July 1892.
2. SGL, p.72.
3. Most of the following information is to be found in Cahiers Paul Claudel No.1, (Gallimard, 1959) p.135 : Jacques Petit, "Autour de la publication de Tête d'or". Four letters from Mauclair to Claudel are published; the Société Paul Claudel has no others.
4. All letters are dated by J. Petit.
5. Pub. RI Feb. 1892.
Mauclair was especially put out by this, for he had prepared the ground for just such a revelation, by alerting influential friends, and by writing a long article on Tête d'or for publication in La Revue indépendante, at the same time as Claudel's fragment:

Votre livre étant pour ainsi dire inconnu, de par votre volonté, nous aurions préféré qu'au moment qu'il vous conviendrait de vous révéler avec une œuvre aussi belle, ce fût d'une façon foudroyante et sans préparation. Mais pourquoi cette note bibliographique isolée sur un ouvrage paru depuis déjà un an?

Now of course, Hirsch's note would either pass unnoticed or be insufficient to bring about success.

At the end of the letter Mauclair explained that it would still be possible for the 'fragment' to be published the following month, and that this could still be useful since he himself intends to discuss new dramatic theory, and so the issue could perhaps be devoted to the theatre.

Once again this idea came to nothing. Mauclair published his "Notes sur un essai de dramaturgie symbolique" in March as he said, but Claudel's "Fragment d'un drame" did not appear until May; it too was published anonymously.¹

The reason for Claudel's reticence may have been as Mauclair said later that "Claudel, avec cette littérature bizarre, redoutait d'être mal noté dans la Carrière"² or, at this point, early 1892, it may have been that he was quite simply preoccupied with La Ville. Although this play was not published (anonymously) until 1893,³ in mid-1892 Mauclair was assisting Schwob to get it printed. In July he wrote a long letter to Claudel to say that he had read the

1. Tête d'or had been published anonymously in 1890.
2. SGL, p.75.
3. It was announced "aux prochaines livraisons" in MF March 1893.
manuscript, that he considered the work even better than Tête d'or, and that as soon as he returned from holiday he would see Claudel to arrange for it to be published.

Until now we had only Mauclair's statement in his memoirs that Schwob and he were responsible for the publication of La Ville.¹ There is however a letter from Maeterlinck to Verhaeren, dated 14 November 1892, which substantiates the claim:

Or, Claudel qui est très pauvre vient d'achever un nouveau drame La Ville et n'a pas de quoi le faire publier. Un de mes amis, Camille Mauclair, m'envoie un certain nombre de bulletins de souscription. Malheureusement, ici je suis presque seul, et ne puis presque rien faire, peut-être trouverez-vous l'occasion de placer quelques-uns de ces bulletins ou d'intéresser l'Art moderne à la souscription.²

Mauclair was to be of use to Claudel many years later, but for the present that is all that need be said about their relationship, inspired as it was by Mauclair's interest in the theatre.

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By February 1892 Mauclair had enough experience of the theatre and was sufficiently aware of the difficulties of Symbolism finding expression on the stage to see that the Théâtre d'Art had serious shortcomings and to wish for closer involvement with running a theatre.

Reviewing a recent performance of the Théâtre d'Art in La

1. SGL, p.75.
2. Unpublished letter in B.R.B.-M.L. In the preceding paragraph Maeterlinck discussed Tête d'or. Perhaps this has a connection with Mauclair's postscript to his letter to Claudel in Feb.: "Avez-vous fait connaître Tête d'or à Maurice Maeterlinck? Sinon, faites-le. Il aimera tant cela." (Cahiers Paul Claudel I, p.151.)
Revue blanche of February 1892, Mauclair offered this advice:

"...je souhaiterais que M. Paul Fort : qu'il songeât qu'un spectacle ne doît point durer jusqu'à deux heures du matin; qu'il se décidât à renoncer à des mises en scène coûteuses et impossibles pour ses ressources, en se bornant, comme nous l'en supplions, aux écrits de Shakespeare; ... qu'il jouât des drames de jeunes écrivains, l'admirable Tête d'or par exemple, au lieu de décortiquer Jérémie, Salomon ou Homère comme il veut faire. Toute bonne volonté lui en serait acquise; mais l'utilité de sembler nous barricader derrière des vénérables défunts? Pourquoi nous faire entendre des vers aussi mauvais, habillant une pièce ancienne que M. Fouquier est trop heureux d'opposer paternement aux œuvres jeunes."

Let us not forget this insistence on the "œuvres jeunes".

In March 1892 the ideal opportunity for putting ideas into practice presented itself. Porel, who had been the director of the Odéon theatre since December 1884, left it to take over the Grand-Théâtre. The possibilities of the vacant post were enormous:

Il y avait dans le magasin de costumes et des décors tout un matériel qui n'avait pas encore été utilisé. Le poste était tentant... Qui n'a pas rêvé, même aux plus mauvais jours, d'être directeur de l'Odéon? Les compétiteurs furent nombreux, mais suivant l'usage ce fut le directeur de la scène qui fut appelé à la direction du théâtre.

Before this decision was made however, among the many "dreamers" who presented themselves as joint-candidates for the directorship were Saint-Pol-Roux, Georges Rochegrosse, and Gustave Charpentier. There are three letters, one to Mallarmé, one to Gide, and one to Jullien of the review Art et Critique, which show conclusively that Mauclair

1. Among the works of this performance were Marlowe's Faust, to which Mauclair much preferred Van Lerberghe's Flaireurs, and Rimbaud's Bateau Ivre.
2. A. Bernheim, L'Odéon in NR 1900, p.185.
3. 15 March 1892.
4. 19 March 1892.
5. Letter published in Art et Critique of 26 March 1892, but sent to Jullien some time before.
was one, if not the main, moving spirit behind this attempted breakthrough of the young to the established stage and to a larger public. For there is no doubt that the principal virtue of this attempt was for Mauclair (as spokesman) the fact that a group of young men were not simply bemoaning the lack of understanding of the public, but were actually doing something to bring their ideas to that public. This did not mean pandering to the crowd, but rather presenting the best of young ideas so that they might be fairly judged, and not hide behind the excuse that no one would listen. Of course, Mauclair and the others did not entertain much hope of success, but it was enough to take up a position, to act positively.

Apart from Mallarmé and Jullien, others Mauclair named as supporting the venture were Besnard, Mirbeau, Hervieu, Lorrain, Rosny, Sévérine, Sainte-Croix, and Maeterlinck. He was however appalled by the apathy, and even antipathy that most of the younger artists showed:

"Cet essai de prendre une attitude, que j'ai tenté par dégoût de l'universelle apathie où tous sont ici, et que j'ai mené à bien avec St. Pol, suscite des colères, et le plus triste est que pas un jeune n'est venu à nous, tant ils sont apeurés et craintifs, sans même un Panurge."

Clearly, this attempt at a symbolist 'coup d'état' was not so much a feasible proposition as an outburst of youthful idealism. There was to be a 'comité de grands artistes' of which Mallarmé was to be head, a governmental agent to deal with finance, the former repertory was to be kept, supplemented, of course by works from Villiers, Ibsen, Claudel (Tête d'or is mentioned), Maeterlinck, and the 'young' in general. Both Rochegrosse and Charpentier, in charge of the scenery

1. Letter to Gide. (19 March 1892).
and the music, would encourage younger painters and musicians to express themselves. In view of Mauclair's emphasis on the age of those concerned, it is interesting to reflect that Roche Grosse was born in 1859, Charpentier in 1860, and Saint-Pol-Roux in 1861, so that they were all over thirty, whereas Mauclair was barely nineteen!

Little is known about how well Mauclair knew Gustave Charpentier. In *Servitude et grandeur littéraires* he mentions him, but as a typical example of the Montmartre-Chat Noir exuberant, yet hard working artist.¹

As for Saint-Pol-Roux, we cannot be sure when Mauclair first met him. Many years later in the *Tombeau de Saint-Pol-Roux*,² Mauclair recalled that he met him 'vers 1890', but little precision is to be expected from this kind of memory. Certainly in July 1891 Mauclair dedicated the poem "Décor romanesque" (in *La Conque*) to him,³ and their friendship may have begun about then. In any case, it was to be a fruitful relationship, since there appears to be an affinity between Mauclair's early ideas, such as "ideo-realism" and those of Saint-Pol-Roux. Even ten years later there is something of Saint-Pol-Roux in Mauclair's ideas on the 'fusion des arts', as we shall see. In the period under review, Saint-Pol-Roux reviewed Mauclair's conference on Maeterlinck in the June number of *Mercure de France*, and it was no doubt on the staff of the *Mercure* that they came to

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1. SGL, p.147. Mauclair also mentioned him to Mallarmé on 6th Feb. He was introducing Ernest Legrand; Charpentier was quoted as knowing and appreciating the young musician.
2. Editor A. Bergot, Brest 1941, pp.138-141.
know each other best. We should remember too that Mauclair had re-
signed from La Revue indépendante because of a quarrel over an art-
icle on Saint-Pol-Roux.

Georges Rochegrosse has already been mentioned several times. If the beginning of their friendship is sparsely documented, the holiday period Mauclair spent with the Rochegrosses at Barbizon, shortly after the attempted candidature to the Odéon, is sufficiently well documented to show how much Mauclair owed to his friends.

On the 8th August Mauclair explained to Gide, who had visited his home in Paris, that for the past four weeks he had been staying at the Rochegrosse's home at Barbizon. He was exhilarated by the open air, the forest, nature, unaccustomed tasks such as chopping wood, and was thoroughly happy to be cut off from the world, from newspapers, from city life.

Unfortunately, this was not to last. Letters to Gide and to Mallarmé inform us that from the 15th of August until the 10th of September Mauclair was severely ill, and Rochegrosse had been obliged to bring him back, more dead than alive, to his Paris home. However he recovered sufficiently to be able to return to Barbizon, where he was convalescing in the pure forest air, his life and activities greatly restricted by doctor's orders.

Writing to Mallarmé on October 24th, Mauclair, who had just recently returned to Paris at the end of his vacation, regretted that

1. Mauclair also dedicated "Lacrimaverae Virgines" (La Conque Aug. 1891) and a short story in GRPS (25 Sept. 1892), to Rochegrosse.
2. Four weeks before the date of this letter is 12th July. On this date Mauclair ended a letter to Pelletier "je pars paisible" - though this could be in reference to leaving La Revue indépendante. A letter from Mauclair to Claudel (dated as "juillet 1892" in first of the Cahiers Paul Claudel) - contains an invitation to come to Barbizon.
3. 25th Sept. and 24th Oct. respectively.
he had been unable to visit Valvins,\(^1\) because of his illness. We may read this praise of his friend\(^2\):

Rochegrosse a été pour moi le plus admirable et le plus dévoué des amis et c'est grâce à lui que je vais aujourd'hui beaucoup mieux.

But apart from his health, what other effects did his holiday have on Mauclair? Briefly we may say that he underwent a period of intense artistic experience, for, perhaps for the first time in his life, he was living in the midst of unspoiled forest with two people whose only preoccupations were artistic:

Ces deux êtres dont tant d'aspects et de tendances modernes révoltaient les sensibilités vivaient à l'aise dans les retrospections de l'histoire et l'érudition était pour eux bien moins morte que l'ambiance banale.\(^3\)

The fact that Mauclair enjoyed this so much is reflected in a letter to Gide:

Je suis absolument heureux et lucide, sans un journal, sans une revue, ignorant tout, jusqu'au jour et au mois, ne connaissant que le soleil et le ciel.\(^4\)

This shows however, at this time, only one facet of Mauclair's character. Though his illness had changed his plans for the future,

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1. In a letter from Mallarmé to Bourges of 14 Oct. 1892 (B.N. Mss.) we read this curious note: "Madame Normant s'y enquit de Samois, qui est vous, les "petites" aussi. Elles ont donné une soirée, s'il vous plaît, avec musique, Mauclair, Natanson, Degas, orangeades et leurs robes!"

2. It was almost certainly during this time that Rochegrosse painted Mauclair's portrait for inclusion in Un déjeuner à Barbizon (1893); Mauclair also appears in L'Angoisse humaine (1897). (Iconographie : Van Bever : Les Potes d'aujourd'hui 1913). \(\sim\) Rochegrosse designed the cover for Mauclair's Couronne de clarté (1895) and illustrated Le Poison des pierreries (1903) and Les Danaïdes (1903).

3. Marie Rochegrosse (a collection of essays by several writers to commemorate her death on 5th May 1920) p.54. No date or publisher is given for this except for the 'achevé d'imprimer' : 30 Sept. 1922.

he remained the militant symbolist who had thrown himself into raising support for the candidacy to the Odéon, he still had many plans to complete. There is regret in his voice when he writes during his convalescence:

Me voici dans une solitude absolue. Je compte beaucoup me replier sur moi-même. Tu vois que peut-être c'est un bien, à cette période où j'avais décidé de faire une retraite d'y être contraint par la maladie. Je réfléchirai plus et j'écrirai moins, voilà tout. Mais ma vie va être d'une monotone bien pénible. Et j'eusse voulu tant agir cet hiver! 1

It is worth remembering that Eleusis was begun in this climate of, on the one hand enforced inaction, and on the other, the intellectual example of Georges et Marie Rochegrosse.2

Since it is to play an important part in the future course of Mauclair's work it is appropriate to draw together here some facts concerning his health, especially as they influenced his outlook.3

The winter of 1891 was particularly unfortunate for Mauclair. In September he was obliged to resort to morphine and ether to be able to endure 'des crises nerveuses', and in October things had become so much worse that he could write:

Je crois très-sérieusement que je n'en ai point pour longtemps. Il y a en moi des présences soudaines de l'inconnu qui m'illuminent somptueusement. C'est dommage, parce que j'avais en moi le germé d'une grande volonté pour le bien, et puis de jolies choses, mais les nerfs tuèrent tout cela. Je t'assure que cela est vrai : je n'ai rien, pour un médecin, sinon les yeux caves et la poitrine pas très solide. Mais moi, je sais bien qu'il y a autre chose. Je m'analyse avec beaucoup d'acuité, c'est curieux. Je suis

1. Letter of 25 Sept. 1892. He was also doing a little painting.
2. For Eleusis see chapter 4.
3. It must also be remembered that Mauclair may have had to 'double' a year at Louis-le-Grand perhaps because of ill-health.
brûlé par ma vie, qui n'a été qu'une agonie, mon cher ami.1

What this letter is expressive of is Mauclair's tendency to write about his illness in a manner which can only be described as 'symbolist'; he does not fear death but thinks of it as like music by Haydn, or Chopin, or as something mauve... It would be unfair to suggest that Mauclair was not seriously ill, but rather that he shows the melancholic introspection to be expected of a poet destined to an early death:

Je suis délicieusement malade, il pleut avec prudence et sous ma fenêtre, un brasier sonore de fanfare, dérisoire et intéressant...

In January 1892 Mauclair was very ill for a period of twenty days, suffering what he termed 'une fièvre cérébrale' and was especially upset that he had been unable to visit Mallarmé.3 The result of this illness was that he had to follow a strict medical regimen involving eating at fixed times, and not going out except between one and six in the afternoon.4 His only consolation was being forced by circumstances to work and read a great deal. Indeed, this restricted life may have played an important part in his development, as when he declares: "Être faible me procure des joies intellectuelles inouïes".5

Although there was some improvement in the early months of 1892, the troubles of the previous winter were responsible for the sudden illness which befell Mauclair when on holiday with the Roche-
glosses. This was a severe form of pneumonia connected with spitting blood and indications of the disease so dreaded at the time, consumption. He survived this too, by taking arsenic and digitalis, giving up coffee and tobacco, and having his chest bound in mustard poultices. On top of this all his activities were reduced by doctor's orders – one hour of work per day, and no possibility of leaving the house after six in the evening.\(^1\) And yet, despite Mauclair's gloomy forecast that this was to be his life for the next three years,\(^2\) by the spring of 1893 he was engaged on the production of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Nevertheless, behind the activities of the next few years we must think of a background of delicate health.

Before considering the events leading up to the production of *Pelléas*, it is useful to point out that it was in the last months of 1892 that Mauclair joined the staff of *Le Mercure de France*, or as he put it, he entered "le sanctuaire symboliste lui-même".\(^3\) His name appeared among the staff on the cover of the September issue, in which was also to be found "Notes sur l'idée pure" by him. Because of his illness there was a long gap until his next contribution in February 1893, and in fact, though there were during that year several articles of note which will be referred to in due course, his main work in the *Mercure* begins in 1894.

It is quite simply impossible to try to be precise about whom Mauclair may have met while working on the *Mercure*. Many friendships, such as those with Remy de Gourmont, or Pierre Quillard which may have been formed in rue de l'Echaudé Saint-Germain will become apparent in the course of the following chapters. Finally it should be said that

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1. Letters of 25 Sept. and 24 Oct. to Gide and Mallarmé respectively.
2. Ibid.
3. SGL, p.18.
to have a voice in this, the most important of the 'young' reviews must have been of inestimable value in the weeks to come, when it was essential to be able to tell a future audience about the preparations for Pelléas, and later, for l'Oeuvre.

* * *

We have already seen that at the performance of Les Aveugles in December 1891, Maeterlinck met Lugné-Poe. It appears that since he had almost finished Pelléas et Méli- sande, he suggested that Lugné produce it. Shortly afterwards, in March 1892, when the Théâtre d'Art played l'Intruse in Brussels, Lugné-Poe visited Maeterlinck in Ghent, and this meeting saw the beginning of their business friendship. In the spring of 1892 Pelléas was completed, and published by Lacomblez in June.

In view of his friendship with the author of Pelléas et Méli- sande, and his enthusiasm for his other plays, Mauclair must have been as hopeful as Lugné-Poe or others of Maeterlinck's friends in Paris of seeing the play produced in the near future.

About ten years later, Mauclair recalled that it was through Maeterlinck that he met Lugné-Poe, but it is not clear when this took place, whether as early as 1891 when Mauclair was involved with the Théâtre d'Art (for the production of Le Geste au Roy) or whether it was not until after the publication of Pelléas in mid-1892.

Certainly, they cannot have been strangers to each others' 1. The material concerning Maeterlinck is largely taken from W.D. Halls: Maeterlinck, a study of his life and thought. Oxford, 1960. 2. P & M is announced in the June/July issue of Le Livre d'Art; it was reviewed by P. Quillard in MF July 1892. 3. La Revue de L'Oeuvre, March/April 1913: "Souvenirs" by Mauclair.
activities since they had common friends, and moved in the same circles. For example, not only did Mauclair contribute to early issues of *La Revue blanche* which was founded in October 1891 by Thadée Nathanson, fellow-pupil¹ and friend of Lugné-Poe, he also contributed, in February and March 1892, to *L'Endehors*, an anarchist paper founded by Louis Malaquin who had been Lugné-Poe's friend since 1886.

However, had Mauclair been very friendly with Lugné in March 1892, it is probable that he would have mentioned him in his letters concerning the projects he had in mind for the Odéon; on the other hand he knew Jean Jullien, editor of *Art et Critique*, and fellow-member of the staff of *La Revue indépendante*, well enough to write to him to enlist his help over l'Odéon. Both Jullien and the *Art et Critique* were well known to Lugné-Poe who later recalled the meetings of those associated with the review at the Café Gutenberg² above which lived Malaquin, who was crippled. The first meetings to organise the Théâtre de L'Oeuvre also took place at the Gutenberg.

The rather intricate story of the delays and difficulties which beset the production of *Pelléas et Mélisande* has been told several times.³ Mauclair's role in the affair has generally been understated. It has therefore been found useful to relate the story once more, incorporating material - some of which is unpublished - which allows his role to be better appreciated.⁴

It may be assumed that at the beginning of 1893 Lugné-Poe had Maeterlinck's authorisation to produce *Pelléas*, and that Mauclair

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¹. At the Lycée Fontanes. So too were Stuart Merrill and Quillard, who were also friends of Mauclair.
⁴. Many of the following details are drawn from Jasper, op.cit.
was aware of this fact. Lugné-Poe began rehearsals early in the year without being sure when or where it would be possible to stage the play. In itself, Pelléas was so unusual as to inspire mistrust in any conventional theatre owner, so that Lugné was obliged to turn to less 'official' groups. In the January issue of Mercure de France, it was announced that the Escholiers intended to put on Pelléas, but this report was premature.

In February Lugné-Poe received very welcome encouragement from Rachilde and also from Maeterlinck who visited Paris very briefly on 14th February, possibly to see a positive beginning to preparations for Pelléas; he spent the day with Mauclair. A week or two later Maeterlinck wrote to Lugné-Poe to express his approval and hopes for the future.

At this time too, Paul Fort hoped to re-animate the Théâtre d'Art with the material aid of Tola Dorian, and to this end they organised Saturday evening gatherings to stimulate interest in the new venture. Among those present during February or March, were Mauclair, Sérusier, Vuillard, Vogler, Ranson, Rachilde, Hérod, Dumur and Randon, all of whom were later connected with the Oeuvre.

Fort had approached Lugné-Poe with attractive terms for collaboration and in turn Lugné's proposal that Pelléas et Méliande should be one of the first productions of the 'new' Théâtre d'Art was favourably received. Unfortunately, Tola Dorian had her heart set upon producing Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's Axël first of all, and

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1. Letter of Feb. 15th 1892 (Jasper, p.96).
2. Details of Maeterlinck's visit are to be found in a letter Mauclair sent to Mallarmé on 16 Feb. 1893.
3. Maeterlinck wrote on Feb.22 (Jasper, p.96).
5. These included sixty francs per month for Lugné-Poe. (Jasper, p.97).
seems to have been considerably put out by the protests of all concerned that the cuts and adaptations required would ruin Villiers' play. She did give up the idea however, and sent a note to the Mercure to explain her decision,¹ adding that the Théâtre d'Art would re-open with Pelleas, though she still hoped that the recitation of Villiers' L'Impatience de la foule could also take place.

Preparations therefore went ahead to produce Pelleas et Melisande. In March Maeterlinck was again in Paris. On Monday 13th, a lunch was given in Maeterlinck's honour at the Café Voltaire; besides Maeterlinck those present included Mauclair, Merrill, Mockel, Vielé-Griffin, Louÿs, Deschamps, Vallette, Ratté, Mazel, Jean Carrère, and René Tardivaux.²

Maeterlinck and others (Mauclair included no doubt), were understandably cautious of Fort's abilities as stage manager, because of memories of several unfortunate performances of the previous two years which had been spoiled by Fort's general incompetence. It was also important that the play should be produced under the best circumstances, because it was fast becoming seen as an issue of confrontation between Symbolist theatre and that of the Théâtre-Libre and of the Fouquier and Sarceys.

Eventually Paul Fort relinquished all rights concerning Pelleas in favour of Lugné-Poe. This step may have been taken in March, but as shall be seen a more likely date is April. Tola Dorian was annoyed that she had not been allowed to choose the cast, and she too withdrew, though for a time at least, she was persuaded to pay for the scenery.

The web of rivalries, self-interest, and cross-purpose which is only hinted at by the bare statement of these facts is best illustrated by reference to a long letter from Mauclair to Mallarmé.¹

This is so explicit, and the tone of the letter is so revealing about the state of personal relationships that no excuse is made for the length of the extracts quoted:

Mon cher maître, je vous écris pour vous informer brièvement d'une modification importante survenue dans cette éternisée entreprise de Pelléas et Mélisande.

Vous avez su, ou oui-dire à peu près toutes les tribulations par lesquelles passa Maeterlinck depuis que cette renaissance du Théâtre d'Art nous fatigue. Vous connaissez Mme Dorian et Paul Fort, c'est dire que vous savez qu'ils sont absolument incapables, tous deux, d'avoir un caractère et un entendement, même minimes. Depuis leur liaison s'est déroulé un vrai vaudeville de traités dix fois déchirés et récrits ; et Maeterlinck et Lugné-Poe et moi fûmes ballottés entre ces deux arlequins. Heureusement Lugné et moi ne cessions de faire répéter, de dessiner des costumes et de presser la décoration, et bien nous en prit, comme vous l'allez voir.

Hier samedi, nous avons été tous deux voir, et Mme Dorian, et Fort et nous avons obtenu d'eux leur renoncement absolu à tous droits, à tous titres de théâtre; en un mot, ils nous ont abandonné les décors et tous les frais déjà faits, en nous laissant libres d'agir avec cela à notre guise. Il faut vraiment qu'ils soient exténués de querelles pour en venir là, et je vous passe les cent mille complications que nous sommes enfin à bout de démêler.

Mauclair was quite clearly overjoyed that all that they need now worry about was the production of Pelléas, and not Fort's reputation, or the organisation of a new Théâtre d'Art; he intended to let the press know that Pelléas was to be put on by a group of Maeterlinck's

¹. This unpublished letter in the Bonniot Collection may be dated by reference to the postmark: 16 April 1893. Jasper (op.cit., p.100) quotes Lugné-Poe who prints the date of Fort's note of withdrawal as "mars 1893". The facsimile of this note which is also given by Jasper (p.101) shows that the date was not originally written out in full but was indicated by a figure - which could be '3' or '4'. The note could therefore belong to April, not March.
friends, simply because of the outstanding interest of the play and
the talent of the author:

Nous comptons que, délivrés de cet insupportable théâtre dont le nom seul éloignait les gens lasse, nous pouvons ainsi ramener la question à une façon de voir dont vous m'entretiendrez souvent avec approbation: je veux dire organiser entre artistes la représentation d'une œuvre, isolément, sans être tenu à une saison directorale et autres embarras insoutenables - faire comme Dujardin, avec tout de suite ainsi le grain de curiosité, de chose attractive tentée presque en particulier, qui séduit ici.

It is not difficult to see where the name and even the conception of the "Oeuvre" came from, and it is interesting to read how Mauclair thinks of this idea as stemming indirectly from Mallarmé. The desire to work on one single work because of its outstanding individual merit, also has a parallel in Mauclair's early statement of critical method, and indicates a wish to avoid commitment to a fixed plan.

Mauclair continues by telling of his confidence in Lugné-Poe:

......je vous assure que ce n'est pas Lugné-Poe qui sera un second Fort: je le vois trop intelligent et dévoué, et expert en tout jusqu'à l'impossible....

But it is true that they had still three main problems - to find a theatre, to make sure of support, and to resolve financial difficulties.
Although Tola Dorian had withdrawn, the financial position seems to have been fairly well under control:

La pièce est sue, les décors nous appartiennent, les costumes sont payés; et nous avons l'intention de trouver, en souscriptions, le reste de la somme nécessaire - le salaire des artistes et les menus frais.

Nevertheless there was still a balance to find, and it was therefore crucial that subscribers, and general support were found; part of Mauclair's letter was to secure Mallarmé's help, and as happened for the candidature of the Odéon, one can imagine letters of similar content going out to others of Mauclair's friends:

Nous allons envoyer des souscriptions par en-cartage au Mercure et autres revues. Je vous supplie de nous aider de votre influence, de parler de cela; l'exclusion de Fort ramènera bien des gens. Faites pour cela ce que vous pourrez, mon cher maître, nous sommes près du but et nous savons que ce sera bien et correct. Je vais écrire à Mirbeau de nous aider: mais si vous voulez m'appuyer un peu près de lui, comme ce serait bien! Et il peut être extrêmement utile! Un mot de vous nous servirait infiniment mieux que toutes mes lettres. (....)

1. In fairness to both sides, the letter Tola Dorian sent to the Echo de Paris on May 5th (B.A. Fonds Rondel) must also be quoted since it is the defence she felt justified in making public:

"Monsieur, Je vous serai très obligée d'insérer la rectification suivante au sujet de la note parue hier, à l'Echo de Paris, au sujet de Pelléas et Mélisandre(sic). M. Vogler, dit cette note, a été chargé de la partie décorative et M. Lugné des costumes. Mais on néglige d'ajouter seulement que c'est moi qui ai payé les décors et une partie des frais s'élevant ensemble à plus de mille francs. En outre lorsque j'ai offert ces frais et ces décors à M. Lugné (en l'honneur de M. Maeterlinck dont je suis l'admiratrice) et sous la seule condition que le programme portât: Décors offerts par Tola Dorian, M. Lugné a exigé de moi le paiement de l'interprétation toute entière, pour que mon nom figurât sur le programme.

Il serait trop commode de profiter de la bonne foi et de la bourse des autres pour sa propre réclame. Je tenais à prouver à M. Maeterlinck le désir que j'avais de concourir à la représentation.

Je compte, Monsieur, sur votre esprit de justice pour insérer ma lettre. Agréez l'assurance de ma haute considération,

Tola Dorian."
N'est-ce pas que vous nous aiderez et que vous tâcherez de nous trouver des gens de bonne volonté? Il y en a pas mal qui voudraient voir jouer Pelléas. Je vais vous envoyer bientôt les détails précis, du prix, de la date, etc. Comptez que tout ceci est absolument exact, que je ne rêve jamais en affaires comme ce malcontente Fort, et que je cherche enfin à nous tirer tous de l'embarras.

Mauclair's appeal to Mallarmé does not seem to have been in vain. In *Servitude et grandeur littéraires*¹ Mauclair recalled how he met Mirbeau for the first time at one of the rehearsals of Pelléas, and how he offered any service to help Maeterlinck. Mauclair asked that he should write an article in *L'Echo de Paris* to publicise the play; a few days later Mirbeau admitted to having too much work to do and suggested that Mauclair write the article and he would sign it. This was done, and so the very enthusiastic, and surprisingly well-documented article that appeared in *L'Echo de Paris* on May 9th is by Mauclair. Not only is the style and content that which we could expect from Mauclair, but we also read this suggestive passage in a letter to Gide²:

Regarde l'Echo de Paris lundi matin, il y aura un bel article de Mirbeau, qui est bien dévoué. Et je crois qu'après lui il y aura d'autres : j'ai un peu secoué tout le monde, même Barrès!

This is further evidence of Mauclair's keenness in enlisting support - indeed the reason he had written to Gide was to tell his friend that he could not lunch with him because he had arranged to meet Jules Huret, and "il y a peut-être là une chose utile pour Pelléas". He also included in his letter a few 'bulletins' for Pelléas which he hoped Gide would put to good use.

Mallarmé, Mirbeau, Huret, Gide, these were only a very small

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¹. SGL, p.100.
². This letter is not dated, but clearly belongs to the week 2nd-7th May; cf. *Le Figaro* 17th May 1893 - Jules Huret: "Conversation avec M. Maeterlinck."
proportion of the support Mauclair was able to rally. Lugné-Poe in his memoirs gives a slightly ironic, but vital description of Mauclair at this time:

Ce jeune Mauclair donnait à nos esprits assez ingénus l'impression de posséder un cran étonnant, nous croyions deviner en lui un conducteur pratique qui deviendrait précieux; il gardait en mains des fils avec toutes les maisons, tous les salons, chez Stéphane Mallarmé, chez Paul Hervieu, chez de Régnier, chez Barrès, et jusque chez les snobs. Agressif ou simplement audacieux, ses yeux vous gagnaient par leur acuité...

In the same place, Lugné acknowledged Mauclair's devotion to Pelléas, and his great influence with the press, especially over Mirbeau's article:

Mauclair's own memories are similar, but introduce two more names:

.. nous fûmes aidés par Hervieu qui avait toujours admiré Maeterlinck. Il fut obligeant et nous amenait des souscripteurs. Lorrain, non moins dévoué, mobilisa Montesquiou et divers snobs.

Because of Maeterlinck's reticence, Mauclair was called upon to help out in other ways too:

Je dus aussi répondre aux interviewers et échohistoriers aux lieu et place de Maeterlinck qui, à la grande fureur de notre ami Huret, se déclarait incapable de dire trois mots à un journaliste. Il me désignait en murmuran: "Demandez-lui, il dira mieux que moi" et s'esquivait lâchement.

That this was no exaggeration is borne out by a letter Mauclair sent to Gide only three days before the performance inviting him to come to meet Maeterlinck at the Bouffes-Parisiens where rehearsals were taking place.

2. SGL, p.103.
3. Ibid., p.103. (Cf. p.62, note 2)
4. Letter of 14th May.
Maeterlinck had arrived in Paris about the 10th of May¹ to be present at the final preparations. Two examples of how Mauclair served the cause of Pelléas are firstly how he invited Robert Charvay to 'un diner intime' at which Maeterlinck and four or five friends were present - and was rewarded a few days later by a favourable article in L'Echo de Paris²; and secondly the fact that he brought Maeterlinck along to meet Mallarmé (and those present) the evening before the performance.³

The final difficulties had been surmounted. Lugné-Poe had somehow managed to be allowed one matinee performance at the Bouffes-Parisiens, (in his letter of 16th April Mauclair had spoken hopefully of being allowed to use the Théâtre du Vaudeville by Albert Carré, but he too withdrew); Lugné and Mauclair had designed the costumes, following suggestions and photographs sent by Maeterlinck, the set was painted by Paul Vogler (although the original conception may, as we hope to show in the next chapter, owe much to Mauclair) and despite circumstances, all was ready.

One performance was given of Pelléas et Melisande at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, at one-thirty in the afternoon. Among those present were Mallarmé, Whistler and his wife, Barrès and his wife, Mirbeau, Paul Adam, and of course Debussy.⁴ Despite mockery

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¹. This may be ascertained from a letter, from Mauclair to Gide, written between 2 and 7 May.
². Robert Charvay: "Pelléas et Mélisande" L'Echo de Paris 16 May 1893. Some indication of the interest the play generated may be given by the fact that the folder in the Fonds Rondel (B.A.) which is devoted to it contains more than 45 separate press-cuttings, all printed within a few days of the performance.
³. Since the performance was on a Wednesday this may have been a regular 'Mardi'; source: SGL, p.37; ML, p.42.
from some parts of the house and some adverse reviews, the play was pronounced a success.

After the performance, in the Cafe Gutenberg, the accounts were studied: there was a surplus of some thirty francs, which was as well, since no one had any money to cover any loss.

Mauclair's own reactions we may find in a letter of a day or two later to Mallarmé, in which he says his wildest hopes have been fulfilled:

Pécuniairement tout a été couvert, y compris la fantaisie qui me vint de consacrer quelques fleurs aux interprètes; et quant à la presse, elle fut aussi copieuse que pour la Walküre. Je ne voulais pas d'approbation de ces messieurs, mais seulement leur imposer l'obligation d'en parler, de cette œuvre "jeune", et en leurs feuilletons complets.1

A few days later, Alhaiza, director of the Théâtre du Parc in Brussels issued an invitation for Pelléas to be performed at his theatre. The circumstances surrounding this trip are explained in the same letter from Mauclair to Mallarmé:

Je ne pourrai venir mardi. [30 May] Sans doute serai-je en route pour la Belgique aux heures où l'on vient vers vous car je pars jouer Pelléas au Théâtre du Parc à Bruxelles! Je suis ahuri de toute cette entreprise; jamais je ne me fusse supposé directeur de troupe, et cependant.... Malgré une maladie de Lugné-Poe, excédé de fatigue et de détente nerveuse, la chose va se faire sûrement. J'imagine qu'il est bon de montrer au public belge le drame du meilleur écrivain de là-bas. Et puis je suis content de prolonger l'entreprise.

The last line is interesting, because it indicates that Mauclair was still thinking of the performance of Pelléas as an isolated event, and any projects for the future were very vague.

There is some confusion as to the date of the Belgian perform-

ance, due no doubt to the fact that the first was given on Monday 5th June, followed by another a few days later.\textsuperscript{1} The play was well received and the trip a financial success.

Not only was the trip to Brussels of considerable value in establishing the success of Pelléas et Mélisande, it also gave Mauclair the opportunity of enlarging his circle of friends among a group of artists whose work he already admired and some of whom he may have already met in Paris. Furthermore, he arrived on the crest of a wave, as co-producer of Pelléas, and close friend of Maeterlinck. That the latter did not stint his services as 'guide' may be seen from one of his letters to Verhaeren\textsuperscript{2} written only a day or two after the Belgian performance of Pelléas:

\begin{quote}
J'ai passé quelques heures à Blankenberghe ces jours-ci avec Mauclair, M...[illagible] et Maubel à qui nous avons demandé votre adresse, mais l'a (sic) envoyée trop tard et ns. vs. (sic) avons vainement cherché sur la digue et la plage.
\end{quote}

In the May number of Mercure de France Mauclair had already written a very favourable review of Maubel's Quelqu'un d'aujourd'hui, and in February of the following year he was to do the same for L'Eau et le vin,\textsuperscript{3} when he described the author as "un parfait écrivain, d'une pure, noble et profonde sensibilité, un des premiers parmi les artistes de la Belgique." His admiration was clearly returned as shall be seen when the 'conférence' Maubel gave in March 1894 is

\begin{flushright}
1. In Jasper (op.cit.) no date is given. Halls (op.cit.) follows the contemporary information given in Floréal of 15 May 1893, which is June 5th. Other dates found are 9th (the date of a second performance?) and the 11th (which is perhaps unlikely since it is a Sunday).
\end{flushright}
Whether Mauclair succeeded in meeting Verhaeren on this first visit to Belgium or whether they met in Paris at Mallarmé's home is not known, but in any case there was a dedicated copy of Eleusis in Verhaeren's library, and in subsequent years Verhaeren's moral influence (akin to that of Mallarmé) grew over Mauclair.

There is little doubt that Mauclair met Max Elskamp. Through Maeterlinck who had recommended him, Mauclair had already written to Elskamp in May before leaving Paris. At Maeterlinck's suggestion, Elskamp had sent Mauclair copies of his Dominical and his recent Salutations, dont d'angéliques, and, in his appreciation of these Mauclair wrote the following:

Pour le sentiment et l'appropriation hélas! Monsieur, c'est bien ici que je regrette de n'être pas né dans votre admirable pays de légendes, si hautain de caractère, si rehaussé de la complicité des solitudes. Notre cher Maeterlinck sait mon perpétuel regret de cela. Que de fois ne lui ai-je pas dit et redit ces jours derniers à Paris, entre deux répétitions de Pelléas! Je sens bien quelle source fraîche de sensibilité renouvelle et vivifie sans cesse votre estimation de phénomènes à vous tous. Vous êtes comme des feuillages. Ici, après la tristesse d'une enfance passée sur des livres, je m'étiole à manquer le contact avec la nature.

1. L'Idéoréalisme de quelques écrivains, [Maeterlinck, Gide, et Mauclair.] given 16th March in Antwerp, and 19th March in Brussels; published in La Société nouvelle, April 1894. = On 27th Oct. 1893 Mauclair had asked Gide, on Maubel's behalf, to be allowed to send Le Traité du Narcisse and La Tentative amoureuse to his friend, for his forthcoming talk.
2. This is Mauclair's first known visit. For Verhaeren at Mallarmé's mardis, cf. SGL, p.36, ML, p.41.
4. Maeterlinck referred to Mauclair as "un de mes amis les plus chers" and said that Mauclair was considering a long article on Elskamp. This did not materialise.
et à végét er dans une ville où tout est interprété. Je ne suis point conforme à moi, mais aux autres. Chez vous au contraire, je devine un sang vivace, et une foi, une possibilité de s'intéresser. 

Do we not read here precisely that yearning of the young poor Symbolist for the "Ultima Thulé du Symbolisme" which Mauclair was to describe many years later? Possibly because Mauclair only knew it as a visitor, and knew only certain fellow-artists rather than the whole of the literary milieu as he did in Paris, Belgium was for him in the next few years a place of pilgrimage and intellectual interest:

Alors je parlais d'art avec Eckhoud chez Camille Lemonnier; alors je disais au bon Claus dans sa "Zonnensyn" fleurie des bords de la Lys, mon admiration pour Artan, Charles de Groux, Henri de Brakkelever, Vogels, et nous lisions ensemble de magnifiques passages de l'Ulenspiegel de Charles de Coster; alors je rêvais dans le béguinage de Bruges, les vieilles rues de Malines et d'Ypres, ou dans les pâtis de la Campine, avant de me retrouver chez Octave Maus, dans la calme maison de la rue du Berger, où Vincent d'Indy nous donnait au piano l'esquisse de ce Fervaal que la Monnaie allait accueillir avant Paris, cette Monnaie où, comme nous disions, on éprouvait la frappe des belles œuvres..... Comment oublier tout cela, et cette fraternité franco-belge, et ces causeries chez Edmond Deman, devant les manuscrits de mon maître Mallarmé?

1. Correspondence Mauclair - Elskamp in B.R.B.-M.L. Unpublished except for this letter which is reproduced and discussed (with Maeterlinck's letter to Elskamp, and details of PAM) by J. Warmoes in Annales de la Fondation Maeterlinck tome 12, Bruxelles 1967.


3. This extract is taken from a Ms. (in B.R.B.) of an article written for an unknown review, and discussing M.C. Maus' book Trente années de lutte pour l'art 1864 - 1914 which appeared in 1926.

--- Cfr. Mauclair to Mallarmé 10th April 1894 : "Nous (he is at Bruges with Robert Scheffer) comptons aller d'ici quelques jours à Bruxelles; si vous y avez à faire quelque commission, pour M. Picard que je compte prévenir de ma visite ou pour Octave Maus, ou n'importe qui, dites-moi un mot et je ferai ce que vous voudrez."
Mauclair’s visit to Belgium would seem to have been profitable in another direction. Shortly after his 'Conférence d'Art' on Maeterlinck on April 30th 1892, Mauclair wrote to tell Mallarmé that through Paul Fort he hoped to give a talk on his work (in other words, a 'Conférence d'Art') and to this end he would like to call on Mallarmé to discuss the idea, and to borrow a copy of *Pages* which he had not yet read, so that he could mention it in his talk.¹

Difficulties soon arose, for, on the 17th of June Charles Morice wrote to Mallarmé:

Comme j'avertissais Paul Fort que ma prochaine conférence serait sur vous, il m'a répondu qu'il avait reçu dans la journée une lettre de M. Mauclair l'informant que vous aviez donné à celui-ci l'autorisation de parler, aussi, de vous, en public. Il m'est impossible de concourir avec M. Mauclair et peut-être serait-il difficile de faire deux conférences successives sur le même sujet.²

Mauclair's next letter to Mallarmé³ shows that Morice had given his talk, after which Fort had explained that he could no longer back Mauclair, who, for the time being was obliged to shelve his project. Mauclair's slight resentment⁴ on this occasion was only aggravated by Fort's attempts to revive the Théâtre d'Art in 1893, as we have seen.

During the summer of 1892 Mauclair was with the Rochegrosses at Barbizon, but was prevented by his illness from visiting Mallarmé at Valvins. Nevertheless, in October⁵ he wrote to say that he still intended to give his talk, and the following month he was able to state that after revising his text, he was ready to speak whenever

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1. Mauclair to Mallarmé, 31 May 1892.
4. "Je ne puis rien objecter aux raisons de ce fallacieux imprésario [Fort]."
the opportunity arose.1

During the winter negotiations were entered into with one M. Hippeau to give the 'conférence' in the Salle des Capucines, but after a series of half-promises and fruitless pestering, this too came to nothing when Hippeau vanished, leaving the rent of the hall unpaid.

In January Mauclair was thinking of another way out:

Ne serait-il possible de persuader Lacomblez de publier purement et simplement ma conférence? Ce serait d'une équivalente publicité et combien plus simple..2

Significantly, it was Lacomblez who had published Pelléas et Mélanie which Mauclair was about to help Lugné-Poe produce; he was also the main agent in Brussels for the Belgian review La Société nouvelle. With this in mind, it appears that Mauclair put his visit to Belgium to good use, for when he returned to Paris he was able to tell Mallarmé at the end of June:

Je vais sans doute publier à La Société Nouvelle la conférence que j'écrivis sur vous, et en faire tirer quelques exemplaires à part... Il faut me le pardonner, car je vois le moyen de dire sur votre œuvre plus et mieux et je préfère brûler mon premier vaisseau...3

La Société nouvelle did in fact publish the 'conférence' in July 18934 with, on the first page, this footnote which sums up its history:

Prononcé devant un public imaginaire ou futur.

As for the reprint of one hundred numbered copies of the article, this was done in Paris, and appeared at the beginning of September.5 One

1. Mauclair to Mallarmé, 28 Nov.1892. This letter is before that of 26 Nov.
3. Mauclair to Mallarmé, 26 June 1893.
5. The reprint is announced in MF Sept. 1893. MF were the agents of Société nouvelle in Paris.
copy was sent to Gide, and a few days later Mauclair replied in the following terms to his friend's comments:

Je suis content André que tu aies un peu aimé mon panégyrique du maître. Ce que tu me dis touchant le choix des pièces que je cite est juste, mais tu en as déjà prévu la raison. Primitivement je voulais dire cette conférence, et j'étais obligé de citer des vers compréhensibles immédiatement et facilement, pour ne pas avoir l'air de commenter un poète français comme un grec, et de reconnaître ainsi implicitement cette obscurité dont je ne pouvais en une causerie courte détruire l'apparent grief. C'eût été aussi blessant pour le maître que pour l'intelligence des auditeurs. Et si, en publiant, j'avais changé les piéces, on m'eût alors reproché le choix de poèmes compliqués, et on m'eût dit qu'en cas de séance parlée, j'aurais tort de citer ces choses. En sorte que j'ai dû m'en tenir à cela, de l'avis même du maître. D'ailleurs c'est l'ensemble et telles théories de la poésie qui importaient.

Tu as raison de dire que tu attendais quelque chose de moi et que voilà seulement la première tentative. Je n'ai encore rien fait, rien. Mais tu verras Eleusis...¹

The last paragraph is interesting because it shows that Mauclair was inclined to agree that his 'conférence' was hardly revolutionary, but after all it was written almost a year before, and one senses that he had grown weary with the difficulties of publication. As for Eleusis it is worth mentioning that this book was largely concurrent with the conference² and bore the significant dedication:

A Stéphane Mallarmé, ce livre de foi idéaliste, est respectueusement et filialement dédié.

How interesting it would be to have the list of those to whom Mauclair sent his first work published outwith a review! We only know that besides Mallarmé, Gide and Abel Pelletier received a copy, and that Mauclair asked Mallarmé for Whistler's address to send him

¹. Mauclair to Gide, 12 Sept. 1893.
². Cf. Chapter 4.
By its subject and its content it must have represented a useful introduction and a worthy testimonial for the author.

Why Mauclair should have been so reluctant to alter his choice of examples in his talk is because for some time he had been dreaming of giving a series of 'conférences' dealing with modern art, as he so vaguely put it, and during his trip to Belgium he had seen the possibility of going from town to town doing just that. Since his Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé was published in Belgium, he would not have wished to give the various presidents of the 'cercles artistiques' at which he hoped to speak any cause to doubt the interest of his material. Max Elskamp in Antwerp, Maubel in Brussels, Gérardy in Liège, and no doubt, Maeterlinck in Ghent, these were the people he thought could sound out the possible welcome - and rewards - in each town.²

Such a project could be doubly profitable. In the first place it could allow expression to new ideas, tempered to suit the audience perhaps, for we must not forget the militant aspect of Mauclair's attitude, and like the theatre, a talk was a means of coming to grips with people, un-interrupted by the printed page which they might or might not read. In the second place, Mauclair may have seen some possibility for financial reward in giving talks. He was quite explicit to Elskamp³ - he simply had no money whatsoever, and only by

1. The 'brochure' does not exist among the papers of the Whistler Collection now at Glasgow University. In WW Mauclair recalled meeting Whistler in his garden at the rue du Bac, one afternoon in 1894. (WW p.318.)

2. These details are to be found in a letter from Mauclair to Elskamp which though undated belongs to the period before the performance by the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre of Rosmersholm -(Oct. 6, 1893), (B.R.B.).

3. In the letter mentioned above. On June 26th 1893 Mauclair told Mallarmé of a series of talks to be given in Belgium in the winter of 1893-1894, but this may have been premature.
writing to each president of the 'cercles artistiques' could he judge from the conditions offered whether a lecture tour would be at all possible.

In fact Mauclair had always been short of money. His memories of childhood present a difficult life, and such it must have been, since his father was dead, his brother had some kind of office employment, and he had not gone out to work as was to have been expected of him. His letters to Mallarmé and Gide are sprinkled with allusions to the fact that he is penniless, and often, ill. In July 1893, because of the sudden death of his uncle, he was even reduced to borrowing from Gide. This uncle, it seems, had been helping the family as much as possible until Mauclair was freed from military service and could find any post. Mauclair's mother and brother had no more than enough for themselves and so the sudden end to his uncle's aid threw an unexpected burden on already strained finances.

To have to throw himself on someone's mercy like this, to stand by and see Louÿs disperse his inheritance, and go off to Bayreuth, to be determined to write for the young symbolist reviews, despite the fact that little reward could be expected, these things must have shaped Mauclair's attitude to life and art. The circum-

1. Letter of 5th July 1893.
2. As early as Oct. 1891 Mauclair had said to Gide in talking of his ill-health: "il y a une époque qui me finira, celle de la dette au Sophisme patriotique", and in April 1893 he wrote to Mallarmé: "Moi aussi je suis malade, et puis ahuri de courses pour tâcher de m'exempter du servage militaire. Je passe à la révision demain [17th April] et je ne vis plus". No doubt because of past ill-health Mauclair was not called for military service - indeed, many years later, in 1914 Mauclair wrote to Paul Adam: "Je viens d'être réformé définitivement, triste bénéfice d'une vieille tuberculose dont on m'a, avec une franchise toute militaire, renouvelé l'assurance sans me surprendre. (This letter in the Bibliothèque Municipale d'Arras is dated '17 décembre'; that it belongs to 1914 is made clear by reference to the 'conseil de révision' in other dateable letters to Adam.)
stances of his life seem to have inculcated in him a seriousness both in approach and judgement, and a tendency not only to disregard money as opposed to the things of the mind, but also to think of relative poverty and intellectual integrity as synonymous for many artists, and even a pre-condition of artistic success. Often this is so, but the point to be made is that in considering Mauclair's work we must not forget a background of necessity. As he confessed to Mallarmé:

Je suis très-triste et très-peu fortuné, deux raisons pour travailler.1

* * *

Although Pelléas et Mélisande was produced by the group which later formed the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, the full conception and the name of this theatrical group did not come into existence until after May 1893. Pelléas was put on the stage by "friends of Maeterlinck" who were determined that such an important work should not be allowed to drift into obscurity or be spoiled by circumstances unconnected with its conception.

Almost one month2 before Pelléas, Mauclair had suggested to Mallarmé that there was a possibility that Lugné-Poe and he would, in the following winter, continue their policy of putting on isolated works of merit, but clearly this embryonic project needed the success of Pelléas before it could be put into effect. Mauclair's position was one of combative strength:

Cette petite tentative préliminaire m'a montré qu'on peut faire quelque chose, et je compte bien distraire mes nerfs de temps à autre à de semblables insurrections. J'ai touché "un public"

Of course, the main idea of prolonging the initial successful formula came from Lugné-Poe. It was he who invited Mauclair and Edouard Vuillard to join him as co-directors; their enthusiasm for the new venture, and their respect for each other's talents were beyond question. They were well aware of the pitfalls which had brought the Théâtre d'Art to grief, they would avoid the overloaded overambitious programmes Fort had offered, and, until the necessary French play should come along, they would turn to the North, to Ibsen, to inspire their compatriots to greater endeavour. In any case, their preoccupation was with the "oeuvre" and not with considerations of nationality; if a work satisfied their high standard it must be performed.

Lugné-Poe recalled that he spent the holiday period in the summer of 1893 with the family of a friend, Paul Clerget, who lived near Fontainebleau. This enabled him to visit Mallarmé at nearby Valvins, and their conversations about the theatre were a source of inspiration to him in the months to come. What can be added to this statement is the very interesting letter in which Mauclair asked

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2. Mauclair makes this clear in his memoirs (SGL, p.105) and in other retrospective articles (Revue de l'Oeuvre March/April 1913) (Revue de l'Oeuvre Feb.1921).
3. In SGL (p.105) Mauclair states that the decision to found the Oeuvre was made by Lugné-Poe at the jubilant gathering after Pelléas on May 17th 1893. This is probably simplification for effect.
4. Jasper (op. cit.) follows Lugné-Poe's account that the name of the new theatre was arrived at by fortuitous selection at random from a book which Vuillard pulled from a shelf. This is unlikely; the name came logically from the aims of the group: "on jouerait toutes les belles choses du monde, et d'abord Ibsen et puis...et puis toute œuvre remarquable d'où qu'elle vint." (Revue de l'Oeuvre Feb. 1921).
Mallarmé if he and Lugné might pay a visit to Valvins to discuss Lugné's plans. Not only did he wish to stage Ibsen, but he had another idea:

celle de mêler ces représentations de petits spectacles à public restreint, où il ressusciterait l'ombre chinoise, la pantomime anglaise, et les combinaisons de musique, mime, décoration et voix. Il me témoigne son vif désir de prendre là-dessus votre sentiment, m'alléguant qu'il vous savait le premier à consulter touchant ces alliances, d'après vos notes sur le théâtre. (...)

En un mot, il tiendrait très-vivement à vous demander conseil quant à toutes ses entreprises, et moi-même, car je m'occuperai aussi, cet hiver de ces affaires. Vous savez combien Lugné-Poe est capable de mener à bien quelque chose, il l'a déjà prouvé ; et c'est de plus un acteur instruit et connaisseur d'art, ce qui est rare.¹

Even if these ideas did not come to fruition in the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, it is useful to see how, behind what was shown, lay the initial inspiration of Mallarmé's "Notes sur le théâtre". The following Sunday (27th August) Mauclair and Lugné-Poe took the train down to Valvins as invited.²

The first play acted by the Oeuvre was to be Rosmersholm; a great deal of work must have been undertaken during September for not only were rehearsals, scenery, and a theatre to be taken care of, but once again support and subscribers had to be found. The Mercure published a letter-manifesto by Mauclair in which he stated the high disinterested ideal which was the guiding principle of the Oeuvre;³ two hundred and fifty circulars were printed which had to be delivered by hand to save expense; Vuillard turned to his friends

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¹. Letter of 18th Aug. 1893.
². The date and the visit may be established by reference to letters of Aug. 22 and Oct. 2, from Mauclair to Mallarmé.
³. MF Oct. 1893, p.191. The content of this will be discussed in the following chapter.
Denis, Sérusier, and Bonnard for help in adapting old sets. Once again, as for Pelléas, Mauclair's influence in the salons and literary circles was to be of great use, as Lugné-Poe acknowledged.¹

Rosmersholm was performed on October 6th,² and the optimism Mauclair had shown to Mallarmé a few days before — 'nous espérons Lugné-Poe et moi toucher enfin à ce but tant désiré de "notre théâtre"' — was justified. The secondary position he had already adopted in the adventure is already apparent although his enthusiasm was undiminished:

Je suis assez fatigué mais je suis vraiment satisfait de la tournure de l'entreprise. Je crois qu'il y aura des choses à faire, et puis Ibsen est si passionnant quand on y entre à fond! Je crois que vous serez content de ce que j'essaie de faire pour être un homme et servir nos amis. Et il faut dire que Lugné-Poe est d'une énergie et d'une habileté incroyable. Nous n'avons pas un sou devant nous et il sauve tout dix fois par jour.³

The performance was preceded by a talk delivered by Léopold Lacour; Hermann Bang who had been recommended by Count Prozor, (Ibsen's translator) had inspired the cast, especially Lugné-Poe and Berthe Bady,⁴ to give a fine interpretation of the play; the evening was a triumph. Mauclair could write happily to Gide and show that he had fulfilled some of the aims he had sketched out at the time of the candidature for the Odéon:

Ici, rien de nouveau, sinon l'Oeuvre qui a réussi très brillamment; peut-être voilà-t-il ouverte la route pour les timides, et tu sais la-dessus mes espérances anciennes et mon goût

². The dress rehearsal took place on the 6th; interest was so alive that it was as important as a première. There were two other performances.
⁴. Mauclair recalled helping Berthe Bady learn her role as Rebecca West. (Revue de l'Oeuvre March/April 1913 and SGL, p.107).
de l'action. Nous jouons le 9 Un Ennemi du peuple d'Ibsen. Je crois que l'Oeuvre va marcher, et je n'y épargne rien.¹

Before Un Ennemi du peuple however, a trip was made by the Oeuvre to play Rosmersholm before enthusiastic audiences in Brussels.² There is no reason to think that Mauclair did not accompany the troupe on this visit.

Preparations for the new production were as hectic as before as a letter from Mauclair to Gide shows:

Depuis dix jours j'étais dans les suprêmes soucis de la première d'Un Ennemi du peuple et tu devines quelle existence de courses, de fatigue, d'anxiété, de temps perdu! Je n'ai pas eu littéralement une minute à moi.³

Because of its topicality as an expression of anarchist and socialist ideas Un Ennemi du peuple developed into a tumultuous performance⁴ which the preceding talk by Laurent Tailhade did nothing to calm.⁵ Mauclair took part in the play, sweating under a large fur bonnet which he felt was very Norwegian, and desperately trying to keep the student 'extras' who had been hired to play the mob opposed to Stockmann from deserting to his support, or from replying to the shouts and cries of the house!⁶

¹ Letter of 27 Oct. 1893.
² Halls (op.cit.) mentions a trip made by the Oeuvre in 'late 1893' during which Rotterdam and the Hague were visited. Elskamp had made an offer to help make a visit to Antwerp possible; it does not seem to have been accepted. (B.R.B. - M.L.)
³ Letter of 17 Nov. 1893.
⁴ Some confusion over the date of this performance exists. From Mauclair's letter to Mallarmé of Friday 10th Nov. we learn that in fact the dress rehearsal took place on Wednesday 8th (Mlle Mallarmé was present) and that on the 9th and 10th are the dates of the opening. Mallarmé attended on the 10th; though the seats which had been reserved for him in the stalls were by mistake given to someone else, places were found in the 'galérie' which Mauclair assured him were equally good. He himself would be there, he said, with Rochegrosse, Mirbeau, Beaubourg and others.
⁵ "Tailhade aussi a été très-bien, et a parlé en poète et en homme", Mauclair to Mallarmé in the letter of 10th Nov. mentioned above.
⁶ SGL, p.107.
By now the Oeuvre was becoming more firmly established. After another trip to Brussels, Lugné-Poe turned his attention to producing *Les Âmes solitaires* by Gerhart Hauptmann. Mauclair however does not seem to have collaborated with him on this, for about this time he decided to leave the Oeuvre.

This decision was arrived at without any disagreement between Mauclair and Lugné-Poe. It is true that Mauclair, as a true idealist, may have objected to the very necessary administrative organisation which Lugné-Poe, who had more experience of day-to-day running of theatres, must have felt was essential if the enterprise was to survive, and if amateurish mistakes such as those over seating arrangements were to be avoided. It was no doubt against this inevitable professionalism that Mauclair was protesting in the following letter to Mlle Mallarmé - though other reasons for his course of action are hinted at:

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Je vous réponds à la hâte pour vous dire que je ne sais pas où en est l'Oeuvre. Je n'y ai pas été depuis un grand mois, ma vie se modifie en ce moment, je n'ai pas ma liberté, et j'ai dû renoncer à m'occuper de ce théâtre, où d'ailleurs on agissait depuis quelque temps contre mon gré. J'y avais vu une chose d'art à soutenir, et c'est devenu une entreprise comme les autres, ce qui ne saurait m'engager à y laisser ma responsabilité. Je passe lundi et mardi des examens toute la journée, et je ne sais si je pourrai, fatigué par un travail incessant, prendre la force d'aller moi-même le soir à l'Oeuvre. Je pense que l'on ne vous aura pas oubliée au service, et je n'ose en jurer, car les gens d'aujourd'hui pensent plus aux journalistes, à tout détenteur de publicité basse ou de gros sous, qu'aux artistes et aux gens de vie haute et discrète. Si les circonstances m'eussent permis d'être le maître, (mais le temps et les ressources...) j'eusse fait place d'abord à ceux
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1. Lugné-Poe and Mauclair showed clearly that they wished to avoid the over-booking which had been a feature of the Théâtre d'Art, by the letter they sent to the *MF* (Dec. 1893); in it they pointed out that only the "administrateur général" could accept requests for seats.
possibly it was some recent event from which Mauclair was smarting that led him to write in such violent terms. Certainly, while he may have disapproved of certain aspects of the Oeuvre, he must have found it difficult, in his state of health, to sustain the pace that was required of him, especially as there could be little financial reward, and he had, as we have seen, no independent means of support for his writing, which in turn would suffer from the amount of time the Oeuvre demanded. His dissatisfaction of early 1894 is not to be found in any subsequent memoirs—either from his pen or that of Lugné-Poe. Mauclair later said that he had been a little put out by articles in which he was portrayed as Lugné's 'Conseiller littéraire', because this was patently wrong: Lugné-Poe had no need of such help, in fact his energy and talents were self-sufficient, and Mauclair felt that his participation was no longer needed. 2 Lugné-Poe was more precise. 3 He generously acknowledged the importance of Mauclair's contribution to the founding of the Oeuvre, but he understood his friend's position as outlined above. He also pointed out that Mauclair was subjected to resentment on the part of those who felt he was not using his position to their advantage or offering them the 'protection' and favours they expected. In fact Mauclair's reply to Lugné's request to remain with the Oeuvre shows that his priorities were concerned with the performance of works of merit, which were not always those of his friends:

Je ne demande pas mieux que de t'être le plus utile possible occultement, mais publiquement, je n'y vois, pour ton entreprise, aucun avantage. Je n'ai pas une notoriété suffisante pour qu'elle te serve par son éclat, et je suis trop jeune pour te présenter avec quelque sérieux auprès des bourgeois. Je prévois aussi que je serais trop pris cet hiver, par mon emploi et mes livres, le soir, pour pouvoir sortir beaucoup et m'occuper d'une chose aussi compliquée. J'aurais certainement grand plaisir à accepter ton offre, mais il faut avant tout songer à ce qui peut servir "l'Oeuvre" et je me fiche que mon nom soit prononcé ou non. Or, pour Pelléas, il semblait logique que je m'en occupasse avec toi nominalement, parce que tout le monde savait que j'étais le seul écrivain ami de Maeterlinck à Paris. Mais me mêler aux drames d'Ibsen à mon âge, et avec mon inconnaissance des choses du théâtre?... Vraiment je ne sais que penser. D'autant plus qu'il s'agit d'une direction purement littéraire, je ne sais si j'aurais l'autorité suffisante quant aux lettres et si on ne te reprocherait pas de t'adresser à des inconnus en négligeant les autres. Enfin j'ai des idées brouillées là-dessus. Le fond de moi est d'accepter malgré les commentaires des sots, parce qu'il y aura bataille et que ça me va. Mais ton intérêt...

Mauclair did remain for a month or two, for the two Ibsen plays as we have seen, and subsequently it was he who suggested that the Oeuvre should produce Maurice Beaubourg's L'Image and Henri Bataille's La Belle au bois dormant. It was also Mauclair, and, Lugné writes, Mallarmé who were instrumental in having Maeterlinck's translation of T'is a pity she's a whore (Annabella) performed by the Oeuvre in late 1894. Mauclair's more direct support took the form of giving a talk before the performance of Ibsen's Solness on April 3rd 1894, and of a long series of reviews of the productions of the

1. Eleusis was about to be published; Mauclair was working on CC.
2. Lugné-Poe, ibid.
4. Performed 24th May 1894; cf. Lugné-Poe, op.cit., p.82; also p.83: "Mauclair et Rochegrosse m'ont suggéré l'idée de la petite Meuris comme Belle au Bois."
5. Lugné-Poe, op.cit., p.42. Annabella was performed on 6th Nov.1894, and was preceded by a talk by Marcel Schwob.
Oeuvre in *La Revue encyclopédique* beginning in May of the same year.

In conclusion to this account of Mauclair's activities with the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, it is appropriate that part of the letter Lugné-Poe sent to G. Jean-Aubry when the latter was preparing his material for his biography of Mauclair should be quoted, because it underlines the two essential qualities of Mauclair's outlook which were to come increasingly to the fore in the next few years:

> J'ai la plus grande estime pour son caractère hautain et quelque peu dédaigneux des suffrages de la foule et de la réclame. Il fut mon camarade désintéressé à la fondation de "L'Oeuvre"... Jamais je n'eus de guide plus sûr, plus affectueux. Fidèle à ses amis, Mauclair que je revois trop rarement garde toute ma reconnaissance.

* * *

Several times Mauclair has told the story of how, in the autumn of 1893 he acted on Maeterlinck's behalf with Debussy. Maeterlinck had written to Mauclair to tell him that he had received a request from Debussy for authorisation to use *Pelléas et Mélisande* as a libretto for an opera. As he was however, quite insensitive to music, the Belgian asked his friend to visit Debussy and form his opinion on the value of the music.

It is possible that Mauclair already knew Debussy, perhaps through Pierre Louÿs, perhaps as early as February 1893, because the title of a short story by Mauclair, *La Mer Belle aux Îles Sanguinaires*, was adopted by Debussy for the first movement of *La Mer* (subsequently

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1. This is an unpublished letter of Feb. 1st 1904, belonging to Mme Jean-Aubry.
changed to: "De l'aube à midi sur la mer";\(^1\) Furthermore, on 6th February, writing to recommend his friend Ernest Legrand to Mallarmé, Mauclair stated that both Debussy and Charpentier could vouch for him.\(^2\)

In any case, after Masterlinck's letter, it was not long before Mauclair found himself with Louÿs in Debussy's apartment on the fifth floor of a house in the rue Cardinet. They listened amazed, overcome, to Debussy who played the piano, sang the roles and gave the effects of the orchestra, with the result that when it was over, Mauclair could only rush out to telegraph Masterlinck to send his immediate authorisation, for a masterpiece had been born.

All this may have taken place before August 1893, because, on the eighth of that month, Masterlinck wrote to Henri de Régnier (who had also been asked to help Debussy): "Veuillez dire à Monsieur de Bussy (sic) que c'est de bien grand coeur que je lui donne toute autorisation nécessaire pour Pelléas et Méliande."\(^3\) It had certainly taken place before Louÿs went with Debussy to visit Maeterlinck in Ghent in September 1893.

Subsequently, Mauclair may have known Debussy fairly well. He was invited by Louÿs to hear the first performance of the first act of Pelléas at Louÿs' home on 31st May 1894;\(^4\) he attended the performance of L'Après-midi d'un faune on the 22nd of December 1894 with Mallarmé;\(^5\) and in the same month on returning from a few days in the country, he found a letter from Louÿs inviting him to hear Debussy

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1. The short story was published in L'Echo de Paris of 27 Feb. 1893; it had been awarded one of Echo's monthly prose-prizes - this fact may have brought it to the composer's attention.
5. Stated in manuscript article Debussy et les poètes; (Cf. p.82, note 2).
play - but the evening was past. Mauclair replied:

Dire que voilà un temps immémorial que je voudrais entendre de la musique de Debussy, que j'en demande à tous les échos, et que justement hier!! Enfin, si le mal peut un jour se réparer, dites-le moi un peu d'avance, et je lâche tout pour venir!¹

Other musicians whom Mauclair knew at this time were Gabriel Fabre, who had composed the music for the song Mélisande sings in the tower in Maeterlinck's play, and who was to put some of Mauclair's poems to music.² Fabre was introduced to Mallarmé by Mauclair, in June 1893,³ and Mauclair also recalled visiting Fabre in his lodgings near the Place Pereire.⁴ Ernest Chausson was also a friend of Mauclair; Le Soleil des morts is dedicated to him and he is portrayed in that book under the name of Méreuse. In an article⁵ after Chausson's death Mauclair described happy evenings spent with the composer, and also with Vincent d'Indy, though these may have taken place slightly later than 1893. In a letter to Jean-Aubry, the latter expressed his full appreciation of Mauclair's talents⁶:

Je considère Camille Mauclair comme l'une des intelligences les plus profondes et les plus chercheuses de notre moderne littérature française; dès ses premiers ouvrages, j'avais été conquis par la hauteur de conception des sujets en même temps que par le charme de l'exécution; les œuvres suivantes ne m'ont point fait changer d'opinion, bien au contraire.

* * *

¹. B.N. Mus. This letter is dated "décembre 1894" by the collector Henri Borgeaud to whom it belonged.
². Sonatines sentimentales, MF 1896 consist of Mélisande's song plus a Ronde, a Ballade, and a Complainte by Mauclair.
³. Letter of 26 June 1893.
⁵. La Vogue 15 Aug. 1899.
"A Valvins il était lui-même." wrote Mauclair about Mallarmé. "Nous nous y retrouvions avec quelques amis dont l'aînesse voulait bien me traiter en camarade. Élémir Bourges descendait de son ermitage de Samois... Gabriel Séailles... était là aussi en voisin, et aussi les frères Margueritte, survenant à cheval... Parfois se joignait à eux le peintre Armand Point...."

This was how Mauclair recalled summers spent near Valvins. It is not difficult to imagine how he must have enjoyed escaping from the city and have relished the company of the men he mentions, especially that of Mallarmé, with whom he remembers going sailing. One such holiday – it was probably the first, since Mauclair hardly knew any of those in question in 1891, and in 1892 he was ill – took place in October 1893. In letters to Gide of that time he quoted the authority of Bourges, Point and Margueritte (he does not mention which brother) with whom he was staying at Mariotte in the forest of Fontainebleau, that Gide should for the good of his health move to a better climate such as that at Biskra. Friendship with these men who were all much older than he was to have a formative influence on his mind. In December Mauclair wrote one of his first articles of art-criticism for the Mercure de France; it concerned Armand Point, and it showed of course that the author had first-hand knowledge of his subject.4

Gide's absence in Algeria had another result. Mauclair acted on his behalf, and following his instructions to supervise the publication of La Tentative amoureuse. Herold also aided him in this task. Mauclair also promised Gide to try to pass some of his verse

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1. SGL, p.31; cf. ML, pp.104-105.
2. 27 Oct. 1893; 17 Nov. 1893.
3. Mlle Éve Margueritte does not possess any papers to elucidate this point.
4. "Motifs mélancholiques" (poems) of Dec. 1893 (RBche) were also dedicated to Point.
On a personal level however Mauclair seems to have been hard pressed. In an attempt to alleviate his financial difficulties he was trying to find some kind of employment:

Figure-toi que je donne des leçons de littérature à la fille et à la nièce de Mme Eugène Manet et que je vais peut-être enfin trouver une place par des amis, par Baur aussi... Cela me fait courir Paris du matin jusqu'au soir pour aller voir les gens qui, que, dont, etc. etc....

In view of their relative circumstances the following passage from one of the letters in which Mauclair shows that he is genuinely worried about his friend's health, indicates how selfless Mauclair could be and how close he felt himself to be to Gide at this time:

..moi qui ai la même maladie que toi (il est vrai au bien plus fort et caractérisé) je sens ici l'humidité pernicieuse. Puisque tu as la chance d'être en pays sec, profites, et reviens-nous calme, pour un longtemps, avec de belles idées, pensant aussi parfaitement que tu écris, mon cher André. C'est ta vie, ça, la beauté! C'est si simple! Vois, je vais me cloîtrer sept heures par jour pour pouvoir au moins penser en beauté le reste du temps et m'isoler : toi qui peux remplacer ça par le voyage, uses-en!

This is not written in a spirit of martyrdom or flattery; Mauclair's admiration for his friend's talents was greater than any thoughts on their relative circumstances, the one pursuing his ideal in the sands of an exotic foreign country, the other struggling to make ends meet in the dampness of a Parisian November.
It would however be misleading to reduce Mauclair's life at this time to a list of his friends, his activities, and his work, without suggesting that there was something else, which was the elusive quality which made the years we are discussing different from any others. It is this quality which dies first, and is almost impossible to re-create. We may study the reviews and the manuals but we are perhaps too far removed from the kind of life that was led then to be able to realise the particular intensity of the artistic milieu of a Paris before the technological age. We can only turn to the diaries and letters of the period to hope to catch a pale shadow of that life:

J'ai passé l'autre soir trois heures charmantes avec Mendès. C'est la lère fois que je me trouvais avec lui. J'étais allé au concert d'Harcourt où un autre jeune que tu ne connais pas, Randon, devait dire des vers de moi. Tout la gendelettrie mercurielle et autre y était, la jeune s'entend : Hérold, Carrère, Fontaines, Stuart Merrill, Reinard, Lecleroq, Saint-Pol-Roux, Camille Mauclair, Retté, etc, etc... (...

Et la fin de la soirée... nous descendons tous ensemble, c'est-à-dire Vallette, Rachilde, Mendès, M***, Mauclair et moi chez Pouisset. Il était minuit moins le quart. A trois heures du matin nous en sortions. J'avais, dès le début, manœuvré de façon à amener Mendès sur le terrain des souvenirs; il s'est laissé faire avec une bonne grâce parfaite; et pendant trois heures délicieuses, j'ai vécu d'une vie de légende. 1


++ It is perhaps worth noting that writing to Gide on 17th Nov. 1893 Mauclair suggested that Samain, "qui est un être exquis", should be included in the 'service de presse' for La Tentative amoureuse.
Maunoir was young, little more than a schoolboy; his life was restricted by the circumstances of his family life. He had however two gifts: the love of Art, and the capacity of articulate expression.

The use of the former phrase may seem slightly wankish, and too vague; too ambiguous, even, for "the love of Art" is a relative phrase which admits any interpretation from that of the simple admirer to that of the self-consuming idealist. Yet it is the phrase which applies to the basic quality of Maunoir's perception.

To Chapter Three: Work, from 1891 until 1893.

An entity which may be called Art is worthy of attention, to do this requires an act of faith. To admire, to be an idealist, one needs to believe in the thing admired, or in the ideal pursued. To be able to believe, one needs to feel that the object of belief is worthy of the implied homage paid to it, whether that homage is lyrical or critical, passionately sincere or subtly cynical.

In Maunoir's case such an act of faith was to undergo several changes of degree and object, but from the passionate adolescent seeking solace from the arid realities of a restricted life in the higher realities of the mind, to the mature art-critic desperately, violently clinging to the only artistic principles he could consider valid, Maunoir's work is orientated by his "love of Art".

"Je veux de l'acte pour traverser de nombreux".

There are probably few who could deny that in their youth, when the unknown is greater, and the undiscovered is love for distant, that Maunoir's desires were theirs also.
Mauclair was young, little more than a schoolboy, his life was restricted by the circumstances of his family life. He had however two gifts: the love of Art, and the capacity of articulate expression.

The use of the former phrase may seem slightly mawkish, and too vague, too ambiguous even, for "the love of Art" is a relative phrase which admits any interpretation from that of the simple admirer to that of the self-consuming idealist. Yet it is the phrase which applies to the basic quality of Mauclair's perception.

To love Art, to be willing to accept that the ill-defined, emotional entity which may be called Art is worthy of attention, to do this requires an act of faith. To admire, to be an idealist, one needs to believe in the thing admired, or in the ideal pursued. To be able to believe, one needs to feel that the object of belief is worthy of the implied homage paid to it, whether that homage is lyrical or critical, passionately sincere or outwardly cynical.

In Mauclair's case such an act of faith was to undergo several changes of degree and object, but from the passionate adolescent seeking solace from the arid realities of a restricted life in the higher realities of the mind, to the mature art-critic desperately, violently clinging to the only artistic principles he could consider valid, Mauclair's work is orientated by his "love of Art".

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"Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!"

There are probably few who could deny that in their youth, when the unknown is greater, and the undiscovered is less far distant, that Baudelaire's desire was theirs also.
Mauclair was no exception:

On dirait que le dernier vers des Fleurs du Mal ne hante personne.

He was reviewing a volume of contemporary verse\(^1\) and complained bitterly that poetry does not consist of lists of furnishings, and catalogues of precious stones, used for the mere pleasure of hearing pompous sounding words. Giraud, Raynaud, Vantor, "et autres dits : symbolistes" fail to reach the essential:

Mon Dieu! qui délaissera les vocabulaires pour se donner la peine de penser, de fouiller dans son coeur et sa cervelle?

Others too did not escape his censure: Tola Dorian's Poèmes lyriques are described as cold and parnassian, with no communion between the author and the reader.\(^2\) Paul Gabillard, author of Élévations poétiques merits ironic dismissal, and has his appointed place between Edouard Dubus and Julien Leclercq - which, in Mauclair's eyes is no great honour.\(^3\) Merrill seems to think that the essence of Henri de Régnier's colour and inspiration lies in the puerile use of rich adjectives, "sans voir que le pur poète dont je parle découvrait dans le rythme et la plénitude des périodes le secret de son charme ..." Because Régnier is a great visionary, he alone can create the art Merrill can only copy, - in poetry which is empty and precious:

Les Fastes ressemblent à un étalage de verreries. La musique en est médiocre, et parfois malhabile, les idées y sont nulles, le symbole, comme toujours! y brille par son absence.\(^4\)

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1. **RI** May 1891, p.265, "Les Dernières Fêtes" by Albert Giraud.
2. **RI** March 1891, p.404.
3. **RI** Sept. 1891, p.418.
As for the comparison between *Les Fastes* and the work of Gustave Moreau - how misleading! Moreau, "ce grand synthétiste de la forme et de la pensée" has nothing in common with these "poètereaux, aligneurs de vocables qui n'ont ni idéal, ni philosophie, ni foi en rien". Even if Merrill's verse is not distinctly bad, it is, of all things, correct, with all that such an adjective applied to poetry suggests.

* * *

What then did Mauclair offer in exchange? Which artistic principles did he consider more valid than those he so categorically condemned in others?

Let us first recall that Mauclair wrote that "l'idéal est un dieu cruel qui frappe ses adorateurs" and that "l'Art est Dieu... c'est pourquoi, dédaignant le rire impur et la joie grossière, poètes envirés du Beau, amoureux extasiés, suivez votre route solitaire..."  

Merrill, Vanor, Leclercq, Dubus and others do not, for Mauclair, show the degree of commitment, or devotion to the ideal which befits the poet and artist.

*Mais lisez Verlaine et Baudelaire, ceux qui frissonnent...*  

Here are two poets of the kind Mauclair can admire; the kind of poet whose life, tormented and 'damned' was the pursuit of the ideal. Banal details of personality are nothing in contrast with the sublimity of this pursuit. Do the phrases Mauclair uses in the above definition of the artist not recall Verlaine's *Art Poétique*?

1. Cf. Chapter 1, p.11.
2. Letter to Pierre Louÿs, also quoted chapter 1, p.5.
L'Esprit cruel et le Rire impur,
Qui font pleurer les yeux de l'Azur,
and Baudelaire's prose-poem "Enivrez-vous"? Such are the roots of Mauclair's artistic attitude.

In Mauclair's early poetry it would be difficult to single out many poems which stem exclusively from Verlaine; one has already been mentioned which is very close to the spirit of Fêtes galantes; and yet Mauclair's first volume of poetry, Sonatines d'automne will be seen to illustrate almost all the ideas of Art poétique.

However, Verlaine as a poet had two distinct facets for Mauclair:

Je crois que j'ai toujours non seulement adoré mais pleinement compris son immense et pathétique génie, et il est encore, avec Baudelaire, le seul poète que je ne me lasse jamais de relier passionnément, fervemment. Mais je n'acceptais déjà pas la légende qu'on créait autour de lui touchant sa pauvreté symbolique, sa figure de haut paria social... 1

Should he not therefore have owned to similar restrictions about Baudelaire's legend and existence as a 'poète maudit'? The answer probably lies in the fact that he knew Verlaine in person, (he recalled visiting him in Broussais hospital), 2 and was acutely aware of his excesses and the behaviour of his 'disciples', whereas he had no doubt looked more deeply into the Fleurs du Mal than into the life of the poet.

Spleen, with such verses as:

Les crimes instinctifs germent, sinistres fleurs
Sur le fumier d'ennui qui pourrit nos cerveaux;
Affole notre Chair de ses baisers menteurs. 3

1. SGL, p.23.
2. Ibid, p.24. According to the information given in Jean Richter's book Paul Verlaine (Seghers, 1960) the most likely date for this visit lies between Nov.1891 and Dec.1893; (op.cit.,p.78).
3. RI March 1891. Mauclair had already recited this piece at the "Soirée de La Plume" of 21 Feb. 1891; (loc.cit.,p.361.).
is directly Baudelairian; yet we look in vain for another example of this sinister, introspective poetry. Nevertheless, we must not underestimate Baudelaire's influence on Mauclair. Even if we had not this statement, written to Louis le Cardonnel in June 1891:

Et puis, vous me parlez de Baudelaire; c'est comme si vous parliez de Dieu à un mystique. Celui-là est tout pour moi.

we could not discount, on the one hand the latent influence of Baudelaire's artistic intensity, and on the other hand, the inspiration of his Curiosités esthétiques.

*   *   *

Mais lisez Verlaine et Baudelaire, ceux qui frissonnent; lisez Shelley, celui qui pense; lisez Poe et Mallarmé les chastes...²

Each adjective is an adjective of value. The poet is a priest, whose symbolic purity and renouncing of the common desires, makes him capable of interceding between us and the Deity who is Art, the Ideal. Perhaps such a priest elevates us by the sublimity of the feeling he communicates, by the thoughts he inspires, by the example of his own anxious, questing soul. He who does not communicate by such means, is not, in Mauclair's eyes, worthy of the title 'poet'.

And yet, do Mauclair's early poems suggest that he had achieved this essential consecration which he so admired in some, and found so lacking in others? It seems not. Mauclair was destined to be an admirer of sublimity in others.

In "Nocturne en bleu et argent" we read this:

Sur le fleuve irisé de turquoise et d'opale
En des senteurs d'ajoncs, d'hyacinthe et d'iris,
Reluit laiteusement, dans les genêts fleuris
Une lune endormie, et langoureuse, et pâle,

and the figure around which such a Moreauesque decor is wrought is Ophelia:

Tout est calme. Et voici que lentement émerge,
Au fil de l'eau chantante aux frissons alentis,
Son front mort ceint de lys et de myosotis
Le chaste et froid profil d'une tête de vierge.

This poem is representative of the mood and language of other of Mauclair's verse about this time: a poised quiet mood and static, momentary situation, expressed in often elaborate language depending on the culminating effect of a number of exotic, or unusual words. The central figure is often a feminine, virginal figure of purity and unfulfilled desire:

Et les Vierges ainsi que de pâles asphodèles
S'embrumant de tristesse en les joyaux lilas,
Aux célestes forêts, mythiques citadelles
Inclinaient l'immense douleur de leurs fronts las.

Leurs seins aigus vibrant d'inapaisés sanglots
Aux baisers ténébreux d'un invisible archange
Elles se déroulaient en leur cadence étrange,
Comme une mer d'albâtre aux harmonieux flots.

"Décor romanesque", "Prière", "Les Bannis", "Le Cygne supérieur", "Les Reines de Thulé", "L'Évocation sacrilège", "Rêverie", "Les Baigneuses aux cygnes", such are the titles of these pieces - of which an impression of the general character is given in this verse (from "Décor romanesque"):

1. RI March 1891. Also recited, 'Soirée de La Plume' of 17 Jan.1891.
2. La Conque 1 Aug. 1891; "Lacrimaver Virgines".
3. Ibid. July and September 1891.
6. RI June 1892.
Et silences! Mais les exquisites insignes
- En ce décor de moyen-âge - de ces roses
Que sèment, en l'envol macré d'ailes de cygnes,
La Cypris nue en la douceur des satins roses!

There is then, at first sight little profound difference between Mauclair's verse and the current productions of other poets of whom he disapproved. Perhaps we must look for an explanation of this conflict in his particular convictions.

We have established to some extent that Mauclair was convinced of the sanctified, specially consecrated nature of Art and the artist. It is however extremely difficult to decide categorically, from a mere group of words such as a poem, or a mere arrangement of colours such as a painting, if the artist has fulfilled the deep function of the poet-priest. Perhaps he did so, and we are incapable of appreciating his method, or his method is too delicate, too robust, too personal. Mauclair however was a critic. That is to say that from the first things he wrote he was able to decide, to turn a preference into a principle. Often too, because one knows the artist, and can hear him expound why, and how, it becomes easier to appreciate, to approve, or conversely to dislike, to disapprove. Much of Mauclair's attitude stems first and foremost from an instinctive conviction that Art is a higher, better plane of existence, accessible to a very few, and second from personal sympathies with living artists whose work satisfied to a greater or lesser degree his initial conviction.

In one of the very first critical reviews Mauclair wrote, on Abel Pelletier's *Le Poème de la chair*, he emphasised the moral importance of the book in contrast with other work of the times:
Voici, enfin, parmi les jongleries du Verbe trahissant l'impuissance de penser et les abdications pessimistes d'une jeunesse sans énergie, un livre sain et viril, où l'auteur a exprimé en une langue sobre et pourtant plein de trouvailles, des idées personnelles sur un thème rabattu, idées dont il a su tirer de fières et consolantes conclusions.

For Mauclair, this is a work of dignity, frankness, severity and strength. But we should not forget that Mauclair was an intimate friend of the author - though this fact does not negate the value of either book or opinion.

There is another point. In this review, Mauclair clearly thinks of himself and Pelletier as members of a new generation, who are not afraid to accept life (La Vie acceptée was to be the title of Pelletier's next book), and who refuse the pessimism of their elders.

It is however difficult to see whom Mauclair thinks of as his elders. Discussing Pelletier's style he exclaims:

Cette oeuvre de travailleur est écrite en une langue serrée, ardue, toute d'abstraction, qui lasserà vite les passants et exaspèrera les symbolo-instrumentistes...

which makes us think of his criticisms of "Raynaud, Vanor et autres dits : symbolistes" or of Merrill who had not made sufficient effort in Les Fastes.

As early as September 1889, when Mauclair wrote to Pelletier to discuss his system of articles dealing with the individual painters and not the schools of painting, he advised:

Je vous engagerais même à suivre la même ligne de conduite pour votre éreintement des décadents, car enfin Paul Verlaine n'est pas René Ghil etc...

1. La Plume 15 Jan. 1891. Pelletier's book was published by Vanier in 1890.
Then he continued with this statement which tends towards an involvement with the personality, or, in the case of Poe and Baudelaire for example, with the legendary presence of the artist:

Je crois fermement qu'une étude personnelle gagne plus en intérêt, par le prestige de l'actualité, qu'une dissertation sévère sur les théories purement abstraites, qui sont affaires de lettres.

Almost two years later Mauclair wrote to Pelletier in a manner which leaves no doubt about his opinions of certain symbolists. One rather important observation must however be made. In 1890 and 1891 Pelletier was absent from Paris, on military service. At the same time Mauclair, for whom the name "decadents" must, in 1889, have represented a fairly vague group of artists, was becoming more and more involved in the decadent, or by that time, symbolist world and was learning to distinguish between artists who were of the type sympathetic to him, and others, whom he never cared for. Who these were, this letter clearly shows:

L'autre jour j'allai chez Mazel à l'Ermitage, en pleine gueule du loup symbolard, parmi les julien leclercq hirsutes, de longanimes alberts-saint-pauls, de fulginieux Dauphineuniers, d'atroces Auriers, etc.

On dit là un mal horrible de toute la Revue indépendante. Je me suis amusé à insulter froidement tous ces gens en plein salon de Mazel, qui en ouvrait une bouche grande comme un vers de Moréas. J'ai même été d'une impertinence si délicieuse que M. Julien Leclercq l'Hirsute s'est fâché et a quitté le théâtre de la querelle. Seul fut gentil Stuart Merrill, que j'ai commencé par éreinter, et que je découvre tout à fait charmant et intelligent. Mais tous ces symbolards! Quelle réunion d'êtres saumâtres.

Only five days later Mauclair informed Gide "Quand je sors, c'est

1. This may explain his seemingly indifferent mention to Pelletier that it could be 'useful' to meet Mallarmé.
2. Mauclair to Pelletier, 12 Sept. 1891.
pour aller dire des bêtises à Stuart Merrill qui est exquis";¹ in December, as we have seen, Mauclair collaborated with Merrill and Retté on Le Geste au Roy for the Théâtre d'Art. Does this friendship of September not contrast with the violent criticisms of June? The difficulty about the desire to find in an artist's work evidence of the search for "quality", as opposed to correct but empty art, is that one of the elements of appreciation may become the artist's character; perhaps it is easier to enjoy Moreau's representation of mythology if one has heard the artist himself speak on the theme.

On returning to Mauclair's opinions as expressed to Pelletier, we may see that in the early nineties he is falling increasingly under the sway of certain personalities of the salons, reviews, and artistic milieu he was frequenting. He must have had to reform his opinions as his knowledge of the aims and ideas expressed in these groups grew. But his acceptance of these ideas and aims was not permanent. He was not to emerge unaltered from his "Symbolist period" but many of the reasons why he rejected Symbolism are already present in his strictures concerning the decadents as we have seen in letters and reviews.

The search for moral values, even in the form of sincere artistic commitment, tends ultimately to involve the moral presence of the artist himself. This is why Mauclair could later write about his early years:

Les jeunes éléphants et stricts allaient plutôt du côté de Mallarmé et du Mercure de France, les bohèmes tenaient pour Verlaine, le quartier, sous-sol du café du Soleil d'Or, place Saint-Michel, chaque samedi.²

¹. Mauclair to Gide, 17 Sept. 1891.
². SGL, p.20.
Already, by March 1891 Mauclair had ceased to frequent the 'soirées de La Plume' to which he refers here; by May he had written his first letter to Mallarmé.

Even if we make allowances in reading this letter for the understandably humble, awe-inspired tone, nevertheless it shows without any doubt that Mauclair had undergone some kind of intellectual experience akin to a conversion; perhaps it was at this time his ideas on the decadents began to be more discriminating:

Maitre, il y a bientôt trois ans que je garde au fond de moi pour votre œuvre et votre caractère une admiration profonde, et que tout en vous m'est la sûre lumière vers la conception d'art que je me suis formée. Mais je ne pensais pas avoir le droit de chercher à vous connaître, tant qu'en moi ne se serait levée une idée, hors des tâtonnements et des pastiches obscures de l'enfant que je suis encore. Bien que, d'instinct, les fragments où l'on parlait de vous, où des jeunes gens disaient de vos idées ce que votre parole avait laissé transparaître, bien que des phrases et des strophes m'eussent fait voir en vous l'homme à aimer et à suivre, je persistais à lire, à travailler, à sonder, pour trouver contre le doute de moi-même une sûre conviction. Aujourd'hui, j'ai pressenti quelque chose. Mais des ambiguïtés m'effraient, des hésitations me prennent. J'ai peur que mes idées ne soient point à moi, qu'imprégné de vos œuvres et de vos théories, je n'aie pris pour une lumière intérieure leur lucide reflet. J'ai, à l'heure où je pense avoir trouvé, l'angoisse de n'être que votre inconscient élève, et je me méserais trop si, votre œuvre révélée, je pourrais être accusé de l'avoir imitée.1

Mauclair's admiration for the older man is too evident for this letter to be an insincere way to be invited to the Mardis; as Mauclair himself pointed out, he could have come to the Mardis with one or another of his young friends, but, such was his desire to discuss his half-formed ideas, with the person who had been so great an inspiration, that he asks for permission to visit Mallarmé alone.

1. Letter dated 2 May 1891.
Only with Mallarmé did he wish to discuss his unsure ideas, only to Mallarmé would he lay bare his 'âme tourmentée'.

If it is wrong to say that meeting Mallarmé completely changed Mauclair's outlook, there is no doubt that Mallarmé's moral example decided his future line of conduct. In Mallarmé he found an artist whose way of life, whose conversation, and whose work fulfilled every innate principle of Mauclair's 'love of Art'.

We should now pause at the end of 1891 in order to examine a letter Mauclair sent to Clément-Janin. It admirably defines Mauclair's preferences in poetry one year later, in late 1892, and which provides the necessary extension to the poetry and principles just described.

The letter is in the form of advice about which poems Clément-Janin should choose to illustrate two talks on 'Modern Poetry'. Although the choice of verse is fairly detailed Mauclair does stress that it is hardly systematic or rigorous; therefore its value for us is that it is probably closer to a list of personal preferences than to a cogent detached résumé of contemporary poetry.

The time limit imposed by a talk immediately rules out poets such as Laforgue and Saint-Pol-Roux, who, in any case are perhaps too 'special' for the general public.

The all-important influences to be stressed are those of Mallarmé - "esthétique hégélienne et idéalisme symbolique de Fichte" and of Verlaine - "mysticité sensualistes et surtout influence de la langue et des rythmes".

The former may be illustrated by l'Azur or Les Fenêtres or by

passages from Hérodiade, "le génie est partout"; the latter by poems from Sagesse, La Bonne Chanson, or more specifically, Crimen Amoris or Mains from Parallèlement. It is interesting that, especially in the first two books Mauclain chooses works of more specific moral content.

Thereafter, there will only be time for the best; Kahn, Morice, Rette, Dubus, "et autres coupeurs de fil en 36" must be firmly rejected - unfortunately, Verlaine's example only led to such cretins and "babas"! As for Merrill, he could be included if necessary, but Mauclain maintains his earlier opinions: "c'est joli de forme mais creux".

Among the best are first the "Neo-Parnassians" : Mikhaël, (À celle qui aima le cloître, if Florimond is too long), who is the master of Régnier, whose work is all admirable, of Quillard (parts of La Gloire du Verbe or La Fille aux mains coupées) and of Tallhade, whose Ballades are not suitable for recitation, but who has written exquisite verse in Vitraux.

Moréas is the only "Roman" worthy of consideration:

Faites dire, de cet étonnant Pélerin passionné, soit Madeleine aux serpents, soit Une jeune fille pâle et les Étrennes de Douce : ou bien, si la langue vous effroie, les Cantilènes vous offriront des sonnets achevés, ou des chansons assonancées comme Margé, ou surtout, - je n'y songeais plus! la pièce qui commence La Détresse dit - c'est peut-être la plus belle...

The best 'vers-libres' are to be found in the work of Vielé-Griffin, in Le Porcher or in Eurythmie.

Then Mauclair continues with the rather surprising declaration:

Reste un seul qui procède de Mallarmé; c'est votre serviteur....

and in a résumé:
Mallarméens: Ego nec pluribus impar..

Although this declaration may seem presumptuous, it is true that towards the end of 1891 and after, Mauclair did write some verse which clearly shows the stamp of Mallarmé's influence. Perhaps he was overstating his case as the sole inheritor of the great tradition in order to impress his colleague, or perhaps he was really thinking of work such as:

Né de l'éther où s'irradie,
Luxe des nocturnes soieries,
L'harmonieuse fuite ourdie
Des elliptiques pierrerries,
L'arc, chu d'une main alourdie
Crispe au ciel ses orfèvreries,
Tandis qu'une flûte étourdied
En bucoliques railleries
Évoque un front tors de satyre
Dont la ride et l'obscène rire
Insultent le chasseur funeste,
Naïf précurseur des désastres
Que prophétise au seuil céleste
L'éperdu vertige des Astres.

This is the first of seven sonnets under the collective title of Sensations and specifically dedicated to Mallarmé.¹ They are not without charm and effectiveness.

Better examples of Mauclair the 'mallarméen' are perhaps the two sonnets which Mauclair gave to La Conque, also at the end of 1891;² these are the sonnets which he had included in a letter to Gide in September. That of December is worth quoting in its entirety:

L'Attente ce soir d'or, de quelque vert fantôme
Émergé ruisselant de l'eau froide des glaces
Exagère le vol imprévu de l'atome
Aux factions soleils des bougeoirs, et si lasses

---

Nos âmes, que voici s'instaurer en des grâces
De squelettes fardés de la poudre d'un tome
Tout un cortège de bouffons aux cent grimaces
Souillant la nuit de son carnaval polychrome.

Le livre sacrilège avec l'ennui tua
L'Hérodiade ou le Narcisse qu'espéra
Notre attente qui s'épouvante et qui desire ;
Et s'exalte sur la déroute en ton espoir
Coeur lâche épris de quelque héroïque délire,
L'or muet de la glace morte dans ce soir.

Nevertheless this is not a mere pastiche; it is especially useful to know that this poem was first sent to Gide, because it expresses obliquely the position many young artists found themselves in, at the threshold of knowledge and expression. Mauclair uses the tone, the style, and often too the language of Mallarmé to express feelings of his own. Many of the 'motifs' used in his poetry after late 1891 are directly Mallarmean but these should perhaps be interpreted in a manner particular to Mauclair and which predicts the future development of his aesthetic.

A good example of this 'personal expression' is to be found in the essay (in prose) entitled "Feuillets vierges".¹ This is a skillful display of the feelings inspired in Mauclair by the sight of the pure, unsullied white pages gleaming in the lamp-light on his desk. His first reaction is one of impotence, of insufficiency :

Je ne crois pas que nul courage humain se puisse ériger en face de cette épouvante idée d'enclorre la majesté du rêve en la sépulture de l'encre, et de diluer l'aromale quintessence de l'infini en ces feuillets que le premier souffle dispersera par le monde.

His next thought is that since the blank page is destined always to be stained, then their function must be that of "intermédiaires de l'invisible et du mystère qui se dénomme : l'âme d'autrui." Bearing

¹. RBche Dec. 1891, p.175.
this in mind, one reason alone is valid for the unavoidable desecration:

elles sont pures comme la couche nuptiale où l'idée au verbe se dédie, et la pensée de cette mission peut seule permettre de cogiter sans horreur leur profanation inéluctable.

For the rest of his life, and especially in his critical articles, this was the justification Mauclair advanced for what he wrote in his role as intermediary on behalf of "l'âme d'autrui".

One essential term of the artist's dilemma in front of the pure white page remains to be mentioned - the symbolic virginity of the page cannot be lightly desecrated:

Mais ces dépositaires du plus parfait symbole que l'homme puisse concevoir après le crépuscule sont les immaculées inspiratrices d'un préliminaire respect : nulle méprisable alliance de verbes impuissants, inutiles, ou adonnés à l'impure gaité ne leur doit être offerte.

It may be assumed then that although Mauclair felt the same impotence before the blank page, and by extension, before the possible expression of the Ideal as did Mallarmé, he had however resolved the dilemma in his own way.

Towards the end of September 1891 he wrote to Gide this opinion which succinctly sums up his attitude:

Je t'estime de voir clair dans l'impossible qu'il y a à suivre Mallarmé, qui est un captif enchanté dans un tour de cristal : écoutons le chant, n'envions pas la muraille lumineuse, marcher est doux.

Mauclair profoundly admired Mallarmé, but he had to be able to express his own Idealism in his own terms.

In 1892 and 1893 Mauclair wrote several pieces of verse which, though not radically different from those of 1891, are enriched with the symbolic evocation of crystal, mirrors, and purity:
Ah! pauvre âme pareille à ces oiseaux qu'enlace
Un décor de tenture au cristal des croisées!
La candide Psyché que baigne, pâle glace,
Ton émeraude étente au reflet des croisées.¹

Poems such as "Pentacle", ² "Hymnaire pour la princesse fabuleuse", ³ and "Yeux clos"⁴ are slow, regular sonnets, or, in the case of the last, a series of quatrains, which are descriptions, by symbolic allegory, of states of mind, of the poet before the Ideal. The longest and most effective of these, because the initial 'situation' is simpler, less over-wrought is "Narcisse".

This was published in July 1892, with the significant dedication to André Gide, whose Traité du Narcisse had appeared at the end of 1891.⁵ Gide must have seen Mauclair's "Narcisse" in manuscript, because as early as May 19th 1892 Mauclair thanked him for his appreciation of it, and continued:

...n'est-ce pas vraiment qu'il y a là des vers, et des rythmes, et une sensibilité? Je suis content de cet essai pour ces trois raisons. Tes vers, mon Dieu, sont plus près des miens que tu ne le penses; ils sont aussi des états d'âme transposés. Mon décor est mythologique, soit: mais au fond c'est moi qui parle.

Mauclair later included "Narcisse" in Sonatines d'automne, when he added the subtitle 'fragment' and omitted the first eight lines of the text as it appeared in Le Revue blanche. This omission

1. La Syrinx Feb. 1892. Dedicated to Henri de Régnier.
2. Ibid. April 1892. Dedicated to Valéry who was more than a little taken aback as a letter to Gide at the end of April shows. (No.95, Gallimard edition.)
3. L'Ermitage Feb. 1893. This is a series of four sonnets entitled: "Orgueil", "Seule", "Lueur douce", and "Fiancailles". Dedicated to Merrill.
5. According to Naville, Bibliographie d'André Gide, an edition of some twenty copies appeared 'Hors commerce' in 1891. The first commercial edition of eighty-one copies appeared in 1892. Since Mauclair mentions Gide's Narcisse to Gide in a letter of Jan. 30 1892, it is probable that he had read the first edition. He also reviewed the Traité du Narcisse briefly in EAL in June 1892: "Voilà des paroles que les Morice et les Kahn n'eussent jamais pu formuler...."
may well represent his wish to make the poem more intrinsically symbolic, for the missing lines set the scene more firmly, because they describe what is reflected in the background of the pool:

Un ciel d'or maladif pleure, s'empourpre et brûle
Dans l'eau fragile d'une source au crépuscule.

So it is that the dusk and the crimson setting sun, symbols of that elusive 'au-delà', are part of the reflection towards which Narcissus vainly bends his head. They lie beyond, or behind the surface of the crystal stream, on which the crimson flower of his lips is mirrored. He cannot realise his dream; he cannot reach the crimson Ideal:

Et pourtant,
L'implacable miroir me bannit, et heurtant
Ma lèvre ardente, il la glace, brisant vos roses

The myth of Narcissus must have been especially apt for the young symbolist, immured in the fervent discussion of all but that disdained Reality, and it has perhaps a particular relevance for Mauclair the idealist, who by the time of writing, because of his age and his acquired knowledge, was tending towards disillusionment and nostalgia for the simple certainties he had felt: he asks with Narcissus why he could not have turned to the simple easily realised charms of real nymphs, why was he unable to move from the contemplation of the Unattainable, so cruel, so fatal, and yet so wonderful?

Oui, j'y veux retrouver le secret vaste où sombre
Parmi l'effroi de ma jeunesse et de mes voeux,
Cet amour, grand comme la mer, et dont je veux
Embaumer au suprême souffle de mes fièvres
Cette fleur idéale!

At the same time there is too an element of resignation which was to become part of Mauclair's artistic attitude. If the Ideal cannot be attained then Narcissus has fallen in love with himself,
J'aime en moi
Cette magnificence et cet ardant émoi
De crier au grand ciel le néant de tes voiles,
Isis! et de chérir les futures étoiles,
Et vous adorant tous en moi, je suis l'Amour
Eternel!

* * *

At the same time he was writing these intricate pieces full
of Mallarmean symbolism and composed of regular verse and rhymes,
Mauclair was also experimenting with a quite different mode of ex-
pression. This was the "vers-libre", used in the simple lied-form
to express in a minor key delicate quiet ideas and the strange
traditions of folk-song.

Though one of the first of these appeared under the title of
"Lied" in November 1892, 1 it was during 1893 that most were publish-
ed, principally in Le Revue blanche, 2 but also in L'Art littéraire 3
and Le Réveil. 4

Of the 25 in Le Revue blanche the majority were included in
Somatines d'automne but it is important to note that the specific-
ally musical titles of some - Andante, Cappriccioso, Agitato, Triste,
Dolce, - were later to be omitted. The reason for this is probably
that Mauclair felt individual titles were no longer necessary since
he placed the whole volume under the tutelage of Schumann, and des-
cribed the inspiration of the poems to be this :

1. La Syrinx No. 11 (Nov. 1892)
3. In June and Sept. 1893.
4. In June, July and August.
Un homme se joue de petites sonates à lui-même,
dans la nonchalance de l'automne.

Nevertheless these poems are more than musical interpretations.

Though they will be fully discussed in relation to the book, at the
moment it is useful to quote one to show that although the form has
changed a great deal, Mauclair's symbolist preoccupations remain
the same:

Quelque chose de très grand et de très doux
Descend lentement en nous:
Quelque chose de très doux et de très fier
Comme le crépuscule, la neige ou la mer
Descend dans mon coeur amer.

O chère âme, est-ce une aile
Effeuillée en pétales frêles?
Dis, mon cher cœur, est-ce un amour
Triste dans le grand jour
Mai vermeil dans la nuit,
Qui tombe ainsi sans aucun bruit?

Qu'est-ce qui neige,
Qu'est-ce qui tombe dans notre âme?
Dis, qu'est-ce qui tombe des cieux
Dans notre âme qui se pâme?

Quelque chose de très grand et de très doux
Comme le paysage de tes yeux...
O chère âme, ce sont des larmes,
O mon cher cœur, taisons-nous. 2

He is however expressing himself differently; by repetition, by
questions, by the form and the simplicity of the language he is
leaving unsaid precisely that part which is most easily spoiled by
rhetoric.

Another type of poem published at this time was that which

1. Preface to Sonatines d'automne

--- Mauclair also wrote to Gide on 12th Sept. 1893 : "...je donne
À la Revue blanche (le dernier numéro et celui qui va paraître)
des chansons que personne n'aime sauf Beaubourg, et que moi,
j'aime mieux que tout le reste, parce que c'est de moi et que j'y invente des rythmes que Griffin ni Régnier n'avaient....
Mai quel orgueil!"

2. RBche Jan. 1893. Original title : "Dolce". Cf. SA, p.34.
is close to the tradition of the popular folk-song, (and at the same time, reminiscent of Maeterlinck's *Serres chaudes*). In this, technical devices such as the refrain, or supposed audience of ballad style, symbolic motifs similar to medieval or popular beliefs and superstitions, and repetitive, often incantory, but generally uncomplicated language, all combine to create effective and evocative verse:

Elles passèrent devant la porte du fou
- A part la danse qu'importe?
Et lui firent les yeux doux.

Il leur donna trois anneaux, le fou
- A part les baisers qu'importe?
De cheveux blonds, bruns et roux.

Elles les mirent à leurs doigts,
- A part les bijoux, qu'importe?
Et s'en allèrent dans le bois.

L'anneau blond fit sortir des moutons,
- A part la bonté, qu'importe?
Et ils errèrent à tâtons.

L'anneau brun fit sortir les écureuils,
- A part la grâce, qu'importe?
Et ils jouèrent dans les feuilles.

L'anneau roux fit sortir les loups,
- A part la mort, qu'importe?
Et les loups les mangèrent tous.

Les trois anneaux, blond, brun et roux,
- A part l'illusion, qu'importe?
Sont restés aux branches de houx.

* * *

Je cisèle des sonnets, et j'érige quelques cas de psycho-physiologie en des nouvelles de cent lignes.

So Mauclair wrote to Gide in September 1891. What the sonnets were has been seen; Mauclair's prose work of this period is also

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1. RBche. June/August 1893, entitled *Les trois sorts*; also *SA*, p.94.
worth consideration - some of it was to be collected in the volume Clefs d'or (1897).

This work consists of allegorical essays of a few pages such as "Le conte des trois petits vieux", introspective musings such as "Feuillets vierges" already mentioned, or shorter pieces which come closer to the 'poème en prose', or to the impressionistic description of a motif, though these are seldom devoid of symbolic content.

It is highly likely that Mauclair wrote more prose essays than are now known. As early as March 1891 La Plume announced Proses impressionnistes, ten "nouvelles" by Mauclair; he also wrote "chroniques" for L'Estafette and probably stories for L'Echo de Paris, but until these reviews are traced only one such piece from each is known. Elsewhere, in all of his first books, including Clefs d'or, we find under the heading "pour paraître" various intriguing titles such as Album de fantômes, proses and, using the same term as in the letter to Gide quoted above: L'Entraînement cérébral, études psychophysologiques.

Who better than Mauclair to know the influence of a particular characteristic of the body on the mind, an influence epitomised in the fevered creations of the consumptive destined to an early death? (It must be said too that such an interest with the physiological, when applied to an artist and his work, once more involves judgements or allowances of a kind not necessarily to be found in the work alone).

1. GRFS P 10 Feb. 1892.
2. These are respectively: Chronique (14 Nov. 1891) and Mer belle aux Isles sanguinaires (23 Feb. 1893).
3. In Stéphane Mallarmé, Eleusis, Sonatines d'automne, Couronne de clarté.
4. In Clefs d'or.
A good example of this special knowledge of Mauclair's is the following: in the course of a piece about the approach of winter and the death of the sun of which only the poets are aware, Mauclair describes the empathy of the season and illness:

le froid est le tueur de nos passions et de nos espoirs, que l'automne avait exaspérés: ainsi les phthisiques retrouvent au dernier degré de leur maladie des joies de vivre qu'on n'aurait pu prévoir aussi intenses; l'automne, symbole de la phtisie meurt avec les pâles créatures à pommettes roses, et la nuit, à certains frôlements contre les vitres des croisées, on reste parfois anxieux, ne sachant si ce furent des feuilles ou des âmes qu'on entendit frémir et s'envoler....

Mauclair also makes very effective use of the certainty of the early death of the consumptive in another story entitled "La Peur bleue". ¹

This describes the period before an imaginary Apocalypse, brought about by the collision of the Earth with a star which grows closer each day. This star casts an increasingly intense blue light - it is specifically, and allegorically described as 'azur' - on the Earth so that no-one can escape the terrible knowledge of imminent destruction. In the ensuing confusion and typically human chaos, one person is calm: a young man who knows that he need not fear the end of the World, for before it happens he will be dead already from the incurable disease which has sapped his strength and weakened his fluttering heart.

Mauclair certainly includes elements of personal experience when he writes: "Il ne pouvait plus quitter la demeure où sa mère pleurait jadis en silence à son chevêt..."; but what is perhaps even more personal is the feeling expressed by the young man of the story that he alone can contemplate the Ideal unscathed, because he will not be required to pay the absolute homage to it:

¹. GRPSP 10 July 1892, p.44.
Je sens que mes yeux contempleront encore cette étoile, mais que sa flamme suprême ne les brûlera et ne desséchera point leur humide éclat, car ils seront déjà ternis et desséchés par la mort. Cet imminent cataclysme ne m'émeut donc point, et j'en savourerai l'horrible splendeur jusqu'au seuil même de l'inconnu.

In a more decidedly allegorical vein, and still illustrative of Mauclair's intellectual preoccupations, we find a 'tale' such as "Le conte des trois petits vieux". These three old men may be akin to fairy-tale figures but they are to be known as the musician, the painter, and the poet. One golden evening these three decrepit beings have come together in the courtyard of an equally decrepit abandoned chapel.

First of all the musician bemoans his lot, then the painter, and then the poet. In every case their complaint is that whereas in their youth they were happily occupied creating beautiful things for princes and peasants alike to admire, now they live in an age from which all art has been dismissed. Their decrepitude is that of the arts they represent.

Suddenly, in a cloud of white light, the figure of a woman appears; she is L'Idée pure. She can give them the 'happiness' of which they have spoken:

la liberté de créer pour nous seuls les rêves que nous aimons, tout en étant assez riches pour n'être plus contraints de révéler notre œuvre et de la vendre partiellement à l'im-bécillité foraine contre le morceau de pain quotidien...

In return they must give her, L'Idée pure, concrete expression.

Each artist in turn imparts the glories and majesties at the command of his genius. As the silver dawn begins to break, at

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last the words are heard:

Je ne suis plus l'Idée d'une oeuvre...
par la symphonie de vos volontés je suis
l'Oeuvre elle-même.

With this the reward is given, in the shape of a mass of grotesque
arrogant little creatures, destined to serve the three artists, who
henceforth may sing, paint, write about the attributes of Beauty as
they wish; they need only let the crowd of dwarfs interpret their
work to find honour and prestige:

Car en ces êtres sont encloses toutes les
fausses Idées que les peuples arrogants
et vils s'étaient faites de moi (L'Idée
pure). Ce sont les Âmes de la foule.
Je vous les livre.

The irony of this and of the final conclusion is unmistakable. This
is another statement of the function of the poet-priest, faced with
the impossibility of compromise between the Ideal and the Banal:

Ne livrez aux nations que l'écho de vos
pensées déformé par ces gnômes bavards,
et vous resterez pour jamais introublés
devant votre Rêve.

There is a strange analogy between the three old men who re-
gain their youth and vigour and accept the 'mask' they have been
offered, and Mauclair who too was to regain his health and adopt a
similar mask. When irony becomes necessity, can one be sure that
one is remaining true to the Ideal, and is not slowly giving the
'gnomes' what they wish to hear?

"Tristesse de la Pourpre"¹ is similar to the previous 'tale'
in that it concerns the relationship between the Ideal and the ar-
tist, the Poet and la Pourpre.

Some indication of the value Mauclair attaches to the symbol

¹. Rhythm April 1892.
of la Pourpre may be suggested by this passage from a Belgian review:

Je suis un être bien dangereux; je réduis le bien à une couleur et le mal à une autre. J'agis toujours selon la Pourpre et j'ai la haine du gris terne. Pourrez-vous supporter en votre société un homme qui n'a point de plus solide critérium moral? Il vous faut tant de dogmes pour être probes que vous ne pouvez fonder votre tranquillité sur cette seule disposition de ma rétine. Pourtant tout cela égale juste une nuance optique pour moi; qu'y ferai-je? Si vous étiez assez bons pour décréter que la Pourpre est morale et le gris terne criminel...

Bearing this positive identification of moral values with the 'opposite' colours of crimson and grey, it is interesting to read, in a letter to Gide that Mauclair declares that he 'sees' crimson, not grey; this corresponds to the feeling of perfect well-being he had just described.

Similarly, in another letter telling Gide that he had not long to live, Mauclair wrote that he was not afraid of death because, for him death presents no terrors:

La mort, ça doit être comme un finale de Haydn.
Je t'assure que ça doit être ça; ou bien alors un nocturne de Chopin avec des rais de soleil pourpre sur des mains de femme qui jouent. Ou bien encore quelque chose de mauve, comme les iris, et de penché comme les fleurs dans les fonds de Botticelli...

Oui, la mort, c'est mauve, couleur crépuscule, du calme, du mourant, de la joie d'agonie.

It is evident then that crimson, or mauve, or purple, these are the colours associated with the 'au-delà'; they are the symbol of something infinite, unformulated and yet felt instinctively to be 'good', beneficial, comforting even. They are the colours of the greater

1. Floréal: "Feuilles Mortes", May/June 1892.
2. Letter of 8 August 1892.
3. Letter of 6 October 1891.
current of Life beyond ordinary existence.

The allegory "Tristesse de la Pourpre" begins in an indefinite time past, or present, with the statement that "the poets" had become cowards and doubters; they no longer dared to be poets and to proclaim the forces and mysteries surrounding them - "la Pourpre qui est le manteau du bien et dont les Idées sont les franges" - they had let themselves be persuaded that these things no longer mattered; they had begun to envy the persuasive but empty words of the politicians - without using such words themselves because they were incapable of believing them.

Ainsi, ils étaient très misérables parce qu'ils n'osaient avoir conscience de leur conscience, lâches en vérité comme des femmes.

At last one poet stood up and summoned them to face up to their cowardice and to look into themselves, then to re-assemble so that each could tell how he had thought it best to serve la Pourpre.

This was done. The first had proclaimed la Pourpre to the Crowd - but had had no reaction. The answer came that la Pourpre may not be blatantly displayed to the Crowd; by saying "this is the purple", it ceases to be so.

The second had remained silent, sure of the unmistakable conviction emanating from him - but without effect. To this the answer was that his conviction had not been absolute enough or it could not have failed to rivet the attention of the Crowd.

When the third rose to speak, he claimed that he had brought together wise men and had told them such wonderful truths that they immediately shut these truths away to preserve them and to keep them from profanation. Again the answer was given: Who had the right to extinguish the light in this way; could the so-called profanation not
have been the seed for rebirth?

The fourth poet declared that he had remained alone, and had so embellished his mind that the beauty in him could be absorbed by others. Yet this was serving himself alone. La Pourpre had to become so powerful that it alone surpassed his mind — this had not been so.

After this answer, the others present pointed silently to whichever poet had acted as they had; there were no exceptions. Only then did they realise that he who had answered them all had gone — he had been La Pourpre, who had nowhere found a worthy poet.

After this answer, the others present pointed silently to whichever poet had acted as they had; there were no exceptions. Only then did they realise that he who had answered them all had gone — he had been La Pourpre, who had nowhere found a worthy poet.

This, the final paragraph of the parable, is quoted to show how Mauclair leaves unstated the answer which the poets ought to have given; perhaps this is because there is none, and the only virtue is in the attempt to find one and not to turn defeated to le gris criminel, the easy solution. The passage also shows how Mauclair could make good use of a long flowing sentence using positive and negative statements to create a symbolic atmosphere.

"Avoir conscience de sa conscience", that is also the theme
of another essay entitled, significantly: "L'Ame frêle". This story is told in a manner reminiscent of Poe, for the reader is the person to whom the speaker addresses himself, a speaker with an air of strangeness, madness in his eyes, who insists all along on the veracity and sanity of his tale.

He had always been unhappy and misunderstood, as a child, in love, in any relationship with others. Nothing of any consequence had ever happened to him. Then he gradually began to realise that the only consolation he could expect was to be found within himself.

In this way he came to happiness:

So far Mauclair has described a situation which might be that of many lonely people. The speaker continues however by telling how he cultivated this new conviction of his, and, in order to explain it better, this is the image he uses of "cette âme chérie":

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1. Le Figaro - Supplément littéraire 14 May 1892. Republished Clefs d'or. On publication the intended dedication to Gide was omitted. (Cf. Mauclair to Gide, 19 May 1892).
Once again here is spiritual well-being symbolised by dusk and la Pourpre.

The essay comes to a climax when in a rush of words, repetitions, exclamations and phrases of childish usage, the speaker tells how happy he now is and how little he cares for the jealousy of other people who think him mad, but who secretly would wish for the insight he possesses. Cleverly, by the vocabulary and phrasing, Mauclair reveals in us, the listeners, a similar momentary dilemma: someone who speaks like this must be crazed.... and yet how fortunate he is to know so well his "vibrante et fragile et joyeuse âme de cristal"!

The theme of the search for self-knowledge is also symbolically expressed in "Mer belle aux Isles sanguinaires".¹ This story was later incorporated in the 'roman féerique' Couronne de clarté, and will be discussed in detail with this book. For the present it is sufficient to isolate from it certain passages revelant to the symbols found in other work of the same date.

A group of young men have set out on the sea of Life, they come to three blood-red islands, which as we shall see are the three stages of the pursuit of the Ideal through Life. Here they are at the threshold of their adventure:

Nos âmes étaient fibres, et l'aventure glorieuse les exaltait, d'ainsi toucher indubitablement à ces îles de hantise, dont la pourpre célèbre et inconnue n'avait encore ébloui que les rêves de nos veillées et de nos somnolences.

From island to island they go, seeking the reason for the strange

¹. L'Echo de Paris illustré 26 Feb. 1893. This review is not to be found in B.N. Part of the relevant number, with the story, was found with the papers of Abel Pelletier. It is this story which may have inspired the first movement of Debussy's La Mer. Cf. Lockspeiser, op.cit.
crimson which surrounds them. On each island they meet beings who are really reflections of themselves and of their passage through life. Not until the last of the islands is this explanation given:

La clarté pourpre est le reflet de la rouge rouille féconde de ces terres. Et cette rouille figée est le sang éternel des habitants de nos trois Îles, qui des blessures de leur cœur ruisselle perpétuellement, et peu à peu se stérilise. Ils l'épandent toute leur vie; ceux de la première Île [de la Connaissance] ont des veines riches, héritières de beauté et de désir, et leurs floraisons sont opulentes. Ceux de la seconde Île [du Doute] ont déjà le sang plus pâle et déprécié, car la lutte pour la vérité est rude. Et nous, [de l'Île de la Certitude, ou du Dégoût] qui avons appris, notre sang est clari-fié et aveuli, et voici qu'il flue en ore blême. Ainsi de plus en plus absorbés par la connaissance des choses, nous allons tranquillement vers la minute où, les possédant toutes, nous aurons abdiqué notre chair.

Only now the voyagers realise that they too have become old and white-haired like the inhabitants of the third island; they turn to flee, but the wind has carried their vessel from the shore, it lies out of reach, its white sails outspread like a Swan in the middle of the crimson ocean. In this final symbol Mauclair sums up the enigma of existence.

In the prose considered so far, irony has been present, but it becomes much more outspoken - to the point of satire in "Le Vendeur des Larmes", subtitled "histoire naïve".¹

Of course this story is anything but naive. It tells of an old angel who is dissatisfied with his salary as "Directeur du service locomotif des planètes de dix-septième grandeur". He obtains permission to come to Earth to look for a more lucrative employment. There is something Voltairian about this opening; the satire in the next part is patent:

¹. CRSP 25 Sept. 1892.
Dès l’abord il ne songea point à ouvrir une fabrique de tableaux anciens, à entrer au Figaro, à être ministre des finances, ou à fréquenter chez les banquiers, moyens communément employés pour s’enrichir.

He finds a much subtler and richer vein to exploit: he buys tears from the poor who have so many reasons for weeping, and such a great need for the payment he offers, in order to resell them to the rich hypocrites who can afford to buy them, but who do not possess the true feeling necessary to put on a show of grief at funerals and the like.

However the consequences of this delightful speculation are amusingly paradoxical, for the poor grow rich and so have less reason to weep and the rich are consumed with indignation that the poor are 'getting above their station', as they can afford handkerchiefs to wipe their tears away!

This state of affairs calls forth this comment - and let us not forget Mauclair the anarchist as we read it:

Les romanciers aristocratiques et les prédateurs à la mode firent là-dessus de jolies pages et de séduisantes homélies dont l'universelle conclusion fut que les pauvres méritaient absolument de crever de faim, pour l'éternité sociale, et qu'ils monopolisaient tous les vices.

Because of this reasoning, revolutionary hatred welled up in the throats of the poor who had, because of selling tears, tasted something of luxury. At this point, the angel simply withdraws, and leaves the World to its own devices.

Before leaving however, he is persuaded to purchase the tears of an old woman desperately needing money to save the life of her only grandson. These priceless tears he resells to a young poet who then cynically explains that he is incapable of conjuring up enough feeling to be able to write a poem fittingly sublime to his lost love,
in order to fulfil the expectations of the journalists, and gain the
favours of the noble ladies' salons needed to open the doors of the
Academies.

The old angel by now is thoroughly disgusted with humanity; and
yet he is moved once more to buy the tears of a young girl weeping for
her dead lover - these tears surely will be worth keeping. When even
she gaily uses the money to buy a necklace, he sadly pours away her
tears into the gutter, and then returns as quickly as possible, "juge-
ant que la mesure était urgente, s'il ne voulait pas devenir romancier
naturalistes."

If, to be a Zola, one must be totally disillusioned, and have
seen the depths of human hypocrisy, then that is not for Mauclair. On
the other hand he has explicitly condemned the emptiness and 'arri-
visme' of poets who could be of his own generation, as well as the ill-
usory social superiority of novelists who are devoid of intellectual
superiority.

Mauclair's irony in this tale is not only literary but social,
and it is true to say that by this time, late 1892, he was in a posit-
tion to have had a large experience of the types he describes. It is
doubly interesting to remember that this story is dedicated to Georges
Rochegrosse, and at the time of publication Mauclair was staying at
the Rochegrosse home, far from Paris, and, as he wrote to Clément-
Janin: "exempt du menu bavardage des gensdelettres - oh! qu'ils sont
laisd et grotesques, vus de loin..." 1

Mauclair's prose works are particularly effective because,
like his simple lieder, in them his talent is allowed freer express-
ion. He needs the relative freedom prose allows to exercise his

1. Unpublished letter of 7 Sept. 1892 (B.A.A.)
fluency, just as he needed the 'vers-libre' to be able to avoid the box-like container of regular verse and rhymes. His subject matter is not factual or precise; it benefits from the fact that his sentence can develop over several phrases, so that the symbolic presence of the subject may become obvious, rather than be strictly delineated. The conclusion of "Tristesse de la Pourpre" or the passage quoted concerning the meaning of la Pourpre in "Mer belle aux Iles sanguinaires" are good examples of this.

On the other hand Mauclair's prose does border on the fulsome, and the overstatement. The short story, as opposed to the novel, is however less marred by this. In fact, in Mauclair's case, because it imposes immediate limits, then the subject benefits from the resultant controlled elaborateness. In turn, this elaborateness, which is often demanded by the subject, is lightened by the internal divisions which often appear in the tales. The speeches of the three "petits vieux", the arrival at and the description of the three "Iles sanguinaires", the experiences of the four seekers of la Pourpre these create minor blocks of interest. Often such a construction calls for repetition; nevertheless tediousness is generally avoided because Mauclair has the skill to vary these repetitions by his vocabulary, and indeed thereby enhances the fairy-tale, unreal, symbolic atmosphere he wishes to create.

In the light of this, it is curious that much of Mauclair's skill in prose depends on the very real talent he had for pure description. His is the observer's eye, attentive to every detail of the sick-room of the fever-ridden consumptive, or of the hot-house of the poetical aspirations and soul-searching of his contemporaries.

As may be expected, this talent for description was not put to
the service of Realism, but was used to give a deeper meaning to the thing described. A striking example of this is to be found in an article\(^1\) which Mauclair wrote on the "Mur des Fédérés" in the Père-Lachaise cemetery. His visit took place on Toussaint when the sky was overcast, it was cold, the trees were bare. The description of the wall itself consists of lines, of hard-sounding verbs and an accumulation of phrases like the gun fire of twenty years before. Now there is silence, faded, rotten wreaths. The only colours used are white, grey, black, and 'jaunâtre' applied to the mud. Above the wall can be seen the jagged roofs of the miserable proletarian quarter...

Yet the place has this symbolic value: here men died for a conviction, for an Idea.

It should not be forgotten that Mauclair was also a painter. He had that gift sometimes called the 'painter's eye'. In a series of short pieces of prose entitled simply 'Images'\(^2\) he displayed this gift of putting into words the odd little daily sights we pass over every day, and combining with them a deeper meaning:

Quelle calamité comparable à une ombre d'homme, étendue comme une peau derrière lui avec des hochements flasques? Et s'il bouge, elle l'invite servilement, hypocrite comme le lierre, penchée sur le vide de sa vie ainsi qu'un branchage. Chacun traîne, attaché à ses deux talons, ce prétentieux cadavre bouffi, qui va zigzaguant, se contorsionne sur les murs frôlés, et n'a pas d'yeux. Parfois il va par derrière, et soudain accourt à droite ou à gauche, s'allonge devant le passant jusqu'au terme de sa vie, jusqu'à ce qu'il n'atteindra jamais. Et à travers cette ombre on voit les taches du trottoir, les infâmes crachats, les cailloux, les détritus, et tout — ainsi que par transparence les événements défilent dans la conscience, mince comme la peau du lait.

\(^1\) Probably destined for L'Estafette of November 1891, this article is in manuscript among the papers of Clément-Janin (B.A.A.) to whom it was dedicated.
\(^2\) L'Art littéraire Nov. 1893.
It is perhaps unfortunate that Mauclair did not write more prose in this vein. His dexterity in combining sounds, sights, and deliberate comment by metaphor or simile is admirably demonstrated elsewhere in these "Images". He described poor children huddled in mud and misery in doorways; their hungry eyes are sometimes "effrayants comme le chant de l'alouette derrière la porte d'un mort"; their hair is smoothed by thin Insomnia and the rain, they cough in chorus with the lonely footfalls of the last passerby in the deserted streets, "lorsque les becs de gaz graissent les ruisseaux huileux de leurs reflets dégoutants, jaunis par la rancune du silence".

* * *

Tentez le théâtre, pour faire crier à des êtres vos joies et vos douleurs.1

For young men like Mauclair at the beginning of the 1890's, drama must have seemed like the most direct, the most immediate way of making their opinions felt, a more dynamic and possibly farther reaching method than that of the review article. A play may introduce an element of argument, it may be performed by a group of like-minded young people without the grudging intervention of a publisher, it can even be short, fragmentary almost, because in 'experimental theatre' it can be included on a programme with several other pieces. There is something of this in the attraction the theatre held for Mauclair.

However, he was well aware of the disadvantages. Both the difficulty of finding sufficient finances, and that of finding true

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symbolist drama had been painfully highlighted by Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art. Some of the theoretical advantages of the stage, the immediacy, the tangible presence of the actors, become disadvantages in a symbolist concept of drama unless a fundamental change in traditional dramatic writing and presentation is admitted.

_Pelléas et Méliande_, performed in May 1893 was a striking example of this attempt to produce symbolist drama; Mauclair played a large part in this production and in the subsequent birth of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. This section is intended to show how Mauclair's contribution to the success of _Pelléas et Méliande_ was the result of several years' thought on the form and principles of drama.

* * *

Un mot de vous, mon cher maître, me frappa lors de notre première entrevue : le théâtre, la fin d'un art. Pourquoi mon esprit de "bouche close" ne protesta-t-il pas tout de suite? Et pourtant, en moi, il y avait tant de choses qui protestaient! (...) J'ai foi en une Renaissance où le théâtre resplendra, sera l'art-type, plus vaste encore que Parsifal ou Tristan.

Such was the declaration Mauclair made to Mallarmé in October 1891. He went on to explain that although he is aware of the difficulties involved, the experience needed, and the pretentions of Youth, he has written a three-act play in conformity with his dramatic opinions. His mentors? : Carlyle, Racine, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, Wagner, and of course Mallarmé himself, in his Notes sur le théâtre in _La Revue indépendante_. The result? : "une pièce de passion, sans artifices, sans trucs, sans scène à faire."

His play had been accepted by the Théâtre d'Art. Although he did not consider himself an innovator, he felt that certain points of the play might surprise his audience, and so, to prepare the ground
for his ideas, he had written a prefatory article to explain what he had tried to illustrate in the play.

He was however dubious about the complete originality of his ideas, and so much would he hate to appear to have created an involuntary pastiche, especially of Mallarmé, that he would rather destroy both his play and the article than have this happen. He therefore wished to submit his work for critical appreciation to Mallarmé for this reason:

Je ne saurais dire quelle sincère admiration et quelle confiance sont miennes à votre égard : je suis peu enclin aux paroles prodigues, et la flatterie m'est trop intolérable pour en user même pour vous, mais ce que vous me direz, je le ferai, car je m'aperçois bien depuis un an qu'intellectuellement je n'existe à peu près que pour et par vous.

There is no reason to think that Mauclair did not take his work with him for Mallarmé's comments to the next Mardi he attended.

The play was not published, but its title was L'Inaccessible, since L'Ermitage announced a three act play by Mauclair under that title, and with it a preface - "Justification esthétique où sera proclamée une affirmation idéaliste et une tendance à la symphonie wagnérienne héritière de Parsifal et d'Axël."\(^1\)

The 'article-commentaire' on which Mauclair wanted to have Mallarmé's opinion appeared in La Revue indépendante in March 1892, possibly in anticipation of the performance of his play in April, as he had earlier announced to Gide.\(^2\) The Théâtre d'Art was abandoned.

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1. L'Ermitage Dec. 1891. Also announced in the programme of the Théâtre d'Art performance of 11 Dec. 1891, as among the plays from which the next season's productions were to be chosen. Also announced as 'Sous presse' in Le Conque of 1 Dec. 1891. It is possible that this is, under a new title, the play Deux Ames, also a three-act drama in prose which was first mentioned (to Pelletier) on May 4th 1891, and to which Mauclair was putting the final touches in mid-Sept. 1891 (letter to Gide) just a few weeks before the letter to Mallarmé quoted above.

2. In a letter of Jan. 30th 1892.
at the end of March and so the play to which Mauclair's article, "Notes sur un essai de dramaturgie symbolique", referred was never performed.

The article begins with a page or two of self-defence. Mauclair insists that his "Notes" do not amount to a manifesto, an attack, a series of recommendations or counter-proposals, but quite simply are his personal ideas on a topical subject: that of the future form of drama. He only wishes to explain the personal independent principles he would apply to his own work, and how these had been arrived at.

For him there are three distinct conceptions of drama: there is that of the Théâtre-Libre which involves the psychological analysis of the vicissitudes of modern life, but, however exciting or alive it may be, it has no symbolism, no extension beyond the confines of the stage and the subject.

Then there is Maeterlinck, for he is almost alone in creating a drama which deals with the mysteries of existence. Nevertheless, no matter how much genius Maeterlinck's metaphysical dialogues show, they remain essentially philosophical rather than dramatic.

The third conception, that which is the subject of the article, Mauclair holds to be radically different from the other two. It consists of the following elements:

Dans un décor de sensations auditives et visuelles, somptueux tout à loisir - le milieu vraisemblable étant inutile, des héros, aussi grands, aussi sublimes qu'on les voudra concevoir, parleront un langage magnifique, où la poésie resplendira; affranchis des liens terrestres, ils énonceront d'éternelles idées; autour d'eux, éblouis, des êtres d'ordre inférieur inclineront leur hommage humain: ainsi se concilieront la psychologie, la poésie, le décor, la passion, le rêve, la réalité quintessenciée, en une symphonie où tous ces éléments se purifieront des contingences.
The essence of Mauclair's conception is that it rests on the depiction on the stage of L'Idée pure, of philosophical or intellectual entities. The main actors are symbols of eternal, universal ideas; their gestures and movements must be kept to a minimum, so that no incongruity is felt between their real and their symbolic presence; they exist on a superior intellectual plane.

The dramatic action will be transferred to the 'comparses' who are of a lower symbolic value, and serve as intermediaries between the Idea and the audience. The general audience will be able to appreciate in the play the atmosphere of the ancient 'fable'; the artists however will be able to appreciate the true splendour of L'Idée pure which the main figures symbolise.

Since the Idea is eternal and universal, the unities of time and place no longer apply, though that of action does, since a drama is the development of one or more 'idées-forces' as staged for a given period for the spectator. The complete freedom and enormous potential of the eternal as opposed to the transitory, is left to the dramatist; since the subject is ideas, passions, feelings, devoid of temporal reference to period or to psychological probabilities in a given milieu, then the language "n'énoncera évidemment que des choses d'un ordre passionnel, intellectuel ou physique, d'où : poétique."

As for scenery, in theory none is required, it should become apparent from the force of the author's words. Since however this might tend to demand too great an effort of imagination from the public, and create a sense of obscurity irrelevant to the real symbolism of the play, scenery which is purely complementary to the central symbolism might be employed; it would add subtly to the splendour of the Idea, but should have nothing in itself to distract the attention -
a forest might be suggested by gradations of green, a dawn triumph by a crimson backdrop. Similarly, since time and place no longer apply, costume is freed from useless demands of 'local colour'.

No one could be more aware of the weaknesses and the ambitiousness of his theory than Mauclair himself. In his defence he repeated:

Cette théorie, on pourra, comme toutes les hypothèses proposées, la discuter : il sera surtout aisé de discuter les œuvres. Mais ferai-je preuve d'inconscience d'art en déclarant qu'elle est digne, à l'heure actuelle, d'intérêt et d'étude, qu'en l'impuissance du théâtre actuel, elle serait peut-être, sinon une source de rénovation, du moins l'annonciatrice d'une lointaine vision nouvelle?

It is also quite clear that Mauclair feels that the works on which he has based his theory, (and on which he had told Mallarmé he had based his play) are in some way 'guarantors' of the artistic integrity of that theory. These works, and their influences are:

La simplicité du décor et l'héroïsme des personnages - Racine, Le Héros1 - Carlyle.
La passion et la mysticité, le langage - Axél, de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. Le symphonisme des décors et des paroles, la théorie des entités symboliques - Wagner. Une philosophie idéalist - le Prométhée délivré, de Shelley.2

1. In a letter to Gide on 8th Jan. 1894 Mauclair spoke of "le Racine de Bérénice, tu sais, le vrai Racine, le beau, celui qui est notre aîné secrètement et qu'on n'ose pas dire."
   Cf. Bérénice : Préface. "Ce n'est point une nécessité qu'il y ait du sang et des morts dans une tragédie ; il suffit que l'action en soit grande, que les acteurs en soient héroïques, que les passions y soient excitées, et que tout s'y ressente de cette tristesse majestueuse qui fait tout le plaisir de la tragédie."
   How this must have pleased Mauclair the idealist.

2. Cf. Prometheus unbound, Preface : "The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed."
Une évocation verbale, un rythme et le rationalisme du symbole - M. Stéphane Mallarmé.1

The list is certainly impressive, but its very accumulation of 'quality' makes it, one feels, too specialised, too refined. What Mauclair was however concerned with was the sheer fabric of ideas, no more.

It should be remembered that it was also in March 1892 that Mauclair had joined Saint-Pol-Roux, Rochegrosse and Charpentier in the abortive attempt to become joint directors of the Odéon. In this venture too the important thing was not whether their "théâtre jeune" was really a viable proposition, but that they should take up a position, adopt a positive attitude, stop complaining that there was no outlet for the young, and try to create such an outlet. If nothing else, it was the stirring up of ideas that counted, just as was the case in Mauclair's article.

Mauclair's association with Saint-Pol-Roux at this time bore other fruit. In his "Notes sur un essai de dramaturgie symbolique" which have just been discussed, Mauclair twice made specific reference to Saint-Pol-Roux's dramatic theory "d'un symbolisme symphonique et métaphysique".2 He also pointed out how close his own theory of drama was to Saint-Pol-Roux's, especially in relation to the difference between idealism and realism, which Mauclair claimed no longer existed under his theory, and which Saint-Pol-Roux felt he had reconciled in his theory of 'ideo-realism'. However, owing no

1. Cf. in Conf. S.M.: "Tout le sourd tressaillement de rénovation dramatique qui, dans la fluctuation des pièces actuelles, secoue certains jeunes hommes... tout ce tressaillement vient de l'initiale proclamation de ces Notes [sur le théâtre]. L'Oeuvre dramatique, le grand œuvre de synthèse, morale, esthétique et métaphysique où se confinera l'art futur, cet œuvre a trouvé là ses plus indéniables principes." (p.20.)

2. Mauclair mentioned a 'lettre-interview' given by Saint-Pol-Roux to Jules Huret (L'Echo de Paris) and an article by him in MF in Jan. 1892.
doubt to the personal independent framework he had insisted was that of his article, Mauclair denies that the obvious relationship of their ideas on this point forms part of any deliberate 'movement'. It probably was true that Mauclair had reached his conclusions independently of Saint-Pol-Roux, but nevertheless, as far as the concept of ideo-realism is concerned, he owed much to the older man, and said as much elsewhere.

The notion of 'l'idéo-réalisme' will be further discussed in relation to Mauclair's book of theory Eleusis but for the moment it is useful to include this succinct definition of what the idea consisted of for him:

Mauclair admitted that the notion of "idéo-réalisme" came to him from Johann Fichte. The artistic counterpart of idealism, it cannot create an art but an artistic consciousness. It involves the perception of ideas committed to a plastic medium, whereas idealism considers ideas in themselves: "the one completes and justifies the other".  

Perhaps then Saint-Pol-Roux merely confirmed what Mauclair had already found in the ideas of Fichte, or perhaps he came to Fichte via Saint-Pol-Roux; in any case, Mauclair clearly thought of ideo-realism as applied to the plastic medium of the theatre. It is however debatable whether the extreme dramatic theory which he advocated did in fact go beyond the limitations of pure idealism. Although 'ideo realism' is not to be thought of as a compromise between idealism and realism, (for it remains totally idealistic) one might wonder whether Mauclair's theory contained sufficient realism or rather plasticity to lift it beyond the speculative, abstract state of theory. Who was to be the dramatist capable of fulfilling the elevated charge?

Although, for the purpose of his article, Mauclair had declared Maeterlinck's work to be more philosophical than dramatic, it is quite clear that at the same time he really considered his Belgian friend to be the only contemporary writer to have approached "theatrical ideo-realism" in any significant way.

The study of "L'Art de Maurice Maeterlinck" which Mauclair published in February 1892 is remarkable from several points of view. Since his admiration for Maeterlinck's work is obviously intense, enthusiasm, excitement almost, is added to his eloquent and perspicacious analysis; the article is not only sensitive, it is skilfully constructed, moving from general principles to precise examples, dealing in detail with each of the four dramas - La Princesse Maleine, Les Aveugles, L'Intruse, and Les Sept Princesses - but pausing at critical moments to emphasise the steps in philosophical development which both link and separate them; other of Maeterlinck's preoccupations: Ruysbroeck, Novalis, Carlyle, Plotinus, are alluded to, so completing the picture of his mind, and the whole is bound together in terse but comprehensive prose.

From his letter to Mallarmé in October 1891, it appears that Mauclair had formulated his dramatic theory before his study of Maeterlinck. As may be expected therefore, he retains in his study the restriction that Maeterlinck's work is more philosophical than dramatic, except perhaps for La Princesse Maleine, which in certain scenes has the dramatic intensity of Shakespeare. None the less, he whole-heartedly recognised the author who, at that time at least, was best able to fulfil part of his theory:

M. Maurice Maeterlinck est un mystique, un symboliste, et un plotinien. J'entends par là que, philosophe capitalement, il instaure en des formes d'êtres humains, par l'intermédiaire du symbole, une théorie d'idées dont ils sont

\[1. \text{EAL Feb.1892, pp.17-26.}\]
and it is this duality which Mauclair attempts to show.

Following this Mauclair moves quickly through discussions of the author's preoccupation with ineffectual human action separated by the gulf of Death from the ideal country of the Dream; of the special value of the low-relief setting, the mysterious, mist-shrouded North-land, and the resigned, pale, phantom-like characters.

*La Princesse Maleine* conveys the terror of Death, and the equality of all before Death, but, in Mauclair's eyes, has less of the symbolism which links the others to "la Signification Éternelle". This identity with the eternal is one of the first points in Mauclair's own dramatic theory.

Now, at the end of the second section of his article, Mauclair gathers up the interest of his reader and the threads of his argument by asking the rhetorical question - what was to follow the confrontation of Princes and Death? His answer is that Maeterlinck turned to the richer and more intense symbolism to be found in the souls of humbler people, first in *Les Aveugles* and then in *L'Intruse*.

Let us not forget that the first of these works had inspired Mauclair's friendship with the author. Now, some two years later, he was particularly enthusiastic about it; for here was a play which answered several of the ideas expressed in his dramatic theorising. Theunities of time and place, though applicable, are irrelevant, the scenery could be reduced to precisely that gradation of green

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1. In *SGL* (p.101) Mauclair states that Maeterlinck sent him the essays which were later to be published as *Le Trésor des humbles*; the fact that in Mauclair's writing on Maeterlinck at this time several references to "les humbles" are to be found, may substantiate this claim.
representing the forest which he had mentioned, the characters are mere incarnations of ideas despite their 'real' presence on the stage. In fact, it was just this last aspect of the play which Mauclair particularly admired. What, he asks, could the Théâtre-Libre object to in the almost 'crude' realism of *Les Aveugles*? And yet for those who knew how to appreciate it, what could be more satisfying:

..pour l'initié au rêve, de ce cadre simple jaillit le lys magnifique du symbole et de la métaphysique...

So it is with *L'Intruse*. It has a similar realistic modern setting, but the terror of Death, the unseeing eyes of the sighted, the desperate insight of the blind grand-father are timeless, universal and surpass all questions of mere scenery, just as Mauclair maintained should be the case.

Once again, to end this section, (the third), Mauclair recapitulates, in order to move forward more smoothly.

Two moods may be discerned, he tells us, *La Princesse Maleine* being the first, *L'Intruse* and *Les Aveugles* constituting the second. The difference and development between them are succinctly described:

Voilà la seconde méditation mystique de M. Maurice Maeterlinck: de plus en plus s'acheminant à l'adoration de la Mort, seul passage du monde des sens au monde plotinien des Idées, il nous avait dit en *La Princesse Maleine* la pauvreté et l'inconscient achevinement vers le Destin du monde des apparences; il nous avait dit dans *Les Aveugles* la fausse sagesse et la clairvoyance d'une foi même enfantine devant l'inconnu: voici qu'il nous a montré que pour ceux d'entre les hommes qui ont une âme sans que leurs yeux de chair retiennent de méprisables spectacles, la Mort est tangible et visible; et voici que nous demeurons tout seuls devant elle, la Dominatrice, l'Intruse du monde idéal qui vient cueillir les âmes dans le monde que nous disons réel.

1. Mauclair also commented on the double sense of *Les Aveugles* in the programme of the Théâtre d'Art for the performance of 11 Dec. 1891.
Without undue biographical interpretation, it is fair to say that Mauclair found in Maeterlinck's work not only ideas which please his artistic and idealistic opinions, but also themes and symbols to which someone who had known the approach of death, and intellectual rather than social satisfactions, would particularly respond.

Quite clearly, the remaining play, *Les Sept Princesses*, was of special interest to Mauclair. He reminds his readers that the central idea is that of Schopenhauer: the sacred world of Ideas is a fortress without a door; there is however, an underground passage which gives access to the very heart of the citadel. What Maeterlinck seems to have added is that the passage cannot be traversed without the supreme homage of death.

The seven princesses are asleep in a castle behind a crystal wall in which there is no door. Marcellus arrives by sea at the castle; his ship sails off. One of the princesses is his fiancée, but the only way for him to reach beyond the crystal wall is to follow an underground passage which leads through the ancestral tombs. When he arrives at the room of the princesses, his fiancée falls dead, and is carried away by her sisters.

The inaccessible Ideal, the 'idée pure' cannot be reached but through death; Marcellus does not die, he commits sacrilege, and the dream vanishes.

Mauclair considers this to be the most philosophical of Maeterlinck's plays. Despite his restriction that Maeterlinck's dramas tended to be more philosophical than properly dramatic, it is clear that Mauclair was very much attracted to the world described in the play. In it we find all but the final elements of his "Narcisse"; here too there is something of the final motif of the short story "Mer Belle aux Îles Sanguinaires" where the voyagers, like Marcellus
are marooned when their ship - Action - sails off. In fact the symbolism of the sea and ships (also to be found in Couronne de clarté) seems, for Mauclair to be specially related to Maeterlinck's play, as stated at the beginning of the essay:

A ne rien celer, son œuvre fait en nous une si délicieuse réponse à la curiosité d'affleurer l'invisible, que la galère flotte aussitôt sur cette mer de ténèbres, et que le navire des Sept Princesses est tout prêt à notre embarquement pour la Thulé mystérieuse où s'exilèrent nos plus chers fantômes.

Towards the end of his essay, no doubt with the ideas of Vallette in mind, Mauclair sums up the special charm of Maeterlinck's plays: the quality of suggestion, which fuses the subtlest aspects of his mind and soul into a whole defying analysis. This charm is a delicate flower...

...ainsi son œuvre, inexorablement close à ceux qui ne sentent point, s'ouvre à ceux qui savent que le seul langage de l'âme est le silence. Les mots, par leur intrusion de parias prostitués à tous usages, rompent l'enchantement symphonique du lecteur silencieux, et c'est ainsi que fabuleusement l'œuvre, n'abandonnant à la critique impudique que quelques plumes du Cygne, se proclame inviolée en la suggestion tacite de son symbole ou de son charme.

This insistence on the communion of silence for the elite group of artists is extremely important, because it underlines both the strength and the weakness of Symbolism on the stage. The dramatist, with Mallarmé, is aware of the treacherous ambiguity of words; he must possess extreme sensitivity, for he wishes to express delicate, intangible concepts. When his words become speeches on the conventional stage, too many circumstances are present to suffocate the web of words expressing ideas which may only be realised by equally sensitive souls. On the other hand, when the specially conceived

pages are opened before such a soul in the silence of his study, immediate and heightened communion may take place: the reduced detail, the flatness of the characters, the impact of the text will only be supplemented by the fleeting one-dimensional images the reader has in his mind's eye, while his intelligence will thrill to the symbolic presence of Ideas. How to convey on the stage this intimate, personal experience was to be Mauclair's preoccupation in the following months before the production of Pelléas et Mélisande.

To say that silence, the intimate communion of kindred souls, is the only way to real communication, is to admit almost that dramatic symbolism was virtually impossible, or at best, an inferior substitute. Maeterlinck had overcome some of the difficulty by his 'art of suggestion', in which the murmuring understatement, what is not said, conveys the immensity of the surrounding silence; but perhaps it was the reduction to dialogue, expressing philosophical notions, which did not fully satisfy Mauclair's imprecise desire for a much more heroic rounded drama. It is unfortunate that all that is known about his own play is the very significant statement he made to Gide at the beginning of their friendship:

..j'ai écrit dans ma pièce que le silence est la suprême parole, et que l'infini des coeurs ne se laisse franchir que par lui : pourquoi donc, quand il s'agit de sceller entre nous une amitié, obscurcrais-je par des paroles ce que nous concevons si bien l'un et l'autre? Nous sommes si près, que la parole nous étourdirait n'est-ce pas? Le silence est doux comme les yeux, regardons en nous.¹

By now, Mauclair had discussed all four plays, and to end his essay, he turns to the future. He feels that despite the difficulties of putting Maeterlinck's increasingly symbolist theatre on the

¹ Mauclair to Gide, 26 Sept. 1891. The play referred to is Deux Âmes which probably became L'Inaccessible.
conventional stage, at that given time it was the only worth-while drama:

Oui, ce théâtre, c'est le théâtre; c'est l'Art. D'autres le rêvèrent symphonique; mais celui-là, comme il réalise grandiosement l'idéalisme mystique de l'auteur! C'est en vérité la presque perfection qu'est la perfection pour nous autres hommes.

So, while Mauclair and Saint-Pol-Roux dreamed, Maeterlinck had shown the way - "pourquoi dès lors différer de saluer en son œuvre le prélude de quelque idéale et mystérieusement lucide Symphonie" - he was truly one of the 'Magnifiques'.

It is not surprising that after this article Mauclair felt capable of discussing "Maurice Maeterlinck et le théâtre idéaliste" in a 'Conférence d'Art' (an extension of Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art) on April 30th 1892. The text of this talk does not seem to have been printed, but, from a commentary of it given, significantly, by Saint-Pol-Roux it probably differed little from the essay discussed above.

Saint-Pol-Roux does however quote two extracts from Mauclair's talk which concern the future of the theatre, and which should be mentioned here because they contain the extra quality which Mauclair would add to Maeterlinck's work to turn it from a 'prélude' into a 'symphonie'.

The first is briefly a statement of idealism in the theatre - the character becomes an incarnation of an idea, so touching the eternal. This much has been said already; the second extract is more precise, it contains what amounts to the 'social' mission of the theatre to be achieved by the application of all artistic tech-

1. *MF* June 1892 (pp.156-162), "Autour de la conférence de Camille Mauclair sur Maurice Maeterlinck."
niques, though it is difficult to see how idealism under this guise becomes more accessible to 'l'âme de la Foule':

Voici qu'un Art est créé, en qui la peinture, la musique, la plastique, le rythme et la parole se symphonisent indissolublement, et tout le monde est appelé au théâtre. Ce jour-là ce n'est plus à des consciences solitaires et méditant sur un livre que le Poète s'adresse, c'est à cette Amé de la Foule qu'il adresse la Parole. Et ce jour-là, il n'est plus temps d'étudier, d'analyser ou de livrer au spectateur des vérités partielles et des certitudes fragiles; ce qu'il faut lui montrer, c'est une Vérité universelle, en qui chacun de nous pourra se reconnaître et prendre conscience de lui-même; c'est une Vérité en qui chacun pourra s'abreuver et vers qui tous pourront aller, comme les organismes au grand soleil.

In the rest of the article Saint-Pol-Roux shows how close Mauclair is to him when he discusses his own conviction that it is only by Ideo-realism, which avoids the extremes of both realism or positivism, and idealism or metaphysicism—'les coups d'aile de Pathmos et .. les coups de pioche de Médan'—that the theatre of ideas will find its full expression. Further, Saint-Pol-Roux is convinced that it is Mauclair's generation who will give the best examples of Ideo-realism because they have given proof of exceptional talents, as well as a disinclination to accept either the extreme mysticism of idealism, or the extreme atheism of realism. Even if these 'Enfants sublimes' have yet to be put to the test of life and experience, they will not lose their initial conviction. It is interesting to read the following appreciation of Mauclair's talents, one of the first of many similar:

Magnifique vaillant, Camille Mauclair est un esprit rare et déjà fécond de la génération benjamine : il n'a pas vingt ans, et l'on sait des maîtres qui le considèrent, et des valets qui l'envient.

So far Mauclair had thought out an elaborate, idealistic theory of drama which applied in part to Maeterlinck's plays, but
which, since the production of his own play was thwarted by the collapse of the Théâtre d'Art, was destined to remain in the state of theory. It is only fair to say however, that Mauclair enjoyed as much the inter-play of diverse, often conflicting ideas as he would have enjoyed their rigorous application to a dramatic production.

In March 1892 he had declared to Mallarmé¹ (and to Jean Jullien,² for this part of both letters is identical) that the authors he would wish to produce at the Odéon were Villiers (Axél), Claudel (Tête d'or), Maeterlinck, Ibsen, and 'tous les jeunes'. In a footnote to his "Notes sur un essai de dramaturgie symbolique" he had also noted the growing interest paid to Ibsen in France, but this is a force we shall not meet until late 1893.

Claudel, on the other hand is immediately relevant. We have seen how, early in 1892, Mauclair had read Tête d'or, and had tried to be of service to Claudel over the publication of "Un Fragment d'un drame" in La Revue indépendante. Towards July of the same year, after reading the manuscript of La Ville - given to him no doubt by Schwob - Mauclair wrote to the author to voice his enthusiasm for the play. For Mauclair here was another dramatist who satisfied at least a part of the dramatic theory he had evolved:

Vous avez vaincu plus de difficultés, beaucoup plus que dans Tête d'or; or vous avez fait un grand progrès vers le vrai théâtre des idées dominatrices, des situations; vous avez effacé le personnage et fait vivre une foule. C'est un pas vers la dramaturgie abstraite au sens où je la rêve. C'est un effort pour abolir la scène théatrale du premier plan, pour subordonner le geste personnel et la contingence au rythme d'ensemble. En tout cela, mon cher ami, La Ville est une chose supérieure à Tête d'or,

1. Letter of 15 March 1892.
2. Letter printed Art et Critique 26 March 1892.
et si moins brillant y séduit, une construction plus profonde s'y décèle.1

Despite the fact that there were certain elements of Claudel's play which Mauclair found strange - the third act, some of the imagery, the modernity of language for example - these were outweighed by the qualities described above, and by the particular 'symphonic' qualities he ascribed to parts of it:

Cette composition orchestrale, l'andante-adagio du premier acte, les chœurs et l'agitato grandissant du second, l'hymne planant sur la troisième, tout cela m'a fait un plaisir intime, car je veux ainsi mes drames.2

In fact we know from a letter to Gide that about this time Mauclair was writing a play entitled La Princesse Sappho,3 about which nothing is known except that it was interrupted by his illness in late 1892, and, though he mentions it again in 1894 and at the beginning of 1895 when he expects to finish it by July, that it was never published.4

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It would be unfair to suggest that Mauclair's contribution to the production of Pelléas et Mélisande was greater than that of Lugné-Poe or Paul Vogler. Although the following pages throw more light on the relationship between Mauclair's theories and the costumes and scenery of Pelléas et Mélisande than on the part played by Lugné-Poe or Maeterlinck - who, though absent from Paris, was in

1. Mauclair to Claudel, letter published in the first of the Cahiers Paul Claudel, where it is given the date 'vers juillet 1892', (p.159).
2. Ibid. It is worth noting that Mauclair's poem Ex-Voto published in Entretiens politiques et littéraires (25 Feb. 1893) was dedicated to Claudel.
close communication by letter – this is not intended to prove the pre-eminence of Mauclair's ideas alone. It is freely admitted that in 1892 Mauclair was following the contemporary interest in the problems of 'Symbolist theatre', and that in 1893 his writing reflects fervent discussions with Lugné-Poe, Vogler, and all of those determined to make the performance of Pelléas outstanding. He was, after all, the spokesman of the group. Lugné-Poe's particular talents lay primarily in acting and producing; Vogler's (and later Vuillard's) lay in painting and design. Since Mauclair was well able to appreciate the finer points of both spheres of activity, his links with literary circles and reviews, his writer's fluency could be best used to communicate the aims of the group. The very example of this was the article he wrote for publication under Mirbeau's name.

That this article is from Mauclair's pen there is little doubt. How else could the author have known or have written so bitterly about the past months of difficulties which threatened at any moment to stifle the production? The pride taken in the fact that the enterprise had reached its goal despite the lack of influence, flattery, or protection, and the general ill-will of the critics, is just that pride which Mauclair took in the independent position adopted at the time of the Odéon candidature:

L'odyssée serait édifiante, de tous les contre-temps qu'il leur fallait subir. Ce serait refaire l'histoire de la conspiration de silence et du mauvais vouloir qui accueillent toute tentative esthétique,

1. Four letters from Maeterlinck to Lugné-Poe concerning this period are published in Revue de l'Oeuvre mai/juillet 1913. He was certainly also writing to Mauclair, though these letters have disappeared.

2. This article, entitled "Pelléas et Mélisande" was published in L'Echo de Paris of 9th May 1893. In SGL, pp.103-104 Mauclair admitted to being the author. The circumstances surrounding it were discussed in Chapter 2, p.62.
avant que la volonté persistante ait secoué l'in-différence, déjoué l'envie, forcé le médiocre à rentrer sous terre une fois de plus.

Why should Mirbeau have been so concerned, in the next para-graph, to expose in detail the self-interest of Tola Dorian, described as "éprise de concilier l'économie avec le noble rôle de Mécène"? The determination of the group of 'jeunes' (the emphasis laid on the age of those concerned is also significant) was unaltered: they would succeed in putting ideas on the stage, and showing the public scenery which was born from a completely new principle - a principle which is almost exactly that Mauclair described in his "Notes sur un essai de dramaturgie symbolique". The petty realism of the vaudeville stage is contemptuously rejected. In the play of ideas considerations of place, period, and resemblance are redundant:

Ils pensent que l'art n'est pas là, que le sens général du drame suscite, dans la coloration du décor une nuance dominante qui s'y doit harmoniser; que le décor vaut par l'impression de l'ensemble et non par le détail; qu'il est fait pour encadrer les acteurs, préciser le sentiment, et non pour faire admirer des pieds de table et des bahuts.

As Mauclair had already stated, the scenery should complement the impression of heroic reality which must spring from the play itself.

Following this, a series of reflections (in the first person) concerning the strange poetry of Maeterlinck's previous dramas, their simplicity and strength, suggest subtle irony, because, if Mauclair was the author, then he had indeed already discussed these plays, and, as he made 'Mirbeau' say, he had no need to do so again!

Similarly, the final declaration could only belong to Mauclair. This is his eloquence, his preoccupation with independence and integrity, his idealism:
La représentation prochaine sera une date de la Renaissance dramatique, un signe de l'effort grandissant, qui rejettera le convenu, la platitude et ira vers une beauté pure. Et j'aime que cet effort soit dû à une initiative privée, que nul courtier en médiocrité n'y ait aidé, que tout soit mené à bien par des esprits neufs et des gens probes, et qu'en face des théâtres patentés et de la fausse littérature à succès, ceci demeure : des artistes isolés réalisant par leur seule foi, sans marchandages et sans compromissions, la mise à la scène d'un chef d'œuvre.

As is to be expected, Mauclair also published an article under his own name, and this only a few hours before the performance of Pelléas. Many points - such as the indifference, hypocrisy, and incompetence which had to be overcome - were raised again, but more interesting are the details he gives of the scenery and the costumes.

Other details are also found in an article by Léopold Lacour (who was later to give the introductory talk before the performance of Rosmersholm.) This is based on a letter from Mauclair which describes what the public were to expect when the curtain was raised that evening. When the texts of the article, and the letter by Mauclair, and the article signed by Mirbeau are compared, the similarities are striking, but especially in the following passages, which farther support the claim that Mauclair wrote the article of L'Echo de Paris:

"..en voilà assez des reconstitutions d'ameublement, du triomphe de l'accessoire soi-disant exact, de tout le bric-à-brac exhibé au public, des glaces peintes et des trompe-l'œil, autant que de la vraie soupe et du vrai feu, ébahissement du badaud,

1. Le Journal, 17 May 1893 : "Une Première sensationnelle."
2. Gil Blas, 17 May 1893 : "Décor".
and, from the letter quoted literally by Lacour:

les ameublements, détails, trompe-l'œil, glaces peintes, dont s'encombrent ordinairement les scènes, ne sont pas seulement laids et incomplets, forcément bric-à-brac, mais absolument inutiles dès que l'action ne se déroule plus dans un salon entre des gens à la mode du jour.

Only when the false notion described here is dispensed with can the eternal be suggested, or the dream-world be indicated. Certainly Ibsen requires a different treatment. For his plays, and also for l'Intruse, a modern, factual background is called for, but this is not important in itself; it should complement the symbolism of the text. In turn this symbolism does not depend on especial national identity, but on common human emotions - love, anger, joy - and this was the essence of Pelléas et Mélišande. A setting, an ornamental framework, complementing and consonant with the sentiments expressed had to be found.

What is most remarkable in Mauclair's description of the scenery and costumes of Pelléas is the musical analogy on which they are based. In his ideal theory, Wagner was to inspire "le symphonisme des décors et des paroles, la théorie des entités symboliques" and this was what had been attempted; in place of flat realism, there had been substituted "une sorte de symphonie de linéaments et de couleurs en harmonie avec le sentiment général de l'oeuvre"; the costumes, without precise reference to time of place are fairy-tale, legendary:

De la sorte, les nuances s'harmonisent au sentiment comme un sorte d'accompagnement musical ; tout se réduit, comme dans les pièces de Shakespeare, à une grande simplicité, et la scène est encadrée de larges

1. "Notes sur un essai de dramaturgie symbolique" (EAL March 1892).
ornamentations qui la complètent sans distraire le spectateur.\(^1\) Pour Pelléas et Mélisande, le caractère de l'œuvre étant mélancolique et mystérieux, la coloration du décor se gradue en bleu sombre, mauve, orange, vert mousse, vert de lune, vert d'eau, s'allie, par des violets éteints et des gris bleus, aux costumes des acteurs, jusqu'à celui de Mélisande qui est le plus clair.

and again, to Lacour, Mauclair lists the colours with a more positive identification to an ascending musical scale:

..une gamme noire, brune, grise, mauve, hyacinthe, vert de lune allant jusqu'au blanc crème pour le costume de Mélisande.

Here too, Mauclair concludes his description with the words:

Tout cela très discret... la pièce étant en nuances très frêles et fanées,

which are revealing when one remembers that it was at this time that Mauclair was writing his vers libres under such titles as Capriccioso, Triste, or Dolce, poems which he later dedicated to the delicate crepuscular, autumnal art of Robert Schumann.\(^2\) Furthermore the subject of many of these poems could be placed 'vers un onzième siècle vague' which he felt was appropriate for Pelléas.

Painterly influence is also present. Not only were some costumes specifically inspired by Memling, Van Eyck, and the Pre-Raphaelite decorations of Walter Crane,\(^3\) but also Mauclair concluded his

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1. This was the recommendation Mauclair made to Paul Fort in RBche, Feb. 1892: "qu'il se décidât à renoncer à des mises en scène coûteuses et impossibles pour ses ressources, en se bornant... aux écrits aux Shakespeariens."

2. These poems appeared in La Revue Blanche throughout 1893.

3. In 1913 Mauclair recalled working on the design of the costumes with Lugné-Poe "notamment le costume de Mélisande d'après la Ste Ursule de Memling, (châsse de Bruges)" (Revue de l'Oeuvre mars/avril 1913); in SGL (p.102) he alone takes the credit for designing the costumes following photographs sent by Maeterlinck, who also according to Jasper, (op. cit. p.99) sent Lugné an English version of Saint Geneviève of Brabant illustrated by Crane. A passage from a letter from Maeterlinck to Lugné at this time reads: "Pour les costumes, XIIe, XIIe siècles, ou bien selon Memling (XVe) comme vous voudrez et selon les circonstances". (Revue de l'Oeuvre Mai 1913).
description of the stage with these words:

Ainsi au lever du rideau la scène apparaîtra-t-elle composée comme un tableau.

Possibly to leave some element of surprise for the audience, Mauclair omitted any mention of the thin gauze curtain which hung at the front of the stage, thus throwing the action farther into abstraction and dreamworld; the curtain must have resembled a canvas on which the play took place, because the stage was lit from above, so casting short flat shadows, and farther reducing depth from front to back.

The overall combination of pastel colours, flat lighting, and simplified vaporous background reminded some of the work of Puvis de Chavannes - whose murals in the Panthéon had so absorbed Mauclair as a school-boy.

Perhaps Léopold Lacour was correct in his assertion:

...l'intérêt de la tentative nous semble très suffisamment garanti par le nom même du jeune esthète et poète qui l'a conçue. C'est en effet le tout jeune mais étrangement précoce et bien doué M. Camille Mauclair qui a eu l'idée de cette décoration,

and it is interesting to read a similar statement from the pen of Mallarmé, whose description of the scenery is comprehensive and succinct:

Montée avec perfection, par notre confrère Monsieur Mauclair en toute simplicité, dite souverainement. Ambigu décor et forêt comme appartements. Le costume dans le ton, très bien, de l'esprit et des rôles; prêtant cette significative coloration au geste.

One point remains to be made concerning Pelléas et Mélisande; the scenery of the play, as described above, looks forward to effects which were to be better realised by the cinema; in this context the

2. Le Réveil mensuel de littérature (Ghent); National Observer (Edinburgh); June, July respectively, 1893. Also in Divagations, ('Crayonné au théâtre') in curtailed and amended form. Cf. E. Lockspeiser: Debussy, his Life and Mind, vol.1, Appendix E, p.215.
gauche'screen' is especially interesting, and one may imagine how easily the frequent change of scene (no less than eighteen times) or the evocation of a vague dreamworld, could have been effected by means, such as fading out, peculiar to film-making.

Another critic has pointed out another aspect of the play's forward-looking qualities:

Ce théâtre d'idées, fait de récitations linéaires et de "décors schémas", porte en lui le germe de l'Art Abstrait. Surprenante filiation, où l'on voit tout l'art d'un Cézanne - qui idéalise la nature en la faisant rentrer dans un cadre au bel équilibre de lignes et de couleurs - rejoindre celui, hermétique, d'un Paul Klee ou d'un Mondrian - en passant par les habilleurs de marionnettes de Maeterlinck.

Yet Mauclair was unable to appreciate this relationship. Painting, however, contains only one element (or two, if 'rhythm' is allowed) of the 'fusion des arts' which lay behind Mauclair's ideas concerning the stage; the missing element is speech - passage to ideas. Ideas only exist in a painting for those who are willing to hear. Mauclair became increasingly 'deaf' in regard to certain forms of art, though he had once possessed the ability to appreciate them. Nor did he have with the younger men that other means of communication of ideas - personal friendship - which allowed him to appreciate fully the work of Besnard, Carrière, Rochegrosse, Point, or Rodin.

One final piece of information must be considered before closing this section. In October 1893 the Mercure de France published a manifesto explaining the aims of the newly-formed Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. This took the form of a letter from Mauclair, though it probably expressed the joint thought of all concerned.

There were, Mauclair wrote, two parallel, but distinct 'orientations':

La première est de lutter, de créer des courants d'idées, des controverses, de nous rebeller contre l'inertie de certains esprits, d'ailleurs parfois délicats, de nous servir de notre jeunesse, non plus pour nous excuser des essais, mais pour vivre violemment et passionner avec des œuvres.

The best possible author to enable this to be done, and to oppose the inane farces then current was Ibsen, who could offer symbolism in Rosmersholm and The Master Builder, anarchism in An Enemy of the People, and who besides being modern, provoked thought.

The second 'orientation' was of an artistic order, for if the first involved socialism, the second was more symbolist:

...si nous songeons à offrir aux lettrés ce que nous nommons des spectacles, c'est, mon Dieu, que nous voudrions, l'art restant, n'est-ce pas, notre grande affaire, inventer, donner corps du moins à ce qui fit écrire d'excellent, mais sans cohésion, un art scénique de la fiction, de la fantaisie, et du rêve.

What Mauclair is proposing, then, is a theatre of ideas and art, which would allow the expression of many of the ideas of his own dramatic theory, but in a sense he is admitting one of the weaknesses of his theory: that the theatre had, in many cases to be of ideas or of art. In other words, artists of the calibre of Ibsen and Maeterlinck, who could strike the balance between saying something, and saying it artistically, were few.

Mauclair also admitted this, because the principle raison d'être of the Oeuvre was to perform exceptional works, no matter who their author was:

Nous nous manifestons selon notre strict droit d'artistes sous ce simple titre : l'Oeuvre. Nous la révélons, quelle qu'elle soit, cette éternelle attendue, parce que, sans phrases, nous voyons là une façon de devoir, et que c'est encore une de nos meilleures raisons, à nous autres de nous intéresser à vivre.
As we shall see in the next section, in 1892 and 1893 Mauclair had stated his determination to remain "individualiste", referring his Art and Life to a higher set of principles, embodied in Idealism. He could not therefore have accepted Lugné-Poe's offer to join the Oeuvre had its aims been other than those stated. Conversely, since Mauclair's artistic and moral attitude had evolved quite independently and had taken shape before he met Lugné-Poe, his ideas may well have had sufficient identity to influence significantly the initial steps of the Oeuvre. Certainly what the Oeuvre needed to succeed was that intransigent determination to consider nothing but the highest order of ideas, and to remain resolutely independent, which Mauclair showed at the time.

* * *

The fourth section of this chapter concerns what may be vaguely termed 'idealist theory'. Much of this theory has already been seen in Mauclair's activities and writing, but there is a body of articles devoted specifically to Idealism, Individualism, and Anarchism and allied topics which can best be examined separately. On Mauclair's own admission, much of this theory is directly inspired by Maurice Barrès, but, as is the case for Eleusis (to be discussed in the following chapter), to attempt to establish conclusively the sources of Mauclair's ideas is beyond the scope of the present study. It is however useful to indicate what these ideas were, and perhaps show that in them there were the principles which later lead to Mauclair's rejection of Symbolism. These principles stem from an innate seriousness of temperament, reinforced, as has been shown, by social or intellectual development, and accentuated by the particular nature of
the society in which he came to manhood. Not only was this the postwar society of the Dreyfus Case and the Panama Affair, the society which was, for Mauclair, the intellectually impoverished upholder of materialism and naturalism, but also, within his own circle, the Decadent, or Symbolist society, there were attitudes Mauclair could not accept. He has been described as a "third generation Symbolist", he is generally considered to have adopted, or even simply imitated the ideas of his contemporaries. Yet he had a decidedly combative nature, and often showed that he thought of himself as an innovator, especially in the theatre. Perhaps this contradiction may be reconciled by consideration of the following: by his youth, his nature, he was not prepared to accept the decadent, fin de siècle, nihilist philosophy of some of his older contemporaries; by his idealism and his adherence to the finer points of the Symbolist ideas already in the air, he could not accept the effete artificialism of some of his contemporaries; by his energy, fluency, and 'esprit batailleur' he was determined to make his own statement, to pursue what he believed to be best in contemporary ideas, and to slough off the aesthete's posturing which he so disliked, for example, in Wilde. To be thus a 'derivative innovator' - for such he may be termed - means dealing in nuances of ideas and personalities which are not always evident today; it means such a great dependence on already established ideas that the charge of imitation is inevitable; it means moving so quickly, and to such an extent through contemporary ideas that a lack of consistency, an inability to take up a position is held to be the result. Finally, because Mauclair's particular form of combative idealism meant the verbal castigation, and what may appear to be supercilious criticism of many contemporaries, it incurs the enmity and slighting comment which suspected superiority provokes. In turn, Mauclair
adopted a defensive position, becoming increasingly entrenched in
what he considered to be his own ideas, especially as these were
'guaranteed' by the undoubted artistic integrity of those - Mallarmé,
Villiers, Baudelaire, Poe, Besnard... - who had inspired them.

* * *

What did "L'Anarchie" mean to Mauclair in 1892, the year of
Ravachol, Vaillant and Henri? In March of that year he contributed
an article with that title, and under the general definition:
"Petits théorèmes d'art social", in the anarchist paper L'Endehors.¹

In the article he claimed that intellectuals, since they are
preoccupied with Ideas, cannot be other than anarchists. This is
not meant in a purely political sense. Though they cannot accept
the imposed rule of government, this is only one result of their po-
sition as intellectuals who depend on themselves alone. Since they
cannot turn to the rich who are unjust, empty, convention-bound, and
they cannot turn to the poor who lack the fine sensibility needed to
understand, they must resort to anarchism; for Mauclair, Idealism
can only lead to Individualism, which in turn implies intellectual
anarchism:

Parce que nous nous attachons aux seules notions
caractérisées d'éternité, sceptiques à cette
unique fin de n'admettre que de pures certitudes.

Parce que nous répudions et l'ignorance et la con-
vention, faisant de notre âme un riche réceptacle
des visions du monde que nous créons.

Parce que nous sommes avec Fichte et Hegel, des
idéalistes épris de notre seule individualité,
créatrice et ordonnatrice des autres.

Notre Moi, seule indubitable certitude, seul
bonheur, et seul refuge.

¹. This article was given as the first of a series - which did not
materialise.
What however was this "Moi" likely to consist of? In one of his first articles of literary criticism, 1 Mauclair wrote that Gide's Les Cahiers d'André Walter was a book worthy of being called 'une âme écrite'. That this 'âme', as Mauclair described it, is that of Walter, or Gide, is immaterial: it is also a statement of the artistic conscience of the symbolist such as was Mauclair himself at that time—why else was he so attracted to the book?

Supposez une âme infiniment pure; incarnez l'individualité qu'elle constitue en un être habitué à sonder les plus profondes métaphysiques, doué d'une sensibilité exacerbée, lisant en la musique au point de déclarer que "l'harmonie est trop précise" à ses désirs d'incertain berceur, nourri de Spinoza, des Saints Livres, aussi de Baudelaire, n'aimant que Schumann et Chopin ("Wagner accable trop"), et épuré encore par le mépris de la chair, et l'amour idéal d'une femme incarnant l'âme sœur. 2

This then is the essence of the soul of the Elite.

Other reasons why Mauclair specially appreciated Les Cahiers d'André Walter were the depiction of the pain and ultimate anguish of whoever descends into the depths of his soul as Walter had done; the fact that Gide showed acceptance, not pessimism; "le continu el souci d'orner et d'affiner le moi" which indicated an affinity with Barrès' ideas. What Mauclair found in the work was an expression of 'le culte du moi', and this impression was completed by the fact that here at last was a writer who was preoccupied with Ideas, metaphysics, immateriality and who believed in the value of thought and the human mind. Gone were the pseudo-artistic poses and preoccupations with form, exteriority, of so many young men.

Mauclair was clearly 'barrésiste' in his appreciation; a few

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1. RI March 1891, pp.405-407.
2. This must remind us of Mauclair's praise of Pelletier's Le Poème de la chair, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, p.95.
months later he declared to Gide how much Les Cahiers d'André Walter meant to him, caught between interior aspirations and the contingencies of Society:

C'est mon Evangile, ton livre André. Il y a en moi un homme grossier qui proteste contre son extériorité, qui bavarde de vaines utilités sociales. Mais comme le souffrant t'approuve au fond! Lâcheté, être double.

Here is perhaps the crux of Mauclair's character. Torn between the Ivory Tower of the pure idealist, and the Barricades of the struggle against Philistinism, the other complexities of Mauclair's character could only add to the impression of inconsistency, when in fact there is an underlying philosophical and moral concept, which accepts the sole authority of the individual, who acts according to idealist example, and cannot therefore allow himself to sink, intellectually or morally (for the two are inseparable) to any thought or deed unworthy of that example.

During 1892 three articles by Mauclair appeared in Écrits d'Art Libre under the significant titles of "Le Dédain d'être mauvais"; "Pour l'Idéalisme"; and "Lettre sur l'individualisme". These articles in themselves contain the source, the definition, and the development of Mauclair's intellectual Anarchism.

The source is quite clearly the work of Maurice Barrès. The first article mentioned above is written around a review of Barrès' Toute licence, sauf contre l'amour, and contains less critical appraisal than enthusiastic amplification of Barrès' ideas, to which Mauclair shows total adhesion. Had there not been something of Barrès in Les Cahiers d'André Walter? "Le continuel souci d'orner et

2. EAL April 1892, pp.97-106.
3. Ibid. July 1892, pp.251-258.
"d'affiner son moi" was the point of resemblance Mauclair found then; now it is precisely what attracts him most.

The article begins by quoting and discussing in detail many passages which illustrate Barrès' ideas: the 'culte du moi' of the artist who is subject to superior eternal laws alone; the fatuity of students' associations as a typical example of how young men undergo a reduction to common mediocrity at the moment when, leaving the imposed uniform mould of 'cette étonnante et niaise Université' and about to come into contact with real life, they are thrust once more into external social conformity and cannot achieve their identity as individuals, with only themselves, their own minds, and their own experience as models. Mauclair fully accepts the true scepticism of which Barrès writes - that which accepts nothing a priori, which involves a state of mind close to that of the believer in more noble things than are known to the crowd. Mauclair agrees that the 'sceptique' should not actively oppose the general platitude, but should join with it, the better to know what must be avoided, and so to perfect the 'culte intérieur'. To such a lone mind, any activity - politics, teaching, writing, - would be impossible without the axiom:

L'Amour est la seule raison qui décide les hommes de pensée à entrer dans l'action.

The result of this declaration is:

La 'volupté de communier avec les simples', la préoccupation 'non d'étaler le fâtras de la raison humaine mais de donner à chacun ce qui lui est bon' - le critérium 'non de la logique mais de l'aptitude des idées à augmenter le bonheur dans le monde'.

Is this not one of the fundamental ideas behind Mauclair's later work as a critic, when he thought of himself as 'le loyal serviteur', the intermediary between the great minds and those seeking

1. SGL preface.
to know them? Furthermore, it is no mere coincidence that Barrès' conclusion, which is quoted to illustrate that "l'Amour" in question is:

un instant de la connaissance que prend tout être penché sur soi-même, un épanouissement nécessaire de qui sait cultiver son moi was to be followed immediately by Mauclair's Narcisse.¹

Supported by this exposition, Mauclair feels justified in making his own statement, "au nom de l'intellectualité contemporaine" of the ideas inspired in his own mind by Barrès' writing:

Songeons bien que le Moi est le centre de ce qu'il nous est donné d'imaginer et d'idéer [sic] par les cinq fenêtres des sens; pensons que nous ne sommes nés que pour satisfaire notre être, l'orner et le cultiver, [here we find the same formula as that applied to Les Cahiers d'André Walter] broder autour de lui un riche manteau de décors sensationnels.²

Love and pity cannot come from the hereditary system under which we are placed, and to which nominal concessions must be made; it must come from examination of the inner self, and from our own findings:

..de même que nous devons exalter en nous le haut mépris des Barbares, du bien, de l'action commandés par le faux intérêt commun, exaltions en nous, pour la salutaire floraison de notre spiritualité maîtresse d'elle et de l'univers, cette chère idée et cette délicieuse formule : LE DÉDAIN D'ÊTRE MAUVAIS.

It is here that we reach the crux of Mauclair's 'anarchism' which is purely intellectual, and seems to be directed solely at the independent mind, (and by extension, at the Elite), rather than at the mass or at society:

1. Quoted in the first part of this chapter.
2. In the light of this definition, one may wonder whether the title Mauclair gave his description of the scenery of Pelléas et Méli-}

sandé : "Une Première Sensationnelle" had an extra significance in the context of the 'fusion des arts'?
This high ideal may have the inconsistencies of a theory carried to an extreme - if his ideas apply only to an Elite, then how could any member of the Elite need the undeniable superior charity outlined above?; if this charity is intended to elevate, to evangelise, who amongst the 'Barbares' would be eligible?; or is the fortuitous meeting of one of the Elite with an unformed mind seeking the truth all that is meant? In any case, the existence of an Elite of independent minds presupposes a body of beliefs and aspirations which are regarded as a standard of reference; this standard, for Mauclair, was idealism, which he treated in depth in his next article.

"Pour l'Idéalisme" begins by proclaiming the triumph of idealism in "la jeune littérature" and in the contemporary writing of "une certaine élite de connaisseurs". However, the emergence of this 'movement' has brought with it three classes of abuse which it is Mauclair's purpose in this article to despatch.

The first, symbolised by Fouquier, Sarcey, and Dubrujeaud

1. Mauclair's resentment towards these critics was inspired by what he had read by them at the time of his support of the Théâtre d'Art, as well as by the fact that they were the 'bêtes noires' of the young symbolists. He had more recently suffered from Sarcey's "power", for it was said that it was he who would unofficially decide the outcome of the candidatures for the directorship of the Odéon.
consists of a group of critics who deny the validity of any artistic effort in any direction, because they consider that French literature has come to an end, and that the young are all mad, despoiling their 'priceless heritage'. To them no reply can be made; they are deaf to any explanation of what Symbolism is, they cannot conceive what the artistic antecedence of Plotinus, Hegel, or Goethe means. The only consolation of the young is to remember that it is a sign of superiority to be thought mad in one's own time, because this is proof that one is different from the herd.

The second class of abuse is perpetrated by those whom Mauclair terms "les faux jeunes". They are more despicable than the first (who are simply incapable of understanding) because they deliberately set out to discredit idealism by accusations of sterility and by comparisons with inferior works.

In reply to the charge of sterility, Mauclair produces an impressive list of those whom he considers are idealists, and of what they have achieved:

After a surprising paragraph on Science, in which he mentions Hoene Wronski, Louis Lucas, Claude Bernard, Eliphas Levi, Charles Henry, and others, Mauclair turns to Painting. Puvis de Chavannes, Gustave Moreau, Monticelli, Monet, Redon, Besnard, Whistler, Carrière, Denis and Henri de Groux, these men are directly idealist, because they are less concerned with portraying the object, than with what it suggests. Rodin has attained pure idealism by his "puissance de fixer l'abstrait dans le concret". In Music, following the immense influence of Wagner, are César Franck, Vincent d'Indy, and Gustave Charpentier. As for Literature, some turn to find idealism in Baudelaire, or in Verlaine.
D'autres retrouvent dans Platon, Plotin, Hegel, Carlyle, Fichte, Emerson, un idéalisme esthétique affirmé dans les théories et l'oeuvre de M. Stéphane Mallarmé,

and some turn to Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, in whom

une vision héroïque de la vie intellectuelle s'allait à une ironie envers la vie active et à une préoccupation constante de l'au-delà, qui rapproche curieusement d'une initiation occultiste la foi catholique du dramaturge d'Axél.

These quotations indicate two essential sources of Mauclair's idealism. It is however interesting to note that all the artists mentioned so far, (with the exception of Denis and de Groux) are all older than Mauclair. He is establishing the credentials of idealism.

Closer to his own age is Maurice Barrès who is given special mention here (as the previous article would lead us to expect) because Mauclair wishes to stress his particular idealist contribution, - the moral theory leading to Individualism.

As for the young, Mauclair distinguishes between works, in prose of social, humanitarian, moral cast, inspired by Whitman and J.H. Rosny (no examples are given) and the "art poétique résolument idéaliste" of Régnier, Gide (Les Cahiers d'André Walter), Claudel (Tête d'or), Saint-Pol-Roux, or Remy de Gourmont, all of whom draw their intellectual sustenance from Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Villiers, Swinburne, and especially Poe's Eureka. These then are the idealists, and what they have achieved.

After this spirited defence, which was, Mauclair admitted, only a bare list, the third category of abuse remains to be tackled. This is the most pernicious, for it consists of those little men who claim to 'accept' idealism, but who are totally unworthy of it. They are 'les suiveurs' who gladly follow empty fools and denigrate the great, they make a great deal of fuss about 'universal happiness',

or 'inspiration' which they cannot begin to understand. But, Mauclair proclaims: "l'idéalisme est réservé à peu de consciences", and "l'idéalisme est une doctrine exclusive, triste, prometteuse de solitude et de chagrin comme toutes les consécration incessantes de la conscience." The Elite have not escaped from the ignominies of naturalism and materialism only to behave like these pseudo idealists who join students' associations! This is Mauclair's proud, absolute, call to action for the Elite:

Ah! puisque votre art veut la colère hautaine et l'anarchie résolue, défiez-vous de ceux-là qui sont nuls dans toutes les armées, laissez les goujats ne suivre que de très loin, soyez peu: ah! puisque vous rêvez de belles choses, puisque vous voulez être tranquilles dans le travail, jetez donc un peu de dégoût autour de vous, orientez donc vers un salutaire mépris les fausses consciences de vos contemporains, si vous ne voulez pas polluer votre effort et si vous songez à rester propres, idéalistes!

Yet is this too proud, too absolute? Mauclair is stirring up ideas. He seems to exaggerate his case in order to allow his combative spirit more scope. He is indulging his fluency, and his tendency to generalisation, for he does not tell us who are "les suiveurs". In a sense, he is creating an opposition in order to stress his (perfectly valid) defence of idealism. Nevertheless, such high-handed dismissal of all but a very few must have seemed an intolerable impertinence to many, especially to those of the students' associations, to which Mauclair takes particular exception, in both articles. 1

1. Little is known about Mauclair's University days. As early as May 1891 he wrote to Pelletier "Je ne vois plus personne à l'Université; n'allant de plus à aucune réunion, je ne sais pas ce que tous ces gens-là deviennent." It is perhaps more revealing to bring together two sentences from Notes sur mes débuts (Dossier G. Jean-Aubry): "J'ai quitté la Sorbonne parce qu'on me mettait en demeure de démissionner ou de ne plus écrire.." and "..j'ai été mêlé très activement au socialisme et à l'anarchie au temps d'Émile Henry.." [1892] The articles examined above suggest that the two are not unconnected. By 1892, Mauclair had sufficient experience to see the possibility of becoming a writer, and forms of academism were obviously distasteful to him.
This treatment is continued in the next article, because such associations are the very antithesis of the only possible mode of existence for the idealist - which is Individualism.

"Lettre sur l'individualisme" is addressed to Pierre Quillard, and has the informal tone of a discussion between friends:

Vous souvenez-vous, mon cher Quillard, de cette récente causerie entre des roches et des feuillées, où je vous confiai mon espoir, pour cet hiver, d'un individualisme définitif des artistes?

This is an unmistakable reference to Mauclair's vacation in the forest of Fontainebleau\(^1\) when he experienced the calm of Nature, far from the city. As we read this open letter to Quillard, it is worth remembering that Mauclair told Gide that his illness had only made imperative the 'retraite' of which he had been thinking. His attitude towards his contemporaries has visibly hardened following this peaceful holiday.

The time has come, Mauclair writes, to give up all ideas of fraternity and comradeship (typified by students' associations) which are mere social, not intellectual amusements. The condition of the real artist is solitude. Once again Mauclair shows his tendency to project personal experience and development into what he says about the artistic milieux as a whole:

Oui, persuadés qu'enfin, après ce long tâtonnement, ces conciliabules tumultueux, ces chaos de revues éphémères, ces essais de fusions, ces étalages de sympathies illusoires nées d'une circonstance, tuées par une autre, - une plus nette orientation s'était produite, nous dûmes répondre fidèlement à la pensée des véritables artistes et nous confier au sens logique des choses en concluant, mon cher Quillard, en faveur d'un définitif décret de solitude bornant au seul moi la responsabilité des déclarations esthétiques. Fut-ce l'immédiat spectacle de la nature en son isolement salutaire qui nous fit chérir ce nouveau

\(^1\) This holiday was discussed in Chapter 2, p.51.
mode d'action? Je ne saurais répondre que pour moi-même de cette influence, mais je pense qu'à votre décision ne fut point étranger ce libre échange des choses et de l'être que constituent délicieusement les vacances.

It is no coincidence that Mauclair had just left La Revue indépendante to turn to the more serious Mercure de France.

Mauclair wishes freedom, from decadent, symbolist, neo-parnassian or any labels, from false solidarity which is mere coincidence in time and place, from the patronising indulgence shown to the newcomer which does not involve intellectual communion:

..connaissons l'ivresse de respirer en la solitude de routes différentes, confiant au hasard des carrefours la survenue d'une âme soeur quêteuse d'un but semblable.

The individualist, the true anarchist cannot suffer the arbitrary limitations of any group - for this cannot correspond to his inner self; "professional honour" is an illusion because being a writer means nothing in itself, it is the quality of the individual that matters. Youth too means little in terms of 'comradeship'; it is the energy of youth as a means to an end that is important, not the simple fact that one is young.

This all-important rejection of the petty promiscuity of so many is plain to see in the best of the few contemporary minds:

Notre maître Mallarmé ne continue-t-il point au milieu de nous le fort exemple de cette solitude? Et ceux que nous aimons, qu'ils écrivent Tel qu'en songe ou Tête d'or, le Traité du Narcisse ou le Pél- erinage de Sainte-Anne, le Fantôme ou Pelléas et Mélisande, tous ceux en un mot qui rachètent le fatrans impuissant et haineux de ces années, tous ceux qui nous consolent des alcooliques bavards ou des jolis bruns de la littérature, ont fait de leur atti-tude le vivant commentaire de leur œuvre.

Here is the water-shed Mauclair saw before him. The divorce between Mallarmean discipline and the bohemianism above which Verlaine alone was able to rise. The moment to turn to the former (self-discipline)
has come; indeed, for some time this is just what Barrès has been saying. His contribution will be not so much the ideas contained in Le Jardin de Bérénice, l'Homme libre, l'Ennemi des lois, or the continuation of an "aristocratie intellectuelle" following Goethe, but

Ce sera pour nous avoir présenté délibérément, par son attitude même, une commode et agréable image des divertissements, un profitable et convaincant exemple des forces dont dispose un isolé devant sa conscience.

It is this particular moral attitude which explains so many of the petty jealousies of the "eunuques des lettres en quête de tapages profitables" who have not, as yet, been able to offer a cogent argument to oppose Barrès. Until then, Individualism "où chacun va rester et oeuvrer chez soi" is the only possible moral and intellectual position the true artist can adopt.

Mauclair's insistence in these three articles upon the fatuity of all but a few exceptional minds must have seemed calculated to annoy. There are inconsistencies: since Retté proclaims his lack of interest in moral and intellectual problems, he is taken to task for his 'prudent' interest in his own work alone. But is there only one form of individualism, one expression of idealism? Must everything stem from the artists Mauclair quotes?

Many must have observed that among these lists of exceptional works there was none by Mauclair - for he had published nothing yet except magazine articles. From a young man not yet twenty years old these articles must have seemed precocious or naïve, depending on the reader's point of view. For different reasons, many would agree with Saint-Pol-Roux when he wrote, in reference to "les enfants sublimes" of whom he considered Mauclair a prime example:
Mais attendons qu'ils aient quitté la Chimérie [sic] tapissée d'illusions et d'hypothèses pour entrer dans l'expérience aux pluies et rayons nécessaires: la vie, n'est-ce pas l'hôtel-de-la-monnaie où, frappé au sceau de la personnalité, le lingot du rêve obtient cours dans l'espace et le temps immortels?

* * *

In early 1892 Mauclair showed himself to be a firm adherent of the 'parti des jeunes'. When the paper L'Endehors was threatened with prosecution on the grounds of obscenity, Mauclair's opinion was that this was merely a blatant attempt by the 'gens en place' to use pornography laws as a weapon to stifle new ideas. His vigorous call to action appeared in an article in L'Endehors itself:

La Liberté de pensée, de parole, de pitié! L'Art jeune est en péril. Ah! il ne s'agit plus de dissentiments et de mesquines querelles; tous debout en masse pour protester et pour se défendre!

In this case, however, Mauclair was writing about a common enemy - the bourgeois; fundamentally, as his articles show, he had personal reservations about the so-called 'jeunes', and his idealist's convictions did not coincide with the popular conception of Anarchism.

In his memoirs Mauclair discussed his former anarchist sympathies at some length; most of what he writes, even after thirty years, is a fair evaluation of his ideas in his early twenties. In the first place, he considers that because of his age, his working-class background, and the general excitable tenor of the time, he

1. MF June 1892, "Autour de la conférence de Camille Mauclair sur Maurice Maeterlinck."
3. SGL, pp.111-123.
could hardly have been anything but an 'anarchist'. He was present at the execution of Vaillant, and was profoundly revolted by/injustice of the sentence. He was painfully alive to the social injustice and corruption of the society in which he had come of age, and naturally wished to change the accepted order of things. His friends were 'anarchists' and unanimously condemned the undue severity of the punishments which crushed Ravachol and Henry. In the second place, however, because he did know what it meant to be "pauvre et de petite naissance" he was unable to accept the dilletante anarchism of the well-fed, well-dressed 'fils de famille', which amounted to a hypothesis critical pose. Secondly, if Barrès had inspired in him the feeling of revolt, the means to achieve this was also found in Barrès, and was of too exalted an idealism to admit the petty acts of many young men, acts which were simply silly anti-social behaviour under the disguise of revolution. Mauclair's fundamental attitude is best summed up in this passage, written at the time, in 1892:

Le courant occulte de l'anarchie n'éveille en nous qu'un seul frisson primordial : dire pour soi seul son rêve au seul écho de soi-même. Et tout le reste est journalisme...1

Under this particular form, Mauclair's anarchism was expressed again in the following two years. In June 1893, L'Ermitage organised a "Referendum artistique et social" whereby a large number of people were invited to reply to the question:

Quelle est la meilleure condition du Bien social, une organisation spontanée et libre, ou bien une organisation disciplinée et méthodique? Vers laquelle de ces conceptions doivent aller les préférences de l'artiste?

For Mauclair, complete freedom was the only answer, but freedom subject to the personal, moral laws of the individual. To attain this,

1. EAL Aug. 1892, p.248. ("Lettre sur l'individualisme").
the upset of society was only a temporary inconvenience. He continued:

Je dis ceci en artiste et en homme - mêmes mots pour moi qui instaure de ma vie une parallèle oeuvre d'art. Sentir intensément! Mais c'est la seule parole que je consentirais à crier dans les rues! Dans la vie et dans l'art, l'événement est l'effet du magnétisme individuel.¹

In this, Mauclair is following Barrès, in the "dédain d'être mauvais" of which he had already written, and in his determination to make his life worthy of his idealism.

Shortly after this, when he was explaining the aims of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in the Mercure de France, Mauclair gave an example of how the new theatre could contribute to new ideas - and clearly, this was the only form of active protest - through the intellect - that he could accept:

...c'est avec une plus grande sollicitation encore que nous nous préparons en représentant Un Ennemi du Peuple à montrer des hommes libres, à faire crier sur la scène une foule angoissée des questions sociales présentes; et nous comptons servir ainsi à notre guise et selon notre rôle d'artistes la cause individualiste qui passionne l'élite.²

The picture we now have before us is of Mauclair writing and talking about and taking part in, anarchism, as far as that word was understood by a group of intellectuals. Despite his militancy and activity, however, he could not have seemed other than detached, or ineffectually stand-offish. This is reflected by what Lugné-Poe wrote in his memories of the first months of the Oeuvre:

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1. L'Ermitage June 1892. In the findings of the 'Referendum' Mauclair was classed among the "Libéraux anarchistes" (partisans de la liberté absolue, de l'anarchie), with Antonia-Traversi, Beaubourg, Burel, Carrère, de Marès, Olivia, Pica, Quillard, Venancourt, and Wilde.

2. MF Oct. 1893, p.191. With reference to anarchism, Mauclair recalled in SOL (p.116) Mallarmé's dictum: "La vraie bombe, c'est le livre". Is this not the idea behind the production of Ibsen's play, as Mauclair presents it here?
Mauclair en acier, très anarchiste, et le plus absolu de nous tous. Ne faillit-il pas plus tard être compromis dans le procès des Trente. Il l’eût voulu un peu, c’est-à-dire, qu’il eût voulu être tangent, mais pas sécant - tout ça peut se concilier..

There is no precise reason for thinking that Mauclair was involved in the trial of the 'Trente', (when rather dubious charges of anarchism were brought against that number of suspects), though he did mention the main figure, Félix Fénéon to Mallarmé shortly after the trial, and at some time he was in contact with him over Laforgue's papers. In 1894, (when the trial took place), Mauclair gave the following definition of Anarchism, which is especially revealing, since it stresses the intellectual, rather than the social origins of his ideas on the subject:

Si l'anarchie est primordialement la réforme de l'Éthique selon le principe de l'Individualisme, je puis vous répondre nettement que l'anarchisme est né en moi avec l'étude des métaphysiques et l'éveil de la sensibilité dans la période consciente : cette formation de mon esprit en fut la cause et la mode tout ensemble.

In late 1892, Mauclair had not yet reached the age of twenty; he had published only poetry and articles; he was as yet on the eve of first contributing to the Mercure de France. Yet there is little essential difference between his ideas then, and his ideas seventeen years and thirty books later in 1909.

This is not an absurd over-simplification. Though Mauclair's mind developed in breadth with experience and new interests, its depths had now been reached. The artistic preoccupations, the moral attitude which directed his later work are already present in his

2. Letter of 16 Aug., 1894: "Vous avez vu par Fénéon quelle est l'imbécile justice officielle".
3. Félix Dubois: Le Péril anarchiste (Paris, [1894]), p.228.) Mauclair is described as "littérateur, 22 ans."
conception of intellectual anarchism, the child of Idealism and Individualism. The former may almost always be explained by reference to the latter.

We may turn to Mallarmé, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, to Barrès to explain where these ideas originate: we may say that there is nothing new in Mauclair's idealism, culled from ideas already in the air, at a time when the names he constantly used—Hegel, Fichte, Carlyle, Emerson, Plato, Plotinus, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Swedenborg—were common currency. It is nevertheless true that Mauclair's idealism, whatever its origin, so profoundly marked his mind that all his future work is influenced by it.

In September 1892 Mauclair published his first article in the Mercure de France; it was another idealist statement, entitled "Notes sur l'idée pure", and it was placed, by direct reference to Pages under the specific influence of Mallarmé. Subsequently, during 1893, he published other articles of a theoretical nature—"Fraternités idéales",1 "Éloge de la luxure"2 and others—and these contain much of what had been said before, with some interesting extensions of thought. Since Mauclair later re-used the most important parts of these articles in Eleusis, where they will be discussed, all that need by noted here is the difference in style and treatment of these articles and those of the Essais d'art libre. Mauclair is less violent, less inclined to militant eloquence; after all he is addressing the Elite. His vocabulary is much more specialised, tending towards abstruse theoretical jargon; he is discussing points of detail with like-minded enthusiasts who are capable of understanding. This,

1. Feb. 1893.
2. May 1893.
and careful reference to Mallarmé, or to Flaubert perhaps, gives an impression of authority and balance less evident in the earlier articles.

At the end of 1893, Mauclair had published only his *Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé* as a separate work. He had however been working for some time on *Eleusis*, his first full-length book. Together, these are admirable examples of the cumulative result of all that has been studied in this and the preceding chapter, and it is as such that they will now be examined.
Chapter Four; First separate works.

For several reasons it is convenient to discuss MacNeil's *Conference sur Stéphane Mallarmé* at this point. Firstly, although it was probably written in 1892 (and this fact must be borne in mind) it was not published until mid-1893. In discussing it here, it appears in the same chronological order as it did for MacNeil's contemporaries. Secondly, it represents, in the particular instance of Stéphane Mallarmé, an admirable application of the idealist-individualist theory MacNeil expressed during 1892 (and which was discussed at the end of the previous chapter). Conversely, through the Conference we may observe MacNeil's complete faith in the development of MacNeil's idealist theory. Thirdly, this Conference provides a capital insight into MacNeil's mind before Kleinig's comparison between the two shows, in particular that whereas the core ideas are continued and expanded, the later book lacked the insinuations of the Conference.

This was, of course, inevitable. Several limits are imposed upon a lecture of this type by the demands of time and place — in fact, MacNeil made good use of the rhetorical device whereby, picturing lack of time, he was enabled to mention briefly all of Mallarmé's works which he would have liked to quote in greater detail. MacNeil's letter to Kleinig concerning the choice of poems has been quoted elsewhere; it underlines MacNeil's dilemma: this text was intended to be spoken, not read; a degree of simplicity was therefore required in the choice of poems, which was not subsequently altered in the published form. On the other hand, this was not an attempt at vulgarisation. Throughout the Conference MacNeil is specifically add-

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1. For publication details cf. Chapter 2, pp. 69-72.

ressing the Elite who are capable of understanding the works, and who know and admire the man. This is why much of the Conférence is devoted to Mallarmé's idealism, rather than to specific texts.

The Conférence is divided into four sections; the first of which is a short introduction where Mauclair makes clear to his audience that they are about to hear "une simple rêverie sur une humble fable" - an apologue rather than literary criticism.

This apologue, which is the most important part of the Conférence, is contained in the next two sections; the first consists of a statement of the fundamental qualities and preoccupations of the poet, the second sketches the evolution and contemporary position of the poet's mind. In neither section is Mallarmé mentioned by name. Though Mallarmé's presence is felt at every turn, Mauclair's purpose is to evoke "l'incarnation momentanée, en une forme humaine, de ce rêve de la Poésie qui était au milieu de nous et, par le pouvoir seul de la parole, nous hantait."

After this "histoire d'une âme rare", the final section offers a commentary which Mauclair admits can only be slight. In fact, five of the seventeen pages of the Conférence mention specific works, but these are to be thought of rather as the ice-berg tip of the immense current of ideas suggested in the apologue.

Mauclair's declared intention to avoid literary commentary is given from a position of strength. It is what Mallarmé has not expressed that is important; silence, or "abstention" cannot, in Emerson's terms, be subjected to literary analysis:

Mais les pensées que ces quelques solitaires s'efforcent de proclamer par leur silence autant que par leur parole, par leur abstention autant que par leur actes, demeureront en leur beauté forte pour se reformer dans la Nature, par delà le désaccord d'aujourd'hui, dans l'harmonie du système universel. (p.5.)
There is however in Mauclair's intention an inherent weakness of which he was not unaware: later in his talk he said:

"..cela semble si étrange et de folie, ces soucis d'idéalité absorbant une existence humaine jusqu'à semblable paroxysme. En telle façon que seule semble susceptible de tels chimériques personnages une fable, venue d'un Hindoustan de contemplation centenaire, où le rêve semble encore possible, dans l'éloignement..." (pp.14-15.)

This insistence on the unreality of his theme is revealing. Once words are used to describe idealist preoccupations which are strangely unreal because they are so elevated beyond the scope of normal life, once the conviction is expressed that such idealism is not only valid, but essential, the resulting definitions and declarations give the impression of a superior dogmatism on the part of the writer, which paradoxically tends to obscure what it is meant to explain. This tendency is also to be found in Eleusis where Mauclair's claim in the preface that he has only written out hesitant unformed musings contrasts unfavourably with many of the assertions with which he was obliged to clothe his subjects in subsequent pages. Perhaps the dichotomy between the object and the expression of idealism is precisely: how much, if any, explanation can be infused into "une simple rêverie sur une humble fable" without the loss of the hesitant evocative effect sought after? Mauclair appeals to the Elite because the dichotomy described above presents no obstacle to them since they accept that fundamental strangeness of the idealist world.

In the second section Mauclair describes the poet's essential qualities: his isolation, his concentration, his determination not to use his innate talents in a facile display of virtuosity which does not involve his whole being. From the outset the poet was keenly aware of the power of words as intermediaries between men and the
universal current of ideas, he was passionately attuned to Life, to the "sensualité latente des choses". These initial qualities brought him to realise with Poe and Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, that the marmorian, aloof Beauty of his predecessors could be made more accessible to humans - and at the same time, more divinely perfect by not being fully revealed, by requiring a passionate involvement to lift the delicate veil of mystery:

Il se prit à chérir dans les ténèbres cette exaltation de penser au geste glorieux qui soulève les voiles, et fait naître une clarté plus belle d'être venue de loin. (p.8)

The special power of words, and the special awareness of Life - "le respect du verbe et l'amour du frisson" - would form, and combine with, the "symbolic expression" dreamt of.

This conception which the poet had arrived at was not an "easy" one; the effort required was too great, and his first attempts were greeted by the crowd with derision. His reaction was to isolate himself still farther, and to advance his researches into his special concept of Beauty and its expression for himself and for the few who turned to him.

When we hear Mauclair proclaim to his audience that this incomprehension displayed by the crowd, that this independent, solitary attitude of the poet constituted the first period of the Poet's life, and was "l'honneur de notre douloureux groupe" (the Elite) we may better understand why he was later to turn only to those artists whom he regarded as having remained true to their ideals despite early tribulations.

The individualism implicit in Mauclair's insistence on the poet's isolation becomes explicit in the third section. This is built
round the idea that the poet's duty is to show ordinary men what human consciousness is. The poet is a man like others, except that he possesses the means to reach other men, to build bridges between sensitivities by the tangible means of words. In this way he can show that the Ideal may be reached by others too; previous artists created the impression that they were superhumans distinct from the crowd, but the poet of whom Mauclair speaks can show by his work and life, by the quality of his thought and expression that other men may be like him, if they wish:

On the other hand, even if the poet-priest's duty is contained in the verb "se manifester", he is not required to attempt the revelation of himself to his contemporaries if, as the initial derision suggested, the time was not yet ripe, and Beauty would thereby be devalued. Mallarmé had conceived the plan of an immense work of revelation, but knew that the time had not yet arrived for it.

At this point Mauclair turns again to Emerson: when the poets are silent it is not a sign of impotence, but a clear indication that the masses are unworthy of hearing their message. The poet's qualities, however, are recognised by some— they are the young men to whom Mallarmé had shown the secrets and the potential of expression, but had not admitted "l'angoisse de l'inharmonie du temps".
profond et un ami, se réservant de semer de loin en loin dans la foule quelques perles scintillantes, vestiges glorieux d'un étrange diadème connu de lui seul, tandis que la foule domptée, n'insultant même plus les joyaux, en demeaurait impressionnée comme d'une pierrerie inconnue, jaillie avec des vertus singulières d'un cristal indéfinissable. (p.14)

In this way Mauclair arrives at the final section where he turns to discuss Mallarmé's work. First of all, however, he underlines this essential quality:

Au rêve habitué et de lui prisonnier jusqu'au génie, celui qui autrement n'eût été que le premier des écrivains se hausse jusqu'à être : le Poète. (p.16)

Mauclair sees Mallarmé as the first French aesthetician in that proud list (so often mentioned elsewhere) which includes Plotinus, Goethe, Hegel, Schelling, Poe, Carlyle, Emerson, and Wagner.

Mallarmé's idealism is absolute:

Et s'il s'est rencontré une nature humaine destinée à un idéalisme parfait, non point conservé par la seule raison, mais je puis dire par le sang, le coeur, et les nerfs même, c'est la sienne. (p.16.)

This was in those of Mallarmé's contemporaries who referred solely to their own individualism, men such as Villiers, Banville, Manet, Degas, and Verlaine. This is in Mallarmé's young disciples who turn to him increasingly. That they are his disciples is unmistakable; Mauclair specifically describes the 'maître' as "le grand éducateur de l'art métaphysique de ces dernières années" but nevertheless he has in mind Mallarmé's example and conversation rather than any systematic indoctrination. What the young Elite found so uplifting in their 'maître', he says, was his asceticism, his concentrated painstaking researches, and above all, his sincerity. These qualities are important because they became almost the pre-requisite qualities of any artist worthy of that name in Mauclair's estimation.
After these general considerations, Mauclair becomes more precise, though he maintains the tone of the panegyric. In fact this part of the Conférence is firmly orientated towards the Elite - those who knew the very rare volumes of Poèmes with the frontispiece by Rops, those who could fully appreciate le Guignon, l'Angoisse, l'Apparition, or Brise marine, and who would cry out with him:

Ch! Messieurs, au fond de l'âme et en s'écoutant sangloter jusqu'à crier, est-ce qu'il a été écrit, dites, quelque chose de plus admirable et de plus pur? (p.18.)

It is the Elite who are Mauclair's audience now. "Puis vous savez que le maître chanta musicalement..." he writes as he introduces a few words on l'Après-midi d'un faune, Prose, Hérodiade. "Vous connûtes aussi, Messieurs, le volume titré Pages..."; you know the 'diamantine' translation of Poe's verse, the subtle preface to Vathek, it is you who read Mallarmé's articles and reverently listen to his conversation.

Those to whom Mauclair is speaking know that solitary lamp-lit meditation is the only possible commentary; they have seen the evidence of the inspiration afforded by Notes sur le théâtre, they know how great a source Mallarmé's work is for the meditations of their generation.

But why the Elite? Though all men are equal in the sight of Art as a means of human consciousness, some are more capable than others of turning to the message of idealism:

...que dire aux autres, à ceux qui ne comprennent ni ne s'enquièrent, et quelle exhortation à s'enquérir? Nul reproche n'est utile, ou même légitime,

1. Cf. ML p.16. "A cette époque, (1891) je ne connaissais que quelques poèmes en prose et le luxueux album de poèmes autographiés, édité à quarante exemplaires par la Revue Indépendante...avec une eau-forte de Félicien Rops. Pierre Louys... m'avait religieusement montré cet album : bien trop pauvre pour l'acquérir, je l'avais recopié, ainsi que son frontispiece."
The Conference ends on a short 'adieu' which contains a succinct re-statement of the central theme of what has gone before. Mauclair reminds his audience that he has spoken only of Mallarmé's idealism and his intellectual presence. There is another side on which he has not elaborated — and in this we read what is perhaps one of the best definitions of the special attraction of the "mardis de la rue de Rome":

De l'homme j'eusse pu dire des choses élevées et pures, du causeur, ou du rêveur, ou du conseiller admirable, ou plus encore : du simple ami à la parole douce vers qui, à quelques-uns soucieux d'art et affectueux, l'on va s'isoler du pays humain, certains soirs, inquiets de rêve. (p. 21.)

It is difficult to express in an analysis such as that sketched out above what the particular charm of the Conference is. Perhaps at first sight the reader may be taken aback by its apparent verbosity; this is in fact an expression of intensity. As we have already observed, Mauclair is voicing, to the Elite, his passionate admiration for one man's artistic attitude. Therefore, by its subject and its conditions of delivery, this lecture can soar above the heights even of literary commentary. We can imagine that the inflections of the human voice, now calm, now penetratingly decisive would have completed the impression of intensity and above all of conviction which careful reading of the written text does reveal.

There is no doubt that Mauclair thought of himself as a member of an intellectual Elite. Who the other members of this vague group may have been, it is impossible to know. While we may draw up tentative lists of those who attended Mallarmé's 'mardis', or we may turn
over copies of the *Mercure de France* to find lists of contributors, we shall be no nearer knowing which of his contemporaries Mauclair considered even approached the intensity of idealist conviction in life and work which Mallarmé epitomised. Gide, Maeterlinck, Régnier, Barrès perhaps, and others in varying degrees. Even if the absolute definition of idealism contained in the *Conférence* is explicable in terms of Mauclair's complete admiration of his subject, and of his militant determination to combat baseness and laxity in Art, the convictions he expressed there remained with him for ever. There is always something of Mallarmé in those artists - Carrière, Rodin, Besnard, Whistler, Monet - who represented, for Mauclair, the best of French achievement.

Another way of looking at what, from the *Conférence* on Mallarmé, was to remain a permanent facet of Mauclair's outlook, is to consider one of the sources of the text. The extracts from Emerson which Mauclair quotes are almost certainly taken from the translation which appeared under the title "Sécession" in the *Entretiens politiques et littéraires* of November 1891. Not only did Mauclair begin writing his *conférence* shortly after this date, but the passages he uses are almost identical to the translation of the *Entretiens politiques et littéraires*; his only alteration was to lighten the quotations by omitting certain subsidiary clauses which added little to the meaning.

Much of the underlying theme of the *Conférence* is, in fact, based upon this essay: that some men "nobles d'intelligence et d'âme haute" withdraw from Society is a significant omen; where Society resents their withdrawal and its implied criticism, it should instead turn to these men, the idealists, rather than spurn...
them, for the higher Ideals of such 'abstentionniste's are a benefit to Society. This ought to be recognised and encouraged, not denigrated. They have realised that life is too rich to be wasted in pettiness, they are awaiting the time when Society will turn to them. Until then they can only remain true to their Ideal:

Si je ne puis travailler, au moins ne dois-je pas nécessairement mentir; mon seul devoir clairement apparent aujourd'hui, c'est de ne pas mentir.

To understand Mauclair, we cannot do better than to keep these two lines in mind. In his early years Mauclair acquired his deep-seated conviction that there was an Elite - epitomized in Mallarmé, and described by Emerson. By the terms of their disdain for the ignoble in any sense, their Art is a total involvement of Life and Ideas. Their life will be a testimony to their isolated, elevated condition.

On the other hand, the necessary isolation of the Elite is counterbalanced by the duty: se manifester. In 1893 Mauclair could reconcile these two apparent extremes by the thought that the poet may withhold his revelation if he feels that the time is not yet ripe for it; in a few years, as we shall see, it is the second impulse, that of moving outwards from an initial position of reserve, which comes to the fore, and which is expressed in the critic's "duty" to the artist and to the audience. Yet Mauclair's fundamental attitude did not change, there was merely a shift of emphasis. That his concern for intellectual sincerity and integrity remained with him is amply demonstrated by this piece of advice (from the preface to Servitude et grandeur littéraires in 1922), which Mauclair offered to an imaginary young man such as himself, setting out on a literary career:

Travaille avant tout en toi-même; là tu es chez toi, roi de droit divin. Efforce-toi de conserver jalousement cet autre luxe permis au pauvre que tu es: ne pas mentir.
To attempt to be specific about Mallarmé's influence on Mauclair's work of about this time would be a thankless task.

Perhaps there is a similarity between Fauvre enfant pâle and the Images \(^1\) concerning the same subject which were discussed in an earlier chapter; but Mauclair was certainly not so devoid of awareness of his surroundings as to be obliged to turn to Mallarmé for inspiration in this instance.

The following lines from Brise Marine (which Mauclair quotes in full in the Conférence) do recall Mauclair's Feuillets vierges,\(^2\) part of which is quoted next:

\[
\begin{align*}
O \text{ nuits! ni la clarté déserte de ma lampe} \\
\text{Sur le vide papier que la blancheur défend...} \\
\text{...les pâles feuilles de papier gisantes sur ma table} \\
\text{où trône la lampe, comme des pierres tombales dans un doux clair de lune.}
\end{align*}
\]

This is a fairly common image, however. After all, the lamp is often identified with scholarly pursuits — indeed, in the Conférence Mauclair says as much:

\[
\text{Et tant d'autres vers, qu'il me faut confier au silence et à la méditation sous la lampe des fronts qui les voudront savoir...}
\]

Nevertheless, we cannot explain all away; there is influence, but not in simple linguistic coincidence. Mauclair knew, as did Mallarmé, that terrifying moment of indecision when the pen was about to touch the paper, that desperate wish to express his inner tensions, that fear that his power would turn to impotence before the inexorable perfection of the Ideal which inspired him. What Mallarmé's example did, was to show Mauclair that not only was this dilemma inevitable, but the only one possible.

Why else did Mauclair single out the two lines from Toast

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1. L'Art littéraire Nov. 1893.
2. Rl Dec. 1891.
funèbre which he felt typified l'idéalisme moderne?

Cette foule hagarde, elle clame : Nous sommes
La triste opacité de nos spectres futurs.

"Cette foule hagarde" - these young men despising the journalists' mockery, waiting for the moment when Beauty could be revealed and recognised, but suffering intellectually (and often physically) from the desperate trials of their chosen course. Elsewhere Mauclair wrote "l'Art est une maladie..."¹ and "Littérature, maladie triste..."²; he mentioned, in the Conférence, "l'agonie de l'exilé s'accrochant aux Fenêtres symboliques d'où l'on voit la pourpre et tout le triomphe du crépuscule" as well as "la hantise de l'Azur"...

De l'éternel azur la sereine ironie
Accable, belle indolemment comme les fleurs,
Le poète impuissant qui maudit son génie
A travers un désert stérile de Douleurs.

But, in moments of doubt and pain he could turn to Mallarmé, to the 'conseiller admirable' to regain his faith that only by accepting his life could his destiny as one of the Elite be fulfilled. To refuse to accept the challenge once one was aware of its existence was to lie.

It is in these terms that we may realise the full potential and force of the terms and images - La Pourpre, le Silence, le Cristal - which Mauclair might be said to have 'borrowed' from his 'maître'. Then we may see that it is not the mere evaluation of an 'influence' that is important, but rather that tense, passionate development of a young man's personality within Mallarmé's sphere of intellectual, yet human, concerns that is to be retained.

This is why, when Mauclair says of Mallarmé in the Conférence:

¹. Harmor in SM.
². MF Feb. 1893.
Simple et bon dans l'ordinaire existence, il revêt au choc d'un mot, d'un geste quelconque, ce caractère subit, et singulier presque jusqu'au fabuleux, d'un être séparé des choses par on ne sait quel muet cristal qui l'enclôt, qui est cette lumière indéfinie que l'on appelle le rêve, et qui lui confère, ainsi qu'une seconde nature, la vertu maudite en ces temps de ne jamais accomplir le plus petit acte selon les lois subies par autrui, (p.16.)

we must recall his early letter to Gide in which he wrote of

l'impossible qu'il y a à suivre Mallarmé, qui est un captif enchanté dans un tour de cristal : écoutons le chant, n'envions pas la muraille lumineuse, marcher est doux.1

Here we have a "source" - but we also have evidence of the reaction of Mauclair, a young creative artist, to the older man's example.

When we read in the Conférence of the four categories of "false artists" whose super-human attitudes Mallarmé would not accept, we remember the piece entitled "Tristesse de la Pourpre"2 and realise that this could be the framework of it. Another "source", but here too we should not forget that, despite Mallarmé's example, Mauclair too had to make this decision to serve the more human but more divinely perfect and demanding Beauty.

2. RBche April 1891.
Although *Eleusis* was published in February 1894, Mauclair had begun work on it many months before. When he first mentioned it in his letters to Gide, on 8th August 1892, he seems to be speaking of something they had already discussed:

> Je travaille activement à mon Eleusis, que je veux décidément publier l'hiver prochain...

This resolution was however seriously upset shortly afterwards by Mauclair's illness, and his doctor's refusal to allow him to work more than an hour or two each day. He makes his state of mind clear to Gide when he discusses the topicality he would have wished his now retarded book to have:

> Je suis horriblement triste. Mon Eleusis que j'aurais voulu finir, où je voulais dire tant de choses que je sentais bonnes à dire, voilà que seulement l'hiver prochain je le pourrai publier... ¹

At this point, Mauclair is still with the Rochegrosses. On his return to Paris, writing to Mallarmé, he says wryly that from his holiday he has gained two things: his present ill-health, and a start on "*un livre d'esthétique pour l'hiver prochain*".²

From then on, until the following September, Mauclair is obviously busy with *L'Oeuvre*, but this activity does not hinder his work on *Eleusis* as he tells Mallarmé on May 25th 1893, only a few days after the performance of Pelléas; he adds that he has dedicated his book to Mallarmé, but hopes that the older man will have no cause to be sorry for this.

Since we may assume that work on *Eleusis* was begun in the latter half of 1892, the book is evidently a product of the prime

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¹ Letter of 25 Sept. 1892.
² Letter of 24 Oct. 1892.
of Mauclair's symbolist years. By late 1892 he is no longer a debutant; he has acquired friends, and a certain amount of experience. The book is concurrent with his Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé - his first expression of admiration for the principal figure in his life amongst the 'ainés' - and also with his enthusiasm for Pelléas, and the Oeuvre, which may be seen as a venture of the 'jeunes'.

Eleusis is therefore a product of enthusiasm, admiration and conviction. If there are doubts, these are swept away by his ambitious intentions, as the following revealing letter to Gide shows.¹ He begins by discussing the article he has just written on Le Voyage d'Urfien;² what he has said there concerning the "symboles intermédiaires" Gide will find developed further in Eleusis. He continues:

Mon livre est fini, et j'ai cette façon d'en être content, que "c'est ce que j'ai voulu." Maintenant, est-ce cela qu'il fallait vouloir? Je laisse la parole au Démon. J'ai voulu une série de fragments allant du ton de la causerie esthétique à celui de la prose lyrique imagée, des fragments sous lesquels on pressentit pourtant la sourde obstination d'une nature une, sans dogmatisme pédant, mais procédant par affirmations d'une violence froide. Et quelque étrangeté dans l'expression de l'abstrait. Voilà où j'ai tendu.

After this Mauclair gives an approximate list of the chapters of the book - "le tout dans une orientation violente d'individualisme" - but strangely, instead of beginning with "Narcisse" as the book does, he begins with "de la personnalité". Was he afraid that Gide might jump too quickly to the conclusion that here was an imitation of his Traité du Narcisse? In the light of this it is equally interesting to read Mauclair's description of the style he has used:

1. This letter is not dated, but, as the following note shows, belongs to August 1893.
j'ai taché de clarifier et de mettre de l'air,
pour que ça ne ressemble pas à un traité. Le
style est trés-coupant, ou trés-lâche selon
l'aventure. Bref, un pélerinage autour de la
cité intérieure.

On the 12th September Mauclair tells Gide that he is trying
to have his book accepted by Perrin; by October he can state that
Perrin will publish it in the following January. During November he
is correcting the proofs; by the beginning of December this is done.

It appears that Eleusis was eventually brought out towards
the beginning of February 1894. On the one hand, Jean de Tinan, in
his Cahiers describes a visit to a 'Mardi' in February, during which
Mallarmé spoke of Mauclair's Eleusis which was to be published the
next day; on the other hand Mauclair tells Gide on the 15th February
that he had sent his book to Gide's Paris address (Gide was in Alger-
ia). This letter is optimistic, but with a hint of irony:

Mon livre se vend un peu, chose bizarre, et on va
en parler, en jaser, en bafouiller, un peu tout
le monde, Barrès, Bauer, Mourey, qui sais-je !
... Eleusis s'étale aux vitrines, où on l'achète,
j'ai vu !!!

* * *

Contemporary comment on Eleusis seems to have been fairly
limited. Mauclair was considerably put out by an article published
in La Revue blanche by Lucien Muhlfeld. Towards the beginning of

annonce Eleusis."
2. Letters of 17 Nov. and 2 Dec. respectively, from Mauclair to Gide.
3. Vente Andrieux, 22-25 Mai 1939. Item 374: Cahiers janvier 1894 -
novembre 1894.
   The relevant extract is given in facsimile; it is unfortunately
   illegible for the most part, including what may be an invaluable
   report of Mallarmé's opinion of Eleusis, quoted, as far as is
   possible, later in this chapter.
4. Mauclair to Gide, 15 Feb. 1894. Eleusis was among the 'livres
   reçus' in MF March 1894.
5. RBche March 1894, pp.260-263.
March he wrote as follows to Mallarmé:

Je ne sais si vous avez vu la Revue Blanche. J'y ai trouvé sur Eleusis un article de Muhlfield qui n'est ni d'un ami ni d'un jeune homme, ni d'un homme juste se souvenant de services rendus. Il m'importe peu, je me bornerai à ne le plus saluer. Mais la phrase dernière de l'article est pour m'accuser sèchement de vous avoir dérobé vos idées et vos mots. Je sais que vous m'aimez; mais je vous prie de vous reporter à mon livre, où je n'emprunte pas une fois vos idées et vos mots sans citer votre nom et mettre entre guillemets ce que je cite. La mauvaise foi de Muhlfield m'inquiète peu et ne me blesse point, mais une incrimination semblable demande toujours vérification quand elle ne vient pas d'un journaliste quelconque, et je tenais à m'en justifier d'un mot auprès de vous seulement, car je sais que vous m'estimez, tandis qu'un homme me mésestimant ne me fera jamais déranger.1

This seems to be an unwarranted outburst when we turn to Muhlfield's article. In it there are certainly many criticisms to which Mauclair must have taken exception, but the final sentence to which he refers concerns one point only:

Estimer que le vers libre convient aux hésitations de la pensée, et qu'il sied de réserver aux accords définitifs "les grandes orgues de l'alexandrin" est une théorie qui appartient, pensée et mots, à M. Stéphane Mallarmé.

This is the only time Muhlfield mentions Mallarmé in his article, but he seems to have touched a point on which Mauclair was especially susceptible to criticism - or perhaps Mauclair was overwrought.2

After he heard from Geneviève Mallarmé that her father was still in England, Mauclair asked her not to send on his previous letter which

1. This letter may be dated by reference to subsequent letters and by the fact that in it Mauclair did not know if Mallarmé had returned from England.

2. The letter referred to in the previous note tells us that Mauclair was very busy attempting to finish a novel for the 15th of April. This novel may have been CC.
he admitted was written "dans un moment de fatigue et d'énervement".  

There is no direct knowledge as to what Mallarmé thought of Eleusis. Jean de Tinan has recorded Mallarmé's opinion on Eleusis on the eve of publication. This record is however, very fragmentary:

"un enchantement de conversation lente [referring to Mallarmé]. D'abord on parle de l'Eleusis de Mauclair qui paraît demain:
"une façon de traiter [en surface] des choses les plus profondes".
Il en fait grand cas - cite une extraordinaire [...] 
"Si souvent a servi de prétextes à des rêveries" et dont je suis désolé de ne pas me souvenir."

Although Mauclair's reaction to the final sentence of Muhlfeld's article may seem out of proportion with what is said there, it is not difficult to understand why he was so incensed by the rest of the article. Muhlfeld has effectively ridiculed the book by plucking out a few short sentences in each section, and "discussing" them quite out of context. For example, in his paragraph on Mauclair's "Psychologie du mystère" he begins:

Nous allons donc avoir quelque lumière touchant à la définition du mystère. Lisons la première ligne: "Ce que j'appelle mystère, vous le savez" - Vous savez le latin dit un personnage de vaudeville? - Oui, mais faites comme si je ne le savais pas; traduisez-moi vos citations....

The comparison is satirically devastating; and yet is this fair? Muhlfeld has quoted only the first seven words of the relevant sentence which continues: "...ou plutôt vous le sentez", followed by no less than twenty-two examples of the 'mystère' Mauclair has in mind:

le silence, ce qu'on devine dans l'ombre, les formes d'objets usuels qui se modifient lorsqu'on tourne la tête, les haleines que l'on sent très douces sur la nuque lorsqu'on se penche sur un livre....

1. In fact the letter had already left for England: cf. Mondor, Vie de Mallarmé, p.678 - Geneviève Mallarmé to her father: "... une lettre pour toi de Mauclair. Il gémit d'un vilain article de Muhlfeld paru dans la Revue Blanche, que tu trouveras ici, et où il est dit qu'Eleusis c'est tes idées et tes phrases."
He then devotes over thirty pages to his discussion of mystery in various forms. So, in Muhlfeld's terms, the 'quotations' are sufficiently well translated. If the reader does not care for Mauclair's version, then he need only turn to the preface where he is warned not to expect a series of logical exposés.

Muhlfeld took exception to the preface as well. He contrasted Mauclair's declared vague intentions with the high-handed certainty of some of his assertions, and concluded:

*Une forme très assurée sur une pensée souvent flou.*

This, and several other points are perfectly valid — perhaps it is true that Mauclair borrowed too much from Leibnitz, Plato, Aristotle, or Barrès; the usefulness of such a vague collection may be questioned; points of philosophy may be found inconsistent; no doubt the whole volume should have taken the title of the fifth section: "Quelques jeux de l'idéation", but it is the superficiality of some of the criticism, and the facetious form in which some of it is couched that is of little real value, and must have so annoyed Mauclair's serious nature. Mauclair could not have written to Gide:

"...et puis n'aurais-tu aimé mon livre q'aurait été pour des raisons si amicales et hautes!"

if Gide had indulged the tendency to epigrammatic comment shown by Muhlfeld:

"L'auteur a des affirmations généreuses jusqu'à la gratuité."

Nevertheless, Muhlfeld does acknowledge the charm of the book:

"Il est d'une grâce de ton toute personnelle, de tour charmant, de vocabulaire inconsistent mais étendu et choisi, and the extent of the author's knowledge. However, the faint praise

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1. Letter of 21 July 1894.
which damned so easily is never far. These qualities make Eleusis 'un écrit louablement révolutionnaire'. Then he continues acidly: 'Il ne l'est pas encore assez'. The reader cannot forget this impression of insufficiency on Mauclair's part, created at every juncture by a qualifying remark of this type. It is probably no coincidence that, after a relatively important year of contribution, Mauclair did not publish anything more in La Revue blanche for many years.

Consolation for Mauclair came from other sources. As he wrote to Mallarmé at the end of the letter complaining about Muhlfeld:

J'ai reçu d'Huysmans, de Maeterlinck, de Heredia, et de quelques autres de nos êtres chers, des lettres qui m'ont touché, et cela me suffit largement.

At this point it is interesting to read a letter which Élémir Bourges, who was certainly one of Mauclair's "êtres chers", sent to Armand Point and in which he said:

Le livre de Mauclair m'a extrêmement plu, et pour l'âge qu'il a, c'est un début des plus remarquables. Il est poète et je suis sûr que c'est un de ceux qui feront quelque chose. Le mallarmisme, etc. sont des petits boutons sur le nez - qui lui passeront.1

Maeterlinck also showed his appreciation in an article in l'Art moderne2 where he underlined the ease with which Mauclair discussed elevated metaphysical notions:

Les vérités les plus étranges - et ce sont en général les plus vraies - viennent de se mettre à portée de sa main et il ne fait aucun effort pour y atteindre et pour nous les montrer. Il a même l'habitude de s'étonner que l'on s'étonne


Gisèle Marie, the editress of this book, mentions SA in connection with the above letter, which she dates as [mars 1894]; this date and the content of the letter point to Eleusis as being the subject.

2. The date of this article is not known. The extract quoted was taken from the relevant page of AM (pp.77-78) inserted in Verhaeren's copy of Eleusis held by B.R.B.-M.L.
tant il se sent chez lui sur les sommets les plus purs de la morale mystique. Et le plus remarquable, c'est que ce mysticisme est plein d'une vie quotidienne et merveilleuse.

Support also came from another Belgian. As early as 27th October 1893 Mauclair had written to Gide to say that Maubel was planning to give a talk 'sur nous deux'. This eventually took place in March 1894, when, in Antwerp on the 16th and in Brussels on the 19th, Maubel delivered a lecture on L'Idéoréalisme de quelques écrivains. In this he quoted extensively from Mauclair's Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé in order to illustrate the individualism of the Post-Prometheus figure who cries out to his fellow men:

Songe simplement à prendre conscience de toi-même, car c'est là le secret.

Though he does not quote from Eleusis at such great length, it is clear that Mauclair, whom Maubel calls "un gourmand d'idéalité", would have approved whole-heartedly with the links forged between his own thought and that of Barrès concerning 'le culte du moi', or between his ideas on "le mystère du corps" and Maeterlinck's plays, or again, between his description of Le Symbole and that of Gide. The inspiration and the tone (if not the felicity of expression) could well be Mauclair's in this image from Maubel's talk:

Le Jardin est en nous. Il n'y a, au-dehors, que des fleurs coupées et qui se fanent.

Clearly, in the previous articles, friendship, (or in Muhlfeld's case, the betrayal of friendship) played a considerable part. Though we do not know how well André Fontainas and Mauclair knew each other at the time, the former's article on Eleusis, appearing as it

1. A slightly condensed version of this talk is given in SN April 1894, pp.761-774.
did in the *Mercure de France*, must have been of considerable value to Mauclair.

Fontainas is giving a compte-rendu. He is enthusiastic, but precise, and fully appreciated Mauclair's initial difficulty, that which we have already mentioned in connection with the *Conférence sur Mallarmé*, and which Muhlfeld was quick to point out; the dichotomy between the object and the expression of Idealism. For Fontainas, however, Mauclair has avoided the danger:

...chez M. Camille Mauclair, à des attitudes alanguies et vivantes, à de certains cris superbes et nets, nous ne nous étonnons pas d'avoir surpris la noble effigie de son idée: poète, il savait le péril de périr en le gouffre banal des abstractions, et il a su dans un livre d'abstractions, se souvenir d'être un poète.

The essential element in this article is the lyricism and inspiration with which Mauclair has expressed himself, the sincerity and passion used to capture the multiple ideas he develops. Even if the influences of several 'masters' may be discerned, (Fontainas mentions Mallarmé as an example), this is not evidence of imitation, but of thorough assimilation.

Two remaining major themes struck Fontainas: that of the poet as an intermediary between the Universal and the Individual (Fontainas also expresses his high regard for Mauclair's *Conférence sur Mallarmé*) and that whereby Mauclair suggests that certain preoccupations - death, sensuality - which had so far been considered as moral issues, could form the basis for future aesthetic expression.

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1. MF. April 1894, p.338.
No doubt there are numerous literary influences clearly evident in *Eleusis* for those who possess the knowledge to recognise them. Indeed, the fact that they were observed disparagingly by Muhfeld, or sympathetically by Fontainas is merely an indication that Mauclair's preoccupations were those of his contemporaries.

Mallarmé and Villiers de L'Isle-Adam appear to be pre-eminent sources of inspiration. A.G. Lehmann has devoted several pages to *Eleusis*; his general opinion is categoric - "most of the serious parts of this work are pastiches of Mallarmé"; *Eleusis* is "little more than a somewhat laborious elaboration of some of the main threads of the *Divagations*"; and Mauclair is described as "the straw that blows with the more powerful breeze of Mallarmé's influence." Since Lehmann's subsequent analyses of parts of *Eleusis* within the context of Symbolist theorising are extremely detailed and pertinent, his opinion can only be accepted as authoritative.

A.W. Raitt also considers Mauclair's theory to be "dominée par l'idolâtrie de Mallarmé" but remarks that the influence of Villiers is easily recognised. He quotes passages from *Eleusis* to illustrate Mauclair's debt (whether acknowledged or not) to Claire Lenoir, Akédysséril, and Hamlet. Once again the authority of these identifications cannot be put into question. However, Raitt's most significant comment - which could equally well be applied to Mallarmé's influence - is as follows:

> Mais la véritable importance de la présence de Villiers dans l'œuvre de Mauclair n'est pas là : elle réside dans la création d'une atmosphère intellectuelle où Mauclair a baigné au temps de ses débuts littéraires et qui a imprégné son esthétique.

Yet there is in this evaluation an element of condescension which it is easy to assume in retrospect. In 1894 however, a different impression was created by Eléusis, which, despite its hesitancies, was on the whole an extremely articulate résumé of many of the ideas then current. Whatever other criticisms were levelled at Mauclair, his particular aspirations to be a synthesist of at least one sector of Symbolist ideas was generally recognised. Fontainas' comment is the most generously apt:

Forcément, l'influence des maîtres révérés se dénoncera en la formation d'une aussi franche conscience d'esthète, et M. Mauclair s'entendra sans doute reprocher d'avoir par endroits presque textuellement reproduit les idées par eux formulées déjà, par M. Mallarmé, pour citer. Qu'importe ce reproche? N'est-ce point la preuve bien plutôt d'une connaissance approfondie de leur pensée conforme, au point que, confrontée à la nouveauté de sa pensée jeune, elle y a laissé indélébile sa forme définitive? Pour de telles rencontres, il faudrait au contraire louer chez M. Mauclair sa probité d'esprit.

Quite certainly the critic could spend a great deal of time evaluating parts of Eléusis in terms of the influence of Gide, Barrès, Flaubert, Poe, Rosny, Baudelaire, Verlaine - and even Zola by counter-reaction! Yet in a theoretical work of this nature could any author be entirely original? In the particular circumstances of the time - and of his life - could Mauclair have done other than reflect the prevailing ideas? The following letter was written shortly after Eléusis was begun and shows better than any other document the preoccupations and pressures, general and particular, of the time:

Je suis ici solitaire, très-anémié, mais tranquille, la tête calme, les idées nettes, exempt du menu bavardage des gens de lettres (sic) - ch! qu'ils sont laids et grotesques, vus de loin - et me mordant les ongles devant un livre commencé. De la métaphysique, du silence, et de la liqueur de Fowler, voilà ma nourriture, avec deci delà une phrase d'Alégyssérl, une boutade de Pécuchet ou des sanglots de Sagesse, car j'ai emporté ces amis avec moi. Mes amis Rochegrosse sont délicieux : seule m'attriste la récente insanité bavée sur la mémoire de Baudelaire par quelques deschamps (sic), car j'aurais espéré pour Lui un silence éternel, et non des croassements.

En somme, heureux, je travaille...

*  *  *

Almost all of Mauclair's books begin with some form of introduction by the author, whether this is a preface of several pages or a brief explanatory note. This fact tells us something about his attitude as a writer. It indicates that he wishes to point the moral or to direct the reader's mind; it is also essentially a critic's device: he often attempts to anticipate the reader's reaction (since his books illustrate debatable "doctrines") and to present his own defence. An excellent example of the function of the preface is to be found in this letter, in which Mallarmé was thanking Mauclair for *L'Orient vierge*, published in 1897.

Après lecture, peut-être ai-je hésité un peu sur quel point faire tenir et équilibrer l'ensemble : la préface, un très pur morceau, ici me vient en aide loyalement...1

We cannot therefore discount such introductory pages.

Eleusis is no exception. Mauclair effectively anticipates many of the strictures he felt could be levelled at his book, for

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1. ML p. 115 letter of 28 June 1897 (not 1896 as stated).

==Cf. in a letter to Gide of 17 Jan. 1901 Mauclair voiced his annoyance that, in the copies of *L'Art en silence* which had been sent out in the 'service de presse', the preface ("qui me semble utile pour résumer l'ouvrage") had been omitted by error.
example when he writes:

Ici je n'accorde – et si inconsciemment je l'ai paru faire, je m'en délie devant que l'on poursuive – nulle promesse de fidélité à une vision.

The preface is also interesting because it shows that in Eleusis Mauclair is less concerned with the critic's duty, with bridging gaps between the creators and the public, than with presenting his own introspective thoughts, the fruit of his youth and early manhood. In this sense Eleusis is a work of creation, not of criticism or of theory. Mauclair wishes us to believe that the presence of an audience is less important to him than it would have been in the case of a play or a novel.

From the very beginning of the preface, Mauclair insists on the meditative, disparate nature of his book:

Qu'est-ce donc être poète? Voici des feuilles où j'ai essayé de l'écrire. Accordez que, dédiées par le caprice d'un souffle inutile, il y soit question d'une rêverie.

He next gives full emphasis to his title: he compares himself to a wanderer among the pillars of that 'domaine des mystères' which is Eleusis, his Eleusis, 'c'était l'intérieure cité de ma conscience, et (je) voulus la connaître'. What he is about to describe is the sum of his experiences and reflections concerning Art during his early years. This is why it was important to examine closely the articles and activities of these years, so often neglected by commentators.

Eleusis is perhaps more acceptable if seen as a conclusion rather than a beginning. To think of the book in terms of a statement of theory, a part of some kind of Symbolist manifesto as Lehmann has done, is not completely valid. Of course, in retrospect it does take on this quality, but such was not Mauclair's purpose:
Je ne serai sans doute point subtil, ma causerie étant fort simple en son essence, et je ne puis promettre d'être clair, intéressant, littéraire, ou quelque chose avec certitude. Voici, et sans plus, mon souci : préoccupé d'une parole contemporaine : "Etre poète, c'est tenir jugement sur soi-même", je me raconte.

This intention is not however quite as hermetic as it seems at first. Mauclair wishes to carry out just what he had defined for Mallarmé as the poet's duty: se manifester. He must 'tell himself' because this can be of use for other men. As yet, however he is not attempting to reach these others; he is taking up his position, no more:

Ces mystères célébrés dans l'Eleusis que je recèle ainsi que tous les êtres pensants, peut-être n'illustrent-ils que de gestes vides leurs notions fanées; mais les obscurs prêtres qui les honorent y croient... nos actes ne sont qu'une obéissance à ces rites essentiels et muets, nos raisons d'agir y sont toutes incluses, et je veux dire mes preuves intérieures comme je les ai vues, même fausses, parce que cela peut amuser, ou simplement dans l'instinct que se révéler, c'est toujours le bien.

Thus Mauclair feels he can combat the sterile expression of pessimism, of doubts and fears he sees around him in this 'fin de siècle'. What he shows, however vaguely, is something wonderful, for which all men should be glad. His book is not an attempt to distil the knowledge of ages into one text, nor is it an attempt to construct a Theory. Just as someone flicking through the pages of a book about Impressionism might capture a rapid, over-all feeling of a period, so too Mauclair thinks of Eleusis:

Le sens de cette œuvre git dans le simple énoncé d'une conscience à la fin du XIXe siècle - une documentation touchant l'art, une affirmation de nature, et nul formulaire d'esthétique ou de critique, car je me lève pour dire: SENTIMENT, TU ES MON MAÎTRE.

As we read this romantic assertion, we must not forget that Mauclair thought of himself in these years as a poet; in a sense he is attempt-
ting to give a poetical impression of himself and his situation, artistically speaking, in the pages of Elenais. Whether he achieved this, indeed, whether this was possible in the admittedly non-logical, rather undisciplined prose-form he chose, remains to be seen.

As we have observed, he disclaims any adherence to an over-all plan. His is a 'livre d'expressions' a collection of 'essais d'idéations'. Since what he has written follows his 'sentiment' alone, his words must not be taken to be invariable statements. He notes them, and then moves on.

He intends therefore to speak on the sister subjects (the identification of their proximity is interesting) which are Aesthetics, Metaphysics, and Ethics, together with minor discussions of poetico-mysterious subjects. He ends in a curiously elliptical style which returns to his declarations concerning Mallarmé: the poet's duty may be to 'reveal himself', he will not always be admired:

D'ailleurs insuffisant prophète, ne révélant, et mal, que ma conscience, mais prophète dans mon pays...
C'est, il est vrai, dans le désert, et si je me prêche, c'est pour me croire.

Is it right to see any more than a young man's defence of his first volume in Mauclair's declaration that he accepts no authority but his own? This is partly true, but it is also part of his Individualism. We may feel that to depend as he does on 'sentiment' is to turn
to a particularly relative concept; we must remember that the things Mauclair thrills to are contained in his Idealism. That this, in turn should bring him to express Symbolist preoccupations is inevitable - he could not have escaped the contingencies of his life; but to evaluate *Eleusis* solely in terms of Symbolism is not, as the preface shows, immediately valid.

Following the preface, the main part of *Eleusis* is divided into seven sections, of which the first four - "Narcisse", "Psychologie du mystère", "Du symbole", and "Commentaire sur la poésie", are the most intricate.

"Quelques jeux de l'idéation" which follows these does, as Muhlfeld pointed out, set the tone of the volume as a whole. This chapter is further divided into four sub-sections - or 'jeux': "De la fiction", "Du caractère et du style", Du sens de la liberté", and "De la recherche du chef-d'oeuvre".

The penultimate chapter continues this fragmentary presentation under the general title of "Notes sur des arts futurs". Mauclair discusses 'La mort', 'la sensualité', and 'l'interprétation des songes'.

The book ends with "Frontispice d'un drame idéal" - a reflection of Mauclair's interest in the theatre during 1893 - the period in which *Eleusis* was mainly written. Four other texts from the same period have been re-used in *Eleusis*, but, it seems, none from before September 1892 when it is likely that the book was begun. On the other hand, within the sections of each chapter, there are numerous divisions, clearly marked, sometimes only a few lines long which are reminiscent of the scraps of paper on which the main character of Gide's *Paludes* writes down ideas as they occur to him. Indeed it is
possible that Mauclair's "Feuillets vierges"\(^1\) or his "Feuilles mortes"\(^2\) are reflections of just such a method, especially the latter, which consists of short paragraphs or symbolist 'thoughts'. Though these are not re-used in Eleusis they may safely be regarded as a first exercise in those 'jeux d'idéation' which make up Eleusis.

It is not now our intention to explain Eleusis exhaustively in terms of other contemporary theories, nor to examine in detail the fundamental aesthetic and philosophical tenets upon which it appears to be based, nor to employ valuable space revealing apparent contradictions and confusions in the author's mind; such aspects (especially as the book is, after all, of minor historical interest) have received sufficient attention from A.G. Lehmann in his book: The Symbolist Aesthetic in France. For those seeking connections between Eleusis and other major figures or currents of ideas, adequate guide lines will be found there. In this study we must be content with an attempt to clarify some of the major points Mauclair makes, and to consider them in relation to his other work and activities.

Of all Mauclair's books, Eleusis is certainly the most difficult to discuss. It cannot be summarised without reducing the often complex arguments to a few deceptively simple generalisations, so nullifying the considerable effort which must have been expended on them. On the other hand, it cannot be commented on page by page without producing a paraphrase even more lengthy and obscure than the original. While some pages are easily read, and contain points of real interest, in others a tangle of philosophical terms bars our way to the author's thoughts. It is also not unfair to suggest that the

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1. BBche Dec. 1891.
2. Floréal May/June 1892.
book is too long, for the repetitions of basic theories are not sufficiently distinct one from another to be thought of as contributing separately to the whole, which is thereby threatened by the sheer weight of words.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to be categorical on this or that point. For example, the first chapter, "Narcisse", begins with a few pages which introduce principles which are next illustrated in a discussion of the myth itself, and ends in what Mauclair calls 'un acte de foi', a re-statement of both principles and conclusions. Repetition is thereby inevitable, but not without effect, as the basic ideas are given more shape with each development of the argument. The effectiveness of this device is, however, not sustained throughout the book.

* * *

"NARCISSE"

We have already seen that Mauclair in an earlier letter to Gide substituted the title "de la personnalité" for that of "Narcisse". Most probably he only wished to avoid confusion; Gide certainly knew of his friend's admiration, for not only had Mauclair mentioned the Traité du Narcisse - "cette exquise chose de rêve" - several times in letters during 1892 (prior to the first mention of Eleusis, it should be noted), he had proclaimed publicly that it was "une des théories symboliques les plus complètes qui aient paru depuis dix ans". We should also remember that Mauclair had dedicated his poem "Narcisse" to Gide, and had received the dedicatee's compli-

2. Letters of 30 Jan. (from which the quotation is taken), of 17 Feb. and 19 May; cf. p.105, note 5.
3. EAL, June 1892, p.234.
ments on it. This version is probably closer to the spirit of Gide's work than the prose version of *Eleusis*.

There was, therefore, reason enough for Mauclair to choose to avoid misunderstanding by substituting a title which clearly indicated that his purpose was different: in this elaboration of the Narcisse myth he is more concerned with the personality - or 'individualisme', or 'égoïsme' - than with a *Traité du Symbole*, which was the subject of Gide's work. *Le Symbole* after all, receives consideration in a separate chapter, where Gide is both quoted and acknowledged.

Nevertheless, certain similarities are apparent; both for example, describe the river in which Narcissus sees himself, as an allegorical form of Life, or Passing Time; in both we find use of the motif *Yggdrasil* which, though it is properly part of Scandinavian mythology, is treated by both as synonymous with the tree of knowledge (of good and evil) spoken of in Genesis, though Mauclair also adds overtones of the Prometheus legend; the N.R.F. edition of the *Traité du Narcisse* includes a note written during 1890 in which several ideas concerning "les règles de la morale et de l'esthétique" are echoed in Mauclair, to the extent that he re-uses the quotation: "Malheur à celui par qui le scandale arrive" in *Eleusis*.

Yet the two are very different in form and intent. Not only is Mauclair's text much longer, it is far more rigorous in its argument, it attempts to reach conclusions where Gide is content with

1. Poem: *RBche* July 1892. Mauclair thanked Gide for his good opinion in the letter of 19th May 1892.
2. Modern sources spell this *Yggdrasil*; both Gide and Mauclair use only one 'g'.
suggestion, and it introduces many elements (such as the similarity between Jesus and Narcissus) which are not in Gide's version. In its own way - possibly because philosophical and ascertainable truths (as Mauclair believed them to be), are treated with less 'poetry' than in Gide, - Mauclair's "Narcisse" has its own satisfactions to offer.

Mauclair's elaboration of the Narcissus myth begins with several pages of general considerations on the relationship between Man and the World, which are the data he requires for his use of the myth.

Nous sommes devant la vie comme devant une glace, et nous nous contemplons en elle. Toute morale, toute combinaison d'attitudes, toute interdiction et toute licence décrétées en des contrats humains, se fondent sur cet acte, y recurent, et il n'est point d'autre état primordial et irréductible de notre esprit pour un être permanent de par l'alliage d'un système sensitif et d'une intellectualité. (p.3).

This is the basis of the theory Mauclair tells us he has adopted from Hegel. 1 Man is a centre, or like a double mirror, all external phenomena are reflected through his senses on to the second mirror of his conscience where they become 'notions':

Ainsi l'esprit, constitué de notions, ne peut voir que lui-même en elles : il s'y contemple. (p.5). This process creates the personality, for as each 'notion' is formed through the play of these double mirrors, a rhythm is set up in the mind. Any eccentric, or bad 'notion' will disturb this rhythm, whereas regular, good notions enrich and exalt the conscience because they satisfy a basic instinct - "la connaissance des lois totales, de la cause ou du mystère".

1. Cf. ML pp.76-78 :"[Mallarmé] avait connu Hegel à travers Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, qui, lui, l'avait approfondi. Et il m'est arrivé, à Valvins, d'en parler à Mallarmé, car j'étais, vers 1895, férus d'hegelianisme. Mon maître me répondait en homme très informé..."
The next step - that this basic rhythm leads to an individual 'Harmony' - is most important, for in it lies the variable which differentiates between men:

L'homme naît donc avec l'intelligence du rythme et de l'harmonie : et ce sont peut-être les seules vertus qui lui soient nativement conférées, car elles constituent toute la relativité du physique et du moral, et sont les inévitables préliminaires de l'acte de vivre en toutes ses manifestations. Le rythme, et l'harmonie en résultant, sont l'échange du consentement de l'esprit à prendre connaissance des notions et de ces notions elles-mêmes : l'être vivant, contemplant les objets en ses sensitivités ainsi transformées, se contemple. (p.8).

In this way, a special significance is given to the verb 'réfléchir', because both men and mirrors reflect. And this is more than a linguistic coincidence: it is evidence of a special appropriateness of certain words which express fundamental human 'facts'. It also leads to the final important step:

L'homme pensant réfléchit, dans la glace unie de sa conscience, le faisceau de sensations en lui projeté par le prisme de ses sensibilités nerveuses. Le miroir devant lequel il se place, où, si l'on veut, la vie, réfléchit son image et, bien qu'apparemment semblable, la lui renvoie modifiée, débarrassée en effet de sa réalité sensorielle et devenue purement idéale. (p.9).

That this theory is valid is substantiated, for Mauclair, by its illustration in ancient legends, such as that of Jesus offering bread and wine, physical phenomena to be assimilated as the spiritual 'notion' of God, or as that other 'vision métaphysique' which is the Narcissus myth.

1. Cf. Mallarmé, as quoted by Mauclair as 'en-tête' to the article: Notes sur l'idée pure (MF Sept. 1892):
A quoi bon la merveille de transposer un fait de nature en sa presque disparition vibratoire selon le jeu de la parole, cependant, si ce n'est pour qu'en émane, sans la gêne d'un proche ou concret rappel, la notion pure? (from: "Divagation première, relativement au vers").
Narcissus is endowed with that special Greek beauty which is harmony. Not only physically, but spiritually too, nothing spoils the rhythm. He looks into a river, and sees there, in miniature, fleeting teeming Life, and himself. Because he is born of generations of Beauty-loving ancestors, he falls in love with the harmony he presents. As he looks at the river of life, his own reflexion remains steady; he realises that he is the only stable certainty for himself, that he dominates the rest; he loves himself for his beauty and for his power. Thus -

"Narcisse aime son moi. L'âge premier de la pensée est accompli." (p.15). Having fallen in love with his 'moi', which is his body, Narcissus experiences the full sensuality of existence - he savours all that his senses reveal reflected before him. Then, realising that the centre of this physical world is not his body, his senses, but the internal mirror, his conscience, Narcissus turns to that spirituality:

Il aime en son corps le symbole de lui-même, il se devine une Fin supérieure à ce corps, il se connaît : une Idée incarnée. (p.16).

He knows now that he has overcome Matter; that nothing exists unless he gives it life in himself, the only reality: he wishes to know everything. Now comes the moment when he understands that he too, in his physical presence exists as a reflection of his real presence which in turn is part of a superior entity. As he seeks the spiritual affinities between all things and himself, his spiritual presence exceeds his physical manifestation:

Narcisse est perdu en une harmonie supérieure: il comprend.

He has become reintegrated in that higher 'Âme universelle' and so his bodily presence has become irrelevant:
Narcisse languit près de l'onde éternellement mourante. Narcisse regarde passer en lui le rêve du monde.

Le voici concevant tous les actes futurs comme des émanations de la conscience qu'il adore en lui. N'est-il pas lui-même le symbole de lui-même? Ce n'est plus dans la rivière qu'il se contemple et s'aime, c'est dans la Vie entière. Il se conçoit la Vie, il se conçoit la Matière. C'est le délire et le vertige que le cerveau ne peut plus contenir, c'est l'élan hors de soi, c'est la minute où l'Infini ouvre ses yeux tristes: Narcisse se conçoit tout, il est Tout...

Et comme ce miracle, but éternel! va s'accomplir, Narcisse abdique sa méprisable enveloppe corporelle. (pp.19-20).

To perpetuate the name and the spiritual 'adventure' of this Prometheus figure, a golden-hearted flower blooms.

Perhaps this commentary does not do full justice to the richness of Mauclair's interpretation. Perhaps he could be accused of distortion of the myth to agree with a pre-conceived philosophical position, for he has left out the intangibility of the reflected image, leading to Narcissus' despair and death, which is commonly present in descriptions of the ancient myth, and which probably inspires the idea of conflict present in Gide's Traité (where Narcisse and Adam come together) and in Mauclair's verse Narcisse. That is why the reference here to Prometheus is only as a suggestion of challenge, not as a suggestion of higher disapproval. Mauclair's Narcissus becomes aware of, strives towards, and finally joins, a universal essence which cannot be opposed to him because it is the sole reality. That is why, for Mauclair, Narcissus is so close to Jesus; that is why when he talks of 'Dieu', or 'l'idée divine' he means the universal essence, and feels he does so without hypocrisy.

1. It is worth recalling here the theme of Maeterlinck's Les Sept Princesses in which Marcellus loses the Ideal because he does not die in his attempt to reach it.
Characteristically, Mauclair does not leave his interpretation to fend for itself; in a series of three 'Notes', and a rather lyrical conclusion he develops some of the points he has made.

The central element of the "Note métaphysique" is this:

J'entends par Soi la fin idéale de comparaison entre les phénomènes et l'esprit - par Moi, la figuration contingente du Soi, la forme humaine qui le manifeste, ou : son symbole,

and it is this opposition between the body (the 'Moi') and the spirit (the 'Soi') which is important for us, because, for Mauclair, no man, unless he is Narcissus, can quit or go beyond his 'Moi' unless in an idealist sense; it is the attempt to do so, to reach the 'Soi' which Mauclair considers to be 'le rêve'. Perhaps we may think of such a man as 'the poet', and such a dream as the stimulus of Art.

We have already touched on the subject of the "Note théologique" which is the similarity between Jesus and Narcissus even to the visible signs they left - the Holy Grail and the narcissus flower. Clearly there is a great deal of validity in the interpretation of two ancient legends as Mauclair presents it to us, and his careful examination of what is normally a matter of faith (elsewhere he tells us that he cannot admit a belief in God) shows that he is treating the 'legend' as an intellectual problem. The youthful enjoyment of questioning - with respect - the established order is just faintly discernable.

Nearly all of the last 'note' - the "Note esthétique" had already appeared in February 1893 in the Mercure de France. ¹ It is extremely important because it establishes the relationship in Mauclair's mind between the figure of Narcissus and the Poet; it was a relation-

¹. MF Feb. 1893, "Fraternités idéales", pp.132-133.
ship which Mauclair sought in all the artists he admired. Though Narcisse was able to transcend the terrestrial, and abdicate his bodily form, the poet, a man, cannot do so unless through death. Nevertheless, he is a poet because he attempts to do so, his eyes are fixed on that special region of truth:

Le poète, ayant conçu les vérités qui demeurent derrière les formes, noue en un geste de grâce et de rythme les innombrables relativités des formes; il les noue en une seule tresse, chevelure de Bérénice, idéale parure d'une glacée Hérodiade, et de ces cheveux annelés, comme un amant fidèle, il se fait une bague. Puis, ingénu, il se penche sur le fleuve des tumultueuses apparences qui s'enlacent, étonnamment, chantant fugitivement; et il contemple en cette onde courante son image immobile.

Poète qui portes, tel Gyges son anneau magique, ton âme au doigt, si tu tournes l'anneau des mille illusions que l'on nomme réelles, il te fait découvrir et percevoir, et, comme le berger ancien, tu n'es pas perçu. Tu peux ainsi te proclamer roi du peuple des symboles aveugles.

Poète, Narcisse qui imagines le monde et y contemples ton image reflétée, ton reflet ne te perçoit pas. Se manifester, c'est être semblable à la lumière, qui n'existe que parce qu'elle crée l'ombre: si l'ombre concevait la lumière, elle serait elle-même la lumière. Mais elle ne sait rien. (pp.24-25).

Following this, Mauclair takes up the idea contained in the final allegory of the poet's essential position in order to show how the metaphysical joins the aesthetic. Art results from the tension created by the impulse to reach beyond the 'moi' towards the 'soi', to reach universality:

Ainsi le Moi est dominé par le Soi, le Soi est Dieu, le Moi en est le symbole sur la terre. Plus on fera le moi riche et grand, plus on complétera l'image de Dieu en soi-même. Il faut toujours qu'il agisse dans ce sens, qu'il s'exalte (là est toute la morale) afin de consacrer au Soi plus de notions. Le moi tend à représenter Dieu. (pp.27-28).

If we remember that here "Dieu" does not represent a strictly orthodox sense of the word, we may build up a conception of the Poet
(or Artist, in a general sense) as a being by instinct aware of the existence of Soi or Dieu, a higher entity, and also as being able, and willing, to work towards this higher entity (though never fully reaching it) by careful harmonious selection of notions, as revealed by the senses and the intellect, which reflect, in some way, the existence of that higher entity. If the Poet does not do this, but busies himself with purely terrestrial, circumstantial interests the harmony is upset, ugliness results, he is worth nothing.

These are Mauclair's terms of reference at the time of Eleusis. We shall see how they are expressed again in this book, and also how they remain with him for many years even if the mode of expression becomes more direct, and concerns, for example, talent and work, everyday counterparts of what is expressed above.

In the closing pages of this chapter, there is a distinct change of tone. It is as if the author had again suddenly become aware of his audience - he admits to us that he too is somewhat perplexed by the obscurity of what he has just expounded, but that he knows that he is right - silence, music, such things assure him he is.

It is Mauclair the individualist who speaks now. "Il faut croire au moi et l'aimer", he says, and: "J'accepterai, par respect envers moi-même, le nom détesté d'égoïste, et j'obéirai seulement à mon miroir." What he is in fact saying is that he intends to behave in the way he has described the Poet behaving, and it is this essential fact that explains why he devotes two paragraphs to exhorting his "frères spirituels" to look closely at their way of life. The formation of a "Symbolist Mouvement", a grouping together of Narcisses for mutual protection against the Crowd is all very well, but such a grouping together threatens the artistic identity of each individual.
Reversing somewhat the terms of Emerson's essay on the Abstentionists (referred to in the Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé), Mauclair writes:

J'en appelle aux mille hommes qui savent que l'art existe, en France. Les meilleurs doivent s'abstraire. Tous se confinent en eux-mêmes, et tous sont des Narcisses, par goût, par besoin, par horreur d'autre chose que de leur image. Ils sont fiers et stricts : leur sensualité toute cérébrale ne les dompte pas, mais les exalte. Et sachant qu'un pouvoir est en eux, ils vont dans la vie les mains vides. (p.30).

All that Mauclair will allow these men, is not artificial companionship but the appreciation of "affinités" - since, no doubt, true poets are all parts of the higher entity. The most important point in this is that we may see clearly that even in the middle of a perfectly 'Symbolist' treatise, Mauclair refuses the implications of what others call 'Symbolism'.

The closing six pages of this chapter are impossible to describe fully, because they consist of a lyric prayer; Mauclair himself said:

Vraiment ce chapitre, commencé en logique et continué en parabole, arrivé presque à l'acte de foi. (p.30),

and we think also of his letter to Gide where he mentioned "une série de fragments allant du ton de la causerie esthétique à celui de la prose lyrique imagée". The subject of this prayer is 'égoïsme' or individualism which is for Mauclair the vital instinct for all sincere artists:

À l'aurore de mes sensations, lorsque je m'éveillai du hideux sommeil de l'enfance, je sentis que tout me venait par toi, égoïsme : je défaillais en ne me

1. [August] 1893. This letter is quoted at the beginning of this discussion of Eleusis.
rendant pas tout ce que je me devais. Je sus qu'il n'y avait de devoirs qu'envers soi-même, et que le respect de soi implique le ménagement des autres, ô Conseiller! Et je résolus de me développer et d'aimer en moi la conscience de l'univers jusqu'à en mourir. Et tu te tenais devant mon indécision comme une inscription qui rassure, ô mon Fantôme!

Témoin de mon initiation aux harmonies, intermédiaire de Dieu et de moi-même, tu m'as appris à tenir pour nul l'être que j'apparais, à révéler, ô confesseur, l'être que je suis devant Dieu.

(pp.33-34).

"PSYCHOLOGIE DU MYSTERE"

Having dealt with the first chapter in some detail we may now progress more rapidly, for much of what follows is explicable within the theories advanced there. Indeed, Mauclair can generally be seen to be fairly consistent - within the terms of the theory he advances. That is why, as we shall see when we come to discuss the ideas on 'le rêve', a critic such as A.G. Lehmann can declare himself at a loss to know Mauclair's precise meaning, for he attempts too much to relate what Mauclair writes to concepts not necessarily contained in Mauclair's theory. Of course, we do not pretend that all of Eleusis is balanced logic - but the author did protect himself in his preface.

"Psychologie de Mystère" is not an attempt to define a certain number of elements by which 'le mystère' may be recognised; it is rather a discussion of how 'le mystère' can exist, and how, for Mauclair, it is an integral part of his theory.

At the outset it is made clear that 'le mystère' has no supernatural independent existence. It could not have, for how could it then fit into Mauclair's synthetical view of the world - especially of that higher, perfect sphere which was attained by Narcisse through
death? To admit such an idea would be to invalidate the very universality of that Essence.

What Mauclair understands by 'le mystère' is indicated by the long list of examples with which he opens this chapter - things which are almost all natural phenomena - and hence explicable in theory, at least. It is something one feels intuitively, or not at all.

After a reiteration of the essential simplicity of the universe (a difficult but indispensable notion for analytical man to accept, Mauclair claims) we reach this interesting example: When a painter stands before his blank canvas, with his palette and brushes at the ready, and is deep in thought about the subject, arrangement and treatment of his future painting, nothing visible has been created, there is no tangible relationship between his tools and his ideas - and yet it cannot be denied that a throng of invisible forces join the two together. Clearly, a similar analogy could be drawn between the poet, his paper and pen, and his raw material, words (which are, it should be remembered, symbols of the 'idée pure'). A first definition of 'le mystère' is arrived at:

...entre ce qui est mystérieux et l'esprit, il existe un espace vide, et la grandeur de cet espace varie selon ces éléments et si l'on pense plus ou moins à ce qui est énigmatique, on situe différemment les deux pôles. (p.45).

One may suppose, however, that this 'mystère' only awaits the application of the artist's mind (the "double mirror" of his conscience) for it to be resolved and to become explicable.

At first sight, this definition, where 'le mystère' is situated at a distance, does not seem to tally with the second definition (which is certainly the more important) for in it, 'le mystère' has become that distance itself:
Le mystère est la quantité variable entre notre conscience et le phénomène. Aussi varie-t-il avec chacun des hommes, naît-il et périt-il avec lui. Nous ne trouvons pas à notre venue au monde un contingent immuable de choses inexpliquées, mais seulement des orientations entre lesquelles il nous faut choisir. (p.46).

Perhaps the slight confusion is only apparent; we may think of the first definition as representing the first "mirror" of the senses, which then reflect the resolvable enigma of the outside world on to the second "mirror" of the conscience. In any case, we must pay particular attention to the fact that "le mystère" has now become a variable - a differentiating factor between men.

This is developed a little farther when Mauclair quotes Mallarmé, and indicates what is certainly one source of his ideas:

L'a-priori du mystère n'est point : "Tout se meut par réciprocités ou relativement à une figure seule" dit M. Stéphane Mallarmé en parlant de la dramaturgie. Il se trouve formuler en même temps la loi de toute intellection. (p.46).

The particular relevance of this to that supreme individualist Narcisse, is unmistakable. Equally important however, are the two sentences which follow the above:

"Le mystère ne demeure pas fixe, il évolue relativement à notre esprit."

And then:

"Selon notre désir d'interpréter, le mystère croît ou diminue."

Such phrases suggest that Mauclair is thinking of "le mystère" mainly in relation to Art, and especially to the figure of the artist. The Poet is the interpreter, the intermediary between the Crowd and the Essence. Of course, he is theoretically capable of explaining almost all. Almost all, for complete explanation, complete knowledge cannot be reached by man, unless, as was the case for Narcissus, through death.
Following this, we may understand fully this long, essential passage, for, in fact, is what Mauclair calls 'l'hypothèse' not identical to an artistic creation - a poem?

Nous sommes les créateurs de notre mystère, nous l'engendrons comme un suc ; nous sommes les abeilles de notre sensibilité; nous nous en nourrissons et nous la recréons pour nous en alimenter encore. Il n'y a jamais eu qu'un mot essentiel, qui est: sentir. Entre la conscience d'une sensation et cette sensation elle-même, il y a une quantité modifiable, et selon que nous sentons plus ou moins profondément, cette quantité s'intensifie ou s'anémie. Le savant détermine la valeur scientifique d'une hypothèse ; mais toute hypothèse trouve sa fin en elle-même touchant l'éthique. Nous devons seulement multiplier les hypothèses, qui sont des tentatives de restriction de cette quantité dont je parle ; et ainsi nous découvrirons la véritablement légitime et logique destination de notre entendement. Car c'est en nous exerçant à fonder une hypothèse sur tout objet au lieu de nous tenir à la décision de nos sens que nous acquerrons progressivement l'habitude aisée des tactes et des propositions mystérieuses. (pp.48-49).

What follows this central passage does not seem to be immediately concerned with 'le mystère' - and yet it cannot have been included here without reason. Why does Mauclair dwell on such points as: the few essential gestures of our lives which are reflected and resumed in the art of the Dance (an idea clearly owing much to Mallarmé); the 'dédoublement' of the superficially complicated "social" self and the essential simplicity of the inner self; the superior and fundamental virtue of Silence, the absolute we know only now and then, and which consecrates the most important moments of Life? Why does he repeat ideas he has already expressed, such as:

Le mystère qui gît dans un objet vient de nous. (p.52),

and:

Enseignons-nous donc dans le silence et l'instinctivité, qui sont simples, car seule importe l'élévation de la personnalité, et ni les paroles ni les contextures de la logique n'y contribuent. (pp.52-53).
Answers to questions of this nature may be found in the fact that Mauclair was very probably dealing with points and nuances of the theory he was expressing, as in the first of the above extracts, where he seems to be writing of the relationship between people and things as opposed to people and other people. Such passages may have been for the benefit of the young symbolists accustomed to such points of detail, for we must not neglect the fact that Mauclair was certainly writing from a biased point of view. A paragraph such as this serves to remind us of the symbolist author of *Eleusis*:

Le conseil est d'être selon les feuilles. Et les femmes selon les herbes aquatiques, qui sont chevelues. C'est peut-être toute la sagesse qu'une chevelure; chacun des cheveux enlace de soie le secret peut-être de tout le possible, et nous ensemble les secrets; et ils résument l'attitude la plus désirable, qui est de demeurer dans le sens de son intimité. (p.54).

It is however in pages such as these that the book languishes a little, and unnecessary circumvolutions are added to the argument, for what Mauclair is maintaining seems to be simple enough: the common conception of 'le mystère' is an illusion, the only valid conception is that which starts from the assumption that firstly the world is simple, although we tend to analyse and complicate it unnecessarily, and secondly some men more than others are able to interpret these complications, and through their explanations offer a glimpse of the simple universe. Though potentially capable of explaining everything, they would in fact be prevented from doing so by death, the fate of Narcissus; 'le mystère' is what they must leave unexplained. Therefore, for the ordinary man who is little able to explain, 'le mystère' assumes considerable dimensions; for the Poet-Priest, the interpreter and the intermediary, it is the
opposite that is true, and that is why such 'êtres d'exception' are important.

Mauclair now moves to a discussion of certain commonly accepted 'mystères'. The first of these, the one which probably springs to mind the most readily, is magic - and this Mauclair dismisses as 'une bonne plaisanterie'. Most of the so-called signs and portents - the number seven, 'tables tournantes' and all the rest - are taken as indicating the existence of the Supernatural. There can be no such thing, as we have already pointed out:

De ce que notre connaissance ne peut pas s'énoncer entièrement ni dire les suprêmes paroles sur elle-même, il ne s'ensuit nullement qu'elle ait une borne au-delà de laquelle commence une région extra-intelligible. (p.57).

Everything begins with man at the centre, therefore magic of whatever sort is created by him; the coincidence of figures from the diverse mythologies of the world, analogies, special meanings all such represent a movement outwards from man, not an independent force inwards upon him. So, from this point of view, magic represents man's desire to know more, and not a sign of the limitation of his mind.

After a short but obscure passage on what Mauclair terms 'les choses terribles' and another which really seems out of place since it concerns 'la sympathie subite', which can take place between people and would be better understood in a subsequent discussion of friendship, the next potentially fruitful subject is 'le mystère du rêve'.

If, however, we are bemused by this last word, the promise of such a title will hardly be fulfilled, for it is extremely difficult to find here an independent viable definition of 'le rêve'.

We should not forget that Mauclair is dealing with the "Psychologie du Mystère". Perhaps in this way it is possible to explain Lehmann's criticisms of this section,\(^1\) because, as we have said, he seeks to force this theory of Mauclair into a preconceived mould. Since Eleusis is "little more than a somewhat laborious elaboration of some of the main threads of the Divagations", Lehmann takes three quotations from this section which, as he sees it, suggest "something along the lines of Mallarmé's doctrine of the image as the basis of all poetry". Perhaps this is so, and even if Mauclair does not mention poetry at all, such a broad interpretation is legitimate enough, though it corresponds imperfectly to the words Mauclair used:

Ce que nous appelons le rêve n'est pas non plus une lueur en dehors de nous. C'est l'état primordial de notre esprit. (p.62)

(....)

Le rêve, c'est de nous connaître nous-mêmes, et libres. (p.63)

(....)

Ce que nous nommons le rêve n'est que l'état idéal de notre esprit, et nous sommes continuellement sur le point d'y atteindre - mais nous n'y atteindrons que par l'abolition complète des choses inharmonieuses et des circonstances malavisées, et il nous faudrait Mourir, (....) Le rêve, c'est le désir du Soi. C'est l'innocence de la raison pure (pp.62-64).

Taken from a point of view, based on knowledge of Mallarmé's work, this may be a "laborious elaboration", and similarly, in the other points Lehmann makes there is some truth - the terminology is no doubt "strange", the phrasing "pompous", it may be that all Mauclair succeeds in expressing is "an ineffable awe before the mystery of Art", but equally there is a great deal of distortion due to the introduction of interpretations and intentions not in the author's

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mind and also to the critic's refusal to deal with Mauclair at his own level, on his own terms, in the context of the rest of his book.

We should therefore forget the preconceived range of ideas we would expect to find concerning dreams, day-dreams and such subjects. These are mentioned in a later chapter. For the moment we recall that in this section Mauclair treats 'le mystère' which he wishes to demonstrate as our creation.

Thus, in the first of the above quotations the essential words are: non plus, for they link this series of ideas to what has gone before. Now we see that this phrase implies that 'le mystère' contained in dreams is part of the Universal essence, and then the paragraph between this and the second extract is a restatement of our search for simplicity:

Il faut bien songer que nous deviendrons tous des fragments de légendes. Nous nous mettons en marche à travers la vie vers nous-mêmes, dès l'enfance; et nous sommes si fort embarrassés dans la broussaille contradictoire de l'éducation, que nous errons longtemps pour retrouver l'étang de simplicité où nous baigner dans la nudité de notre songe. Et beaucoup ne s'y baignent jamais. Le rêve, c'est de nous connaître nous-mêmes, et libres. (p.63)

After reading this the full value of the individualists' closing statement is restored; Mauclair is speaking of "our dream", in these circumstances, and not of the abstract notion "dream". Mauclair's preoccupation is with the search for the unity of the inner self, as the next paragraph shows:

Et nous nous apercevons fugitivement dans le sommeil; nous nous y contempons grands et comme debout sur des collines. Et quand nous avons les yeux fixes et clos, bien que levés, à tout spectacle extérieur, nous nous efforçons de déterminer notre fantôme véridique dans la tumulte des apparences. Nous désirons nous saisir perpétuellement. Si nous imaginons un beau pays ou un acte extraordinaire, nous ne nous y passionnons que pour
notre personnage futur. C'est le secret de l'émotion du théâtre. Nous ramenons toutes les circonstances à une loi simple, et cette loi ne peut être que notre intime raison : il nous paraît que cela est naturel, puisque c'est notre désir. Ce que nous nommons le rêve n'est que l'état de notre esprit, et nous sommes continu-ellempur sur le point d'y atteindre - mais nous n'y atteindrons que par l'abolition complète des choses inharmonieuses et des circonstances malavisées, et il nous faudrait mourir. Ainsi j'ai expliqué que nous ne pouvons être le témoignage de nous-mêmes avant d'être morts comme Narcisse, et nous tendons à mourir pour toucher à cette simplicité du rêve - à nous-mêmes essentiellement. C'est ainsi que le rêve ne nous est concevable que supravital, et que nous le voyons se déplacer devant nous comme une seconde ombre. (pp.63-64)

Surely when these quotations are replaced in their context, their meaning, which is not exactly that attributed to them by Lehmann, becomes clear : these reflections are the logical development of that phrase used in the first chapter in connection with Narcissus' "death" : "Nul homme ne dépasse son moi, sinon idéalement : il y tend seulement : c'est ce qu'on appelle le rêve" (p.23). As for 'le mystère du rêve', Mauclair says with Baudelaire that 'le rêve', like haschisch, "ne révèle à l'individu rien que l'individu lui-même".

If we are looking for anything remotely approaching the psychol-ogy of dreams in the above exposition, we will be disappointed. Similarly, if we expect modern psychological theory in the next section which is about 'le mystère de la femme', Mauclair will be found lacking. Admittedly his explanation of the enigma of Woman is either unduly simple or insufficiently explained, for he reduces this enigma to the result of the hesitation of the male when confronted with fem-ale duality - the wife or the mother, passion or procreation, Venus or Eve.
This is a subject which occurs again in the sixth chapter of Eleusis, and in it we may perhaps observe the first thoughts which were to give rise to the two volumes De l'amour physique, and La Magie de l'amour of 1912 and 1919 respectively.

The final section in this chapter describes what we may think of as 'le mystère de l'amitié', though Mauclair does not use this term and prefers 'le secret de l'amitié which is, for him, "la chose la plus essentiellement mystérieuse, imprévisible et dominatrice dont j'aie conscience".

He begins by pointing out that "we" (does he mean "The Symbolists", or "Artists" or simply "Men" in general?) enjoy the mystery of the world around us, and the knowledge, however fragmentary, that there is a Universal Essence susceptible to partial discovery:

Nous sommes les gardiens d'un sceptre1 que nous n'avons jamais vu, et de son absence s'épanouit son prestige. Il est licite que l'esprit se dévoue à une immatérialité, non point à son témoignage; ainsi nul symbole ne trouve sa valeur en soi, mais en sa raison d'être, et cette raison d'être étant notre création, nous nous y contempons et nous y admirons Narcisse une fois de plus. Et les symboles choisis au cours de notre vie sont parfois des objets comme le sceptre, l'éventail ou l'épée; et parfois ils sont des êtres vivants. (p.71).

This is of course a restatement of the theme of 'l'idée pure'; but it

1. In the MF article in which this passage first appeared (Aug.1893) this word, here and seven lines later, is printed as 'spectre'. In view of the later juxtaposition of 'l'épée', the Eleusis version is probably correct.
has added to it the very important suggestion that people themselves may be symbols, the reflection of an element of the Universal. This is important because it explains the intensity which Mauclair introduced into his friendships and admirations at this time. Such 'people-symbols' are to be considered as "âmes d'élection" or in other words, their innermost self corresponds to our innermost self, because both are part of a whole; their works are an expression of this inner being and therefore of the whole. That is why Mauclair earlier (p.31) refused the exterior, circumstancial "friendship" adopted by a group such as "The Symbolists" and would accept that only "affinités" of the soul can be authentic and valuable.

Nous sommes souvent les symboles les uns des autres, et nous nous commentons intermédiairement les uns des autres. Voilà le secret de l'amitié... (p.71)

Other people may be symbols of an element of the Universal; so may we. Since there is a preconceived Whole we may be sure that our "friends" though we may not yet have met, will "fit into" this Whole of which we are just as much symbols as they are. Perhaps when we do meet we are surprised that these "frères intérieurs" do exist, but the surprise soon fades for we have always known each other.

When this stage is reached, no words will be required, for silence is the only means of expression of the Universal. If common, everyday language is needed, perfect friendship is lost, we behave like the mass of ordinary people. Clearly Mauclair has in mind members of a predestined elite who instinctively approach one another:

Ainsi notre vie est livrée au pressentiment : et ceux que l'éprouvent le plus souvent sont plus rapprochés de la connaissance que ceux qui l'éprouvent moins fréquemment, l'instinct est le maître de notre isolement et l'arbitre de nos contacts, et il n'est point de méthode qui surpasse en validité le conseil de sentir le plus possible. (p.74)
This section and chapter close with a very significant statement which follows from Mauclair's concept of friendship as outlined here, and which will increase in importance as we observe his later developments as a critic, determined to serve those artists he admires:

"Psychologie du Mystère" ends here, but we cannot move on to the next chapter without pausing a moment to consider the implications of this very idealistic conception of friendship, for only after reading this can we appreciate precisely what Mauclair's friendship with Gide meant to him. There must have been other friendships which he saw in the same almost mystical light - that with Maeterlinck immediately springs to mind - but Gide's is best documented, and as we shall see particularly relevant to this discussion of 'le secret de l'amitié'.
As early as his third letter to Gide, of September 26th 1891, Mauclair used words and ideas which are almost exactly those of Eleusis:

En vérité, j'ai mainte parole de gratitude à dire pour cette dernière lettre que tu m'as envoyée, parce que j'y pressens pour le futur le germe d'une force commune qui nous permettra beaucoup ; mais j'ai écrit dans ma pièce que le silence est la suprême parole, et que l'infini des coeurs ne se laisse franchir que par lui : pourquoi donc, quand il s'agit de sceller entre nous une amitié, obscurcrerais-je par des paroles ce que nous concevons si bien l'un et l'autre? Nous sommes si près, que la parole nous étourdirait n'est-ce pas? Le silence est doux comme les yeux, regardons en nous.

It is certainly no coincidence that two years later, when Mauclair wrote on Le Voyage d' Urien in the Mercure de France, he should speak of both Gide and Maeterlinck as 'âmes élues' and then include almost all of what he had written in Eleusis on 'le secret de l'amitié' after his résumé of Urien. Why he did so is shown by the letter already quoted in which Mauclair told Gide that Eleusis was completed. This fact and the information given in the letter that Valette had given Mauclair barely two days to write his appreciation of Urien suggests that the text of Eleusis supplied the material for the article on Urien, and not vice-versa. This probability, and the following paragraph from the letter mentioned, help us dismiss the idea that Mauclair had borrowed ideas from Gide, for it is clear that only Urien was used as a starting point for Mauclair's own chain of thoughts:

..j'ai essayé d'y faire un peu sentir le courant secret d'idées que fait naître ton bouquin; ce que j'ai dit sur les symboles intermédiaires par exemple, j'ai fait exprès de le présenter apparentem

   -- Cf. the printed date at the end of Eleusis : "Août 1893".
We have seen what these thoughts were; that they are absolutely central to Mauclair's aesthetic theory at this time is perhaps nicely suggested by the next part of this letter, in which Narcissus, the special value of friendship, the secret current of ideas forming the Universal, such themes are implied:

"DU SYMBOLE"

One might almost believe that Mauclair, instead of plunging immediately into a most topical subject and one about which so much was being written at this time, had deliberately chosen to introduce us to the terminology and images he uses in his first two chapters before entering the rather abstruse areas of theorizing in "Du Symbole". The impression that there is a conscious ordering of chapters in this manner is strengthened by the fact that much of the substance, if not the actual text, of "Du Symbole" is found before any other (in Mauclair's "Notes sur l'idée pure" in the Mercure de France of September 1892) and yet is kept for use in this central position in Eleusis.
The most comprehensive initial definition of Mauclair's theory is found some pages from the beginning of the chapter:

Ainsi, je constate que la matérialité d'un objet n'est que le signe de la notion de cet objet, la marque de son existence, et l'ensemble des objets constitue une écriture dont le but est de nous remémorer nos associations d'idées, mais qui n'est rien en elle-même. (p.83)

Since we are by now familiar with such recurring themes as the double mirror of the senses and the conscience in "Narcisse", or the Universal Essence of which all things are part, as stressed in "Psychologie du Mystère", we need not dwell for long on the fact that Mauclair claims that he agrees with Gide: "J'appelle symbole tout ce qui paraît" and points out (following Mallarmé's imagery perhaps) that a rose has a common plastic, material "reality" revealed to us by the senses, but that the essential part of that rose is the conception of it formed in the mind - the 'idée pure'. The "real" thing is only the indication, the symbol of the essence stored in the mind, and part of a synthetical, simple Unity.

The important development which this chapter introduces, lies in the second part of the above quotation; what Mauclair is about to do in fact is to consider what links the universal symbolism around us to the literary Symbolism to which he only partly subscribes. From these considerations "l'idéo-réalisme" is born.

"L'écriture du monde" of which Mauclair speaks is distinct from other writing (invented by humans as opposed to having existed for all time) because it involves all the senses and because it is silent; it translates thought, not sound - "la pensée de l'univers". Just as ordinary writing indicates the thought processes of the author, the symbolical writing of the universe (the objects we see) may be studied to reveal this thought or essence ("l'idée pure").
This thought may be sought after in three ways according to Science (the least important), Metaphysics, and Aesthetics:

Il y a une syntaxe des phénomènes comme il y a une syntaxe des mots. La Science, qui étudie l'événement, en étudie l'orthographe. La Métaphysique, qui s'applique à la pensée de l'auteur, étudie la phrase entière en sa signification. L'Art étudie le chant de cette phrase et la forme de ses lettres. Mais tous trois ont un but commun et indissoluble, qui est, ayant compris tout ce qui est écrit, de communier avec Celui qui écrivit.

La morale, c'est d'avoir plus ou moins compris. (p.84)

When we look at this passage carefully we see again the typical arrangement of Mauclair's thought: the observer, the object, the higher unity, or, the interpreter, the symbol, the Essence; "Celui qui écrivit" is God or that Essence (not in an orthodox religious sense, as we pointed out).

Here Mauclair is using an analogy with ordinary writing, and his purpose, as he goes on to say, is to show that we need be no more mystified by "l'écriture du monde" of "l'écriture des objets" (the same) than by "l'écriture pure et simple" which we accept though it too is a very marvellous thing. A letter on a page is not just ink on paper, it is "du son fixé", and as such, in that it means something, and translates someone's ideas no matter how long after its creation, it is already "sémi-idéale"; it is a symbol of an invisible but existing "idée pure". Since we accept this, we should accept that when we look at the 'letters' in front of us (trees, stones..), we are seeing the symbols of the "pensée de l'univers".

The very important conclusion Mauclair draws from this reasoning is that the contemporary use of the word "symbolisme" is erroneous if applied, as many others around him have done, to an Art-form or an Art-method. Analogy, allegory, coincidence these are all legitimate aesthetic devices.
Mauclair thinks of symbolism as the 'preface' to idealism, and recognizes that it may be "convertissable en esthésie"; in itself, however, it would consist of a list of things, the symbols of "l'écriture du monde"; we recall the phrase: "J'appelle symbole tout ce qui paraît". Every writer is in this sense a symbolist, a user of objects - but, says Mauclair in reference to his favorite 'bête-noire', Zola is a symbolist devoid of Idealism, quite incapable of seeking the "idée pure" of which the material world, his only world, is the symbol.

Mauclair now uses naturalism as a foil to clarify his theory:

Symbolism is not a body of doctrine, an artistic 'mouvement', it is simply "une façon de voir". The exterior envelope of an object should only be seen as an intermediary form between its essential existence and ourselves. It is the idea the object suggests that is important. Symbolism is a "crédonental" which goes beyond the empty cemetery of appearances of the naturalists, to reach the interior life of the mind as typified for example in a character such as Julien Sorel. The proof of whether an author has succeeded in transcending the exterior materiality of his characters comes, as it were, after we have closed the book; after the unimportant physical details have faded, we are left with an impression of the essential mental presence...
of that character:

Voilà le formulaire d'un symbolisme possible: ne prendre aucun aspect de la matière en soi et en finalité, pas plus qu'un sculpteur ne prend le marbre en soi, mais pour faire allusion, à travers lui, à une figure, qui est un esprit. (p.94)

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A second result of the symbolist "façon de voir" is that the symbolist artist uses allusion, whereas the naturalist makes a direct transposition; since the symbolist can only feel intuitively what lies behind the object he sees, he cannot use any other means of expression. Further, he expresses himself by images:

Exprimer par images, c'est prendre un aspect de la substance et le modeler selon un sentiment; juste le contraire du naturalisme, qui modèle le sentiment sur l'objet, conformément à la conception positiviste. (p.96)

Mauclair insists that where there are no images there can be no poetry— that is why Naturalism has, he maintains, no true poet. Zola uses objects with great power, and in great quantities, but never assimilates them:

En art, où il n'y a ni fiction ni allusion il n'y a rien. (p.97)

After dealing with such ideas at some length, what Mauclair considers to be the common misconception of "Symbolism" comes under discussion—it has been as much abused as "mysticism" and "idealism" in the common mind. Yet there is no reason for it to be misunderstood; he rather ingenuously protests:

Il était cependant simple d'ouvrir un volume de Fichte pour y constater que la distinction du phénomène et du sujet avec médiation de l'objet n'est point un procédé littéraire... (p.101)
Nevertheless people continue to refer to "Symbolism" and to include in this "school" such artists as Verlaine and Laforgue, simply because they created effects by indirect suggestion. Indeed, "Symbolism" has even been carried over into painting, to such an extent that even Memling is given this label. Indignantly Mauclair pricks the bubble of all such nonsense:

J'aimerais vraiment mieux qu'on avouât tout de suite que "symboliste" signifie un artiste de moins de trente ans, n'étant pas au goût du jour - et c'est en effet tout ce qu'on veut confier à cette expression gaspillée. (p.102)

After this we arrive at Mauclair's conception of what symbolism (when applied to art, and not in itself an art) can achieve. When he advances a future Utopian conception of a unification of Science and Art in an exalted metaphysical search for truth, he has really returned to his earlier idea of "une syntaxe des phénomènes" of which the orthography is studied through Science, the sense through Metaphysics, and the form and musicality through Art. Here is the conclusion to this series of propositions:

C'est de la sorte que l'humanité cueillera peut-être un nouveau fruit d'hypothèse à l'arbre de la connaissance. Et la morale de cette époque se conformera à la conception actuelle des lois cosmiques, et au sens de ce qui aura été lu sur l'explication de Dieu : car la morale est toujours en conformité avec la conception momentanée de la cause finale. (p.105)

This is only one of many passages where we may feel that Mauclair is genuinely and passionately stating his beliefs, but that his lyricism and fluency, though both products of his conviction, cast a veil between us and his meaning, so that we pick our way slowly through the passage, reminding ourselves what the value of "l'hypothèse" was in an earlier chapter, and that "l'arbre de la connaissance" is one way of expressing the idea of Universal Essence, as is the case for
"lois cosmiques", "Dieu" and "la cause finale". Finally we may also wonder, perhaps with some justice, whether Mauclair has let himself be driven too far by counter-reaction to Naturalism and Zola. His theories are as valid as any other in such a subjective field, but is he perhaps labouring unduly what Baudelaire, for one, had gone at least some way to defining? The sense of the above passage, if not the full implications of Mauclair's "écriture du monde" theory, we read in Le Peintre de la vie moderne:

Le beau est fait d'un élément éternel, invariable, dont la quantité est excessivement difficile à déterminer, et d'un élément relatif, circonstanciel, qui sera, si l'on veut, tour à tour ou tout ensemble, l'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion.

We now reach the first physical break in this chapter. What has preceded it, though a little repetitive in parts, presents a fairly well argued whole; what follows is rather more fragmentary, and lacks the unity of that first part.

Mauclair's first point is to dispel any idea that there could be neither fantasy nor spontaneity in a symbolist-metaphysical conception of Art such as that he has just expounded. His reply begins with the rather irrelevant allegation that fantasy and spontaneity are absent from Naturalism, before coming to the crux of his defence which is that symbolism is above all a way of looking at the world, an aptitude, a curiosity, and not a system or a doctrine of method, and therefore it cannot become stereotyped and dull. Furthermore, the style of the writer must correspond to this "façon de voir":

Le style se ressent d'une vision symbolique, précisément par la nécessité de faire pressentir les correspondances intérieures des phénomènes dont il est écrit. Toutes les qualités de souplesse, de translucidité, de suggestion, toutes les ressources d'harmonie verbale deviennent
désirables, alors qu'elles n'étaient que nuisibles dans l'étude déterminée d'un fait en soi. Surtout s'impose le développement du sens musical des termes, d'un passage à un autre : et c'est ainsi que les écrivains récemment appliqués à cette vision symbolique devaient commencer par la recherche d'une forme poétique, puisque le vers, capitalement, détient l'harmonie verbale, non plus délibérément comme la prose, mais en nécessité constitutante. (p.107)

We shall see in a later chapter what use Mauclair made of these claims in his own creative work; for the moment we are hardly surprised to note that he lays a large part of the credit for the development of this conception of style on Mallarmé's shoulders.

Following a short somewhat irrelevant passage in which Mauclair again touches on his theory of a joining of forces between Science and Art, and in which the names of J.H. Rosny, Poe and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam are ranged against Zola once more, the very heart of this chapter is reached. It is a lucid definition of Ideréalism, which, had it been introduced a few pages before, would have had a much greater impact.

Since idealism, realism, (and no doubt symbolism in Mauclair's sense) are philosophical terms, Mauclair turns to a term he has found in Fichte which he considers defines more correctly what symbolism applied to Art should be called:

L'idéoréalisme est la formule d'art de l'idéalisme, qui ne saurait créer un art, mais un mode de la conscience et un ascétisme individuel. Idéoréalisme, s'occupant de la perception des idées confiées à un médiateur plastique (Goethe, Poe, Mallarmé), idéalisme considérant les idées en soi (Plotin, Hegel, Schelling), l'un complète et justifie l'autre. (p.110)

This definition appeared first in almost exactly this form in the article Notes sur l'idée pure,1 on which, as we have pointed out,

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other parts of this chapter are based. Though Mauclair claims in *Eleusis* to have found the term "idéoréalisme" in Fichte, he did not do so in the earlier article, and the term may, in fact have first come to his knowledge through Saint-Pol-Roux, who had used it in his famous reply to Jules Huret's *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* in 1891. This supposition is strengthened not only by the fact that Mauclair knew and admired Saint-Pol-Roux if not at the time of the *Enquête*, then shortly afterwards, but also by the evident closeness of some passages from Saint-Pol-Roux's reply to passages in *Eleusis*:

Je cherche donc les lignes de la Beauté parmi la Vérité, son essence parmi Dieu, puisqu'en lui permane l'intègre et vierge Idée de la Beauté. La Beauté étant la forme de Dieu, il appert que la chercher induit à chercher Dieu, que la montrer c'est le montrer. Et l'on trouve le Bien par le seul fait que l'on trouve la Beauté, en dehors même de toute marotte didactique. Le rôle du Poète consiste donc en ceci : réaliser Dieu. L'œuvre du Poète est une création, mais une seconde création, puisqu'il met à contribution les membres de Dieu.

Le Poète a pour boussole son intuition. La Beauté, châtiée, qui rôde parmi l'imagination humaine, lui susurre sa nostalgie. Nous devons noter la qualité de cette nostalgie. La Beauté brisée ne retrouvera sa perfection qu'à travers son grand regret de la Splendeur perdue : le Poète est le chancelier de ce regret.

On le voit, mon idéo-réalisme est un arbre immense ayant ses racines en Dieu, ses fruits et sa frondaison ici-bas.¹

It is however only a measure of the role of *Eleusis* as a synthesis of current thought that it was to Mauclair that others turned for the source of Ideorealism. Maubel, who had met Mauclair in 1893, credited his friend with the invention of the term, and the closing 

¹ Jules Huret: *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire*, published serially in *Echo de Paris* between 3 March and 25 July 1891, and thereafter by Charpentier. The above extract is from the latter edition, p.148. In *SGL* (p.15), Mauclair gives the date of the *Enquête* wrongly as 1892.
The paragraph of his lecture L'Idéoréalisme de quelques écrivains indicates how completely his ideas on this subject coincided with Mauclair's:

L'Idéo-Réalisme, vous l'avez compris, n'est pas une étiquette d'école. Il formule le contraire d'une doctrine, car il n'espère la beauté que d'une création spontanée et libre.

Il rejoint seulement deux éléments trop souvent séparés; il les réunit dans l'œuvre d'art, pour un accord harmonieux, qui résonne au-dessus de nous, mais dont le fondement n'est qu'en nous.

After the definition of Ideorealism, there is little to hold our attention in the closing pages of this chapter. The claim that symbolism, as Mauclair has described it, has always been accepted and used by all true artists, leads to another attack (tempered with faint praise) of Zola and the naturalists. This merges into a restatement of the hope of a future fusion between Art and Science as exemplified in Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, followed by a short lyrical hypothesis of what such a fusion would bring.

There is little doubt that this chapter "Du Symbole" may be seen as the central peak around which the rest of the book is arranged. Through the first twenty pages it demonstrates considerable fluency, which is increased by the fact that the basic points of the theory have been elucidated in the preceding two chapters; it is only regrettable that Mauclair did not show more discretion in pruning parts of the last dozen pages which weaken the fine beginning by repetition, by surrounding one of the most important basic points of...
theory with irrelevances, and by creating the impression of undue attention to destructive criticism of Zola as opposed to explanation of creative theory.

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"COMMENTAIRE SUR LA POESIE"

This chapter occupies forty pages of Eleusis, and can be divided into two parts, for the first twelve pages deal rather with the function and qualities of the poet, before we reach the discussion of poetry in its own right.

We must not expect a comprehensive or logical exposition. As in the two chapters which follow this one, this section consists of a series of reflections, some parts of which had already been published - a fact suggesting that Mauclair may well have brought together previously written pieces to create this chapter.¹

Mauclair begins by asking - of what use is the Poet, a question which allows him to loose a passing dart at the modern misconception of mechanical and scientific utility, for the Poet's usefulness belongs to a higher sphere:

Il fait allusion perpétuellement, il guide, détermine, absout, prouve à elle-même la conscience humaine. (p.119)

This means, as Mauclair goes on to say, that the poet is endowed with innate instinctive gifts. He is able to provide a synthetical view of existence and especially of the present, which escapes lesser mortals. In this, clearly, Mauclair is again expressing his conception

¹. The parts previously published are to be found in the article "Fraternités idéales" in MF Feb. 1893, pp.129-135.
of the Poet-Priest. When he writes:

Cette licence rare, de résumer les phénomènes et d'en dégager l'essentielle opportunité, il la possède. Aussi est-il moralement le seul conducteur. (p.121)

this is a restatement of the poet's duty as an exceptionnel being, as part of the eternal essence "Poet", which is "se manifeste". We find here too that the idea that the ordinary beings of the crowd rebel against the poet's revelations because they envy his exalted status, and so resist what he has to say. This is the "malentendu éternel". The true poet does not seek to dominate, but only to give form to a part of that eternal essence which he alone is able to see and describe.

Un poète n'est pas un homme éloquent, ni un législateur, ni quelque autre porte-parole, mais simplement un intermédiaire entre l'humanité et l'individu. Il s'attribue la tâche de vivre conformément au pathétique, et de nous en révéler le plus possible. Le poète formule à l'homme le désir de sa race par le moyen de la langue. Il est un conseiller d'orientations. (p.123)

This is, of course, to be read in the context of symbolism. Mauclair is advancing the defence of principles he considers incarnate in Mallarmé, for example. A glance at what has been said about the Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé shows us this.

Mauclair is however beginning from the viewpoint of a minority group, whose credo, as he sees it, is essentially a moral issue. Only in the light of the metaphysical atmosphere - or faint religiosity even - of part of Mauclair's symbolist aesthetics, do such assertions as these acquire full weight.

We must observe too that Mauclair is referring specifically to the poet, and does not include in this term writers or word-users in general, for to do so would immediately nullify the restricted
'Priesthood' of the artists who consciously use words in very specialised ways. What these ways are will be discussed shortly.

It is also worth noting that this view of the predestined poet-priest places an almost total emphasis on the individual man, even if he is part of some larger entity. In a sense, this is logical, for a poem cannot exist without the intervention of the human brain, but, on the other hand, from the point of view of critical method, this attitude implies the pre-excellence of a given creator, regardless of individual creations. Clearly the one cannot exist without the other, and the poem (the creation) is the evidence of the excellence of the poet (the creator), but nevertheless, it is this emphasis which lies behind all Mauclair's work, and leads (by definition almost) to the idea: Princes de l'Esprit.

Now Mauclair progresses to a discussion of the poet's mental and moral attitude:

Un poète doit vivre matériellement de son rêve, sans abdiquer, sans amoindrir, sans consentir, en conservant l'attitude et l'ordre. Ou sa vision est véridique, et alors la seule preuve, et la plus éclatante qu'il puisse en donner, est d'en vivre : ou elle est fausse et illusoire, et il n'est plus qu'une piteuse dupe de lui-même. (p.125)

The fact that Mauclair's theory is almost certainly based on the example of poets like Mallarmé probably explains why he employs relative terms as if they were fixed values. How is it decided whether the poet's vision is 'true' or 'false'? Mauclair is well aware of the qualities of the persons he has in mind, but this is a subjective element on which it is impossible to base a generalisation. Even when reference is made to ideas already explained in "Narcisse" for example it is difficult to follow the argument beyond the arbitrary and the abstract.
étant véritable et harmonieuse, la notion soutient l'homme en vérité et en harmonie, c'est-à-dire ne permet pas qu'il meure. (p.127)

Mauclair now moves on to the relation between the poet and his audience, again from the minority viewpoint of Symbolism, for he attempts to deal with obscurity. He objects to the poet who offers false warnings that what he is about to say is very profound; such a poet belongs to the category of misguided artists described in the Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé and allegorically in "Tristesse de la Pourpre", who only confuses the Crowd, seeking self-importance for the wrong reasons, he is simply exploiting the analytical habits of our mind, when in reality, as Mauclair has said so often in the preceding chapters, the world is simple, there should be no obstacle between ourselves and the Essence. There is however no doubt that the true poet is important, as the intermediary between the ordinary mind (which has its limitations even when willing to search for the truth) and that permanent Essence :

On ne sait jamais qu'on va dire une vérité, car on l'aurait déjà dite, ou alors on ne la rencontrera jamais ; on dit une de ses psychés intérieures, et cela se trouve être un critérium de tous les autres esprits, parce qu'il fallait que cela se trouvât quelque part. (p.129)

One must admit that such vague principles, in a domain of pure relativity where fashion and education play as large a part as instinct and talent, are as adequate a definition of what differentiates "good" or "true" art from "bad" or "false" art as is any other definition. Similarly, within that relative domain it is perfectly valid to think of an eternal superior reservoir of Truth, accessible to poets who eschew the artificial for the sincere attempt to state that Truth. It is however inadequate to argue backwards from what is
in fact a preconceived idea of Truth or Simplicity, so that Mauclair's definition of "simple truth" would not be universally relevant, and clearly stems from his symbolist view of the word:

..les intérêts d'une vérité simple demandent une énonciation paisible. C'est là que le mot sérénité a un sens : oui, prendre conseil du soir et ne pas parler plus haut qu'on n'a coutume de le faire, alors que le soleil accomplit l'acte simple de mourir... (p.129)

The essence of Mauclair's intimist philosophy is found here and it remains valid for him long after he has left the Symbolist circle. Similar preconceptions are evident in the passage with which Mauclair temporarily concludes his reflections on the Poet. We have already seen the great importance Mauclair places on Silence, the means of communion between like minds. As he describes the "Fraternités idéales" which he feels exist between contemporary artists and those of the past, we cannot fail to think of the series of essays on artists of different dates and disciplines to which Mauclair gave the significant title L'Art en silence. In Eleusis we find again the conviction that a poet is a manifestation of some eternal essence, and that all poets are united by silent communion:

Nous avons notre language dans le silence, et des systèmes de signes et de tact connus de nous seuls : la distance s'abolit pour nous, et le temps (p.130)

The use of 'nous' here is interesting as it limits the group of artists of which Mauclair is thinking (and of which he clearly feels he is part) and introduces quite firmly the subjective criteria of the minority:

Les noms des créateurs sur lesquels nous nous accordons sont des répères idéo-graphiques, et nous nous hâtons d'y recourir. (p.130)

Despite the arbitrary tone of this assertion, we can accord limited
validity to Mauclair's thoughts on why a grouping of artists should come about, provided that we bear in mind that he chooses to explain friendship within his idealist theory, that human beings can be 'symboles intermédiaires':

It is this mystical - metaphysical attitude which typifies Mauclair's mentality, and which explains why he can conclude his thoughts on the Poet with the proud cry: "Littérature, maladie triste" - for the predestined poet must realise the full weight of the burden laid on his conscience. "C'est un état dont on souffre, et voilà tout" (p.131). He will understand what others cannot; he, the "âme supérieure" need not look upwards, for he is already on high.

After such a proud definition Mauclair turns to discuss poetry, but from a point of view which, understandably, takes for granted the principles he has just enunciated.

If it is true to say that many of Mauclair's ideas concerning the Poet could have been inspired by his profound admiration of Mallarmé the man, it is equally true that his thoughts on poetry owe a very great deal to Mallarmé's work, in the first instance to the "Diva-gation (relativement au vers)" from Pages or from Vers et prose (from
which he had already quoted and to which he had referred specifically in his article "Notes sur l'idée pure"), but also to such pieces as "La Penultime" and to the innumerable conversations of the rue de Rome. The following discussion can only touch on the least subtle of the coincidences, not in order to question Mauclair's originality but rather to demonstrate the use he made of ideas already in the air.

Thus, following Mallarmé's more suggestive passage -

Quelques jets de l'intime orgueil véridiquement trompetés éveillent l'architecture du palais, le seul habitable; hors de toute pierre, sur quoi les pages se refermeraient mal.¹

Mauclair advances the claim that there are two levels on which a poem is to be understood: the 'sens extérieur des mots' and 'la symphonie sous-jacente'. The former is obvious to all; the latter only becomes apparent when the words are read out, when their full musical value is restored, and fulfils the sense. Examples Mauclair gives are Baudelaire's "Bénédiction", Mallarmé's "Hérodiade", and the beginning of "Le Guignon", and Rimbaud's "Bateau ivre". It is not surprising that these pieces have a close connection with Mauclair's definition of the predestined, misunderstood, poet-priest. Extending his theory, Mauclair likens Mallarmé's "Apparition" to the andante passage of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata", Baudelaire's "Phares" to a Handel finale, and Verlaine's "Ariettes oubliées" to Schumann's "Historiettes". Certainly, the germ of this criticism, based on what could be called inter-disciplinary comparison - and which Mauclair categorically holds to be a 'vérité théorique', is to be found in Mallarmé's "Divagation", a little before the passage quoted, where the modern search for an art of suggestion is likened to the music of fugues and

sonatas. Mauclair advances this idea a little with precise examples, and this close association of music and poetry is only the beginning of the theme of the 'fusion of the arts' which intrigued Mauclair and so many of his contemporaries. Here he brings music and poetry together, and he made this clear in his musical comparison with the opening phrase: 'Si un poète dit'. For, just as music is not simply crochets and quavers, poetry is not just words, but words of a special order, arranged by the poet, and if spoken by a poet, the special nature of true poetry as opposed to other "arts de la parole" becomes evident. Just as the poet is a special being, poetry is a special creation.

The example Mauclair chooses to underline his conception of the musicality of poetry is simple; he contrasts the 'official' method of reading Racine with the 'proper' poetic way, which gives full value to the mute 'e', and restores the correct balance to the alexandrines. Though the example Mauclair gives comes from Phèdre, as we read his evident predilection for "le beau vers pâle et chantant de Racine" we remember how he wrote to Gide of Bérénice, and of "le vrai Racine, le beau, celui qui est notre aîné secrètement et qu'on n'ose pas dire". On this occasion, he quotes

Ariane, ma sœur, de quel amour blessée
Vous mourûtes aux bords où vous fûtes laissée! (p.135)

and then, in a manner reminiscent of Mallarmé's "La Penultième", continues with a commentary of the 'dessin graphique' of such lines, where the two circumflex vowels are compared to summits, with a valley of heavy dull sounds between them. Such ideas, Mauclair main-

2. Vers et prose. In Divagations this piece has the title: "Démon de l'analogie".
tains, are not idle preciosity, but the very heart of poetry.

It is however, not a process about which we can be dogmatic: "Tout cela est affaire de tact", he maintains, and he refuses to allow the validity of such devices, if rigidly applied. An inflexible system of 'correspondances', for example is bound to be contrary to instinctive poetic feeling; it is absurd, Mauclair feels, to take Rimbaud's poem "Voyelles" and attempt to erect theories of equivalence between 'i', orange, heliotrope perfume, and the flute.¹

Such arid systematizing stifles the all-important factors, intuition and choice:

On ne réglemente pas une sensation, la première condition de la poésie est la spontanéité et la faculté de choix des rythmes et des harmonies: ainsi la vision que Rimbaud fixa en un sonnet était absolument personnelle, nous l'avons tous eue plus ou moins, suivant l'acuité de notre sensibilité, et elle touche à un domaine d'analogies qui sont indéniables, et dont le critère est seulement dans l'individu. Mais les moyens du vers sont multipliés et compliqués, et s'il est fou de les grammaticiser, il est prudent d'en constater les innombrables modalités. Un vers est le résultat de beaucoup plus d'intuition qu'on ne peut se l'imaginer; et le merveilleux est que toute sa science orchestrale soit complètement subordonnée au sentiment, et qu'ainsi on ne la puisse soupponer qu'autant que l'on commence à sentir - s'élevant par degrés à la compréhension esthétique d'un art dont les moyens, au lieu d'aider à concevoir leur raison d'être, se découvrent seulement lorsqu'on l'a sentie vivre en les profondeurs de sa conscience. (pp.138-139)

Quite clearly, the ground is here prepared for Mauclair's next few pages, a discussion of the 'vers libre', and from the above passage, we may easily anticipate his conclusions: All verse, all poetry cannot, by definition be anything else but free, dependant only on

1. Here one is reminded of the presentation on Dec.11 1891 under the auspices of the Théâtre d'Art, of Le Cantique des cantiques in which words, music, colours and perfumes were 'orchestrated' in the above way.
the sensibility and secret design of each poet. It is the idea of 'regular' verse which is a nonsense, for such arbitrary classifications only exist for the convenience of sterile critics, academic historians, and pedants.

We shall return to some of the details of Mauclair's argument here in our discussion of his own poetry Sonatines d'automne; for the moment we need only point out how he takes up the terms he has so often used in his theoretical writing to characterise the Poet's function:

Il y a l'expansion, l'instinctivité et la nécessité de soi, - ou l'art devient l'introduc
teur de la foule des médiocrités, une façon de gendarmerie, de bureaucratie et de parlotte, où l'on apprend à pérorer en douze syllabes - indigne parodie d'un de nos plus admirables fantômes, négation d'une des forces révélatrices de Dieu, la spontanéité. (p.142)

Mauclair's ideas on the alexandrine follow very closely those of Mallarmé in the "Divagation (relativement au vers)" already mentioned - a fact that Lucien Muhlfeld was quick to point out.1 Broadly speaking, Mauclair feels that the alexandrine still has a role to play as a means of expressing solemnity, the 'sentiment essentiel et suprême de l'artiste', whereas another mode is better suited to the transcription of transitory, fleeting moments of emotion. This division Mauclair find perfectly adapted in Verlaine's work, where the opening "Prière" of Amour, or "Crimen Amoris" are as ideally suited to what they express as are his other hesitant, fluctuating 'petits poèmes'. Seen in this light, the alexandrine is to be restored to its full, less generalised, less hackneyed value, and French versification can only be enriched by the addition of another highly expressive and musical verse form in the 'vers libre'.

If the influence of Mallarmé has been felt throughout this chapter of *Eleusis*, it becomes especially clear in the closing argument, which concerns the basic injustice of demanding clarity in poetry. What is clarity? Is it an abstract definable quality? Is Ingres 'clearer' than Whistler; Zola 'clearer' than Verlaine; an Italian minuet 'clearer' than Schumann? (The choice of extremes is in itself revealing). Surely the ability to understand, to see clearly depends on the person, and his individual capabilities.

Of course, this is largely true, and Mauclair is only stating a general principle. We should remember that here he is probably arguing in reaction to contemporary popular complaints over the obscurity of Decadent and Symbolist work. We recall his admission to Gide that preparing his *Conférence sur Stéphane Mallarmé* he had to avoid commenting on "un auteur français comme un grec".¹ He is not as yet making a value judgement implying that a 'difficult' poem is better than a simple one, he is only pointing out that universal clarity is not a pre-requisite to Art.

As far as poetry is concerned, Mauclair maintains that the issue is complicated by the fact that the poet is obliged to use words which are common currency "impersonnel et détérioré par mille usages divers". In consequence when he wishes to enter the special world which painters and musicians may create with their special tools, he is reduced to using a non-specialised medium, and falls prey to having mis-used that medium if he makes a special use of it, not immediately 'clear' to the Crowd.

Since a writer must use this common language, the obvious conclusion is that he must create his style. The concept of "style"

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as a fixed, conventional ideal is absurd, for writers have always
had their own individual styles within such a professorial distinc-
tion such as Classicism. Therefore, Mauclair goes on to say:

La première condition d'originalité est une
délection inattendue des vocables, un goût
spécial de leur arrangement et du groupement
de leur sens, (p.147)

and we must accept this, he says, because it provides as valid a
distinction between writers using the same words and syntax as bet-
ween painters (Monet and Corot are his examples) using the same col-
ours and brushes, and we accept the latter distinctions far more
readily than the former.

Having shown in this way that a writer creates his own langu-
age within the greater common language, Mauclair points out that cer-
tain of the writer's words and usages must perplex the ordinary mind,
and the degree of comprehension will vary with each reader; surely we
cannot wish the poet to reduce his range of expression to a common
uninspired mean?

Il faut le dire, nécessité incroyable : un mot
riche est plus désirable qu'un mot terne. Les
mots ont leur beauté particulière, et plus l'écri-
vain en sait et en emploie, plus il fait son bon
office d'écrivain. Un peintre grandit plus sa
palette est riche de tons, un écrivain se rehausse
avec l'agrandissement de ses connaissances et
l'augmentation du caractère de personnalité de son
écriture. Notions risibles de banalité, pourtant
ignorées de la plupart - et pardon de les retracer
ici. (pp.148-9)

From this point onwards to the end of the chapter, Mauclair
slips increasingly into the excesses of his own theorising. Though
it may be possible to reconcile his arguments with the general theme
of his book, he often adopts an exceedingly high-handed attitude
which depends (as in the passage just quoted) on relative terms treat-
ed as absolutes, and assertions of opinion treated as matters of fact,
though perhaps we may admire Mauclair the polemicist for this.

Is it not a somewhat cyclic argument to declare that clarity is the perfect matching of language to thought, and then to continue:

si l'êne est exactement faite pour enchasser l'autre, l'union est bonne et harmonieuse, et ainsi il naît de cette fusion une particulière lueur, cette lueur qui sort des choses belles. (p.149)

Is it not equally inconclusive to make clarity and understanding depend solely on the degree of 'culture' of the reader, in other words, to make the Poet infallible and the reader predestined to be inferior to him? What, in fact Mauclair is basing his argument on is this:

Un poète n'est pas fait pour être compris, mais pour être senti. Il est un messager du monde hyperphysique, et on ne commente pas le monde hyperphysique. On en ressent des variations de sensibilité. Ainsi les poètes sont des accumulateurs émotifs auxquels on vient se vivifier - et non point des donneurs d'explications. (p.151)

If we wish to understand, the onus is on us to become sufficiently cultured to do so, and this is clearly shown by Mauclair's disdain of those who fail to appreciate Mallarmé:

Il demeure obscure comme la beauté aux illettrés et aux esprits sans culture. (p.150)

For Mauclair accepts nothing but intuition, and individual sensibility. Clarity is not an essential part of art, whereas its opposite, obscurity, or the shadowy places where the imagination may roam, is a necessity:

Une œuvre d'imagination nécessite, comme les prophéties, l'admission de plusieurs glosses. Il faut seulement savoir être obscure, comme il faut savoir mettre les noirs en place dans une eau-forte. (p.152)

Indeed, Mauclair considers that a work of art is not required to mean anything. Laws need to be clear because they impose complete obedience; a work of art is quite different, it does not impose
itself on us; if it is clear, finished, accessible, it holds no secret place, it is dead.

In all this, Mauclair returns to his earlier contention: it is because we are incapable of conceiving the world synthetically as the great minds can that we are perplexed; we wallow in analysis and the desire to see things in fiddling detail. The poet is on high and can see all the country before him as if on a map, but we wander in the valleys concerned about the next turning, the next milestone.

The impression that these pages leave is that of an apology and defence of Mallarmé, for the major points of theory are backed by a reference to him, as in the example just quoted, and in the later assertion that only the poet knows how to use fully the musicaity of words; the example given and commented on is: "Trompettes tout haut d'or pâmé sur les vélins". It is however quite probable that Mauclair only intended to describe the ideal Poet, and that by force of circumstances Mallarmé is the only figure who approaches this ideal.

Why Mauclair should carry his theory to such extremes may have been because this was an issue which excited him beyond reason, or because he felt his overstatement was guaranteed by Mallarmé, whom he quotes in evidence, or because he is carried away by that atmosphere of "critique de combat" which brooks no opposition and drowns any cries of "illogical", "excessive" with the reply "Philistine";
It is however too easy to become hypercritical of what Mauclair was attempting to say within limited terms of reference, and it would be unfortunate if this were to obscure the real fluency with which he creates his images, despite their authoritarian import:

La poésie ne se prouve pas, ne se catalogue pas, ne se commente pas. Mais elle jaillit comme un feu universel, comme un geste autorisé, comme une colonne commémorative, ou quelque grande décision de ce qui est prééminent; et les hommes doivent la saisir avec des mains simples. Car elle ne s'appropie point comme un objet, n'est point faite pour se porter avec ostentation ainsi qu'un bracelet; elle ne consent pas à mille trafics individuels, mais elle se tient au milieu de notre instinct avec des attitudes d'axiome, un caractère d'authenticité — et comme les turquoises elle pâlit, s'éteint, s'annule en sa vertu lorsqu'elle touche à des âmes abandonnées de la véritable santé — en tout semblable à un chant sonore et aussi polymorphe et indomptable que le vent qui vient des files orientales. (p.159)

"QUELQUES JEUX DE L'IDÉATION"

This section, the fifth in the book, is not much longer than that which precedes it, but it is more fragmentary and varied. Perhaps it is interesting for precisely that reason; the short pieces it uses are more akin to review items dealing with one point, one idea, and then leaving it before becoming entangled in theory or in the consequences of the point made in relation to previous statements. Nevertheless, through these relatively light touches a considerable amount of aesthetic theory is developed, and not all the details — and contradictions — of this can claim space here.

Perhaps such a collection, in view of its varied subjects and their titles ("De la Fiction" would be better named "De l'Imagination")
could be thought of as Curiosités esthétiques, for where Mallarmé's influence is all-pervasive in "Commentaire sur la poésie", Baudelaire's art-criticism may well have inspired parts of this chapter, though we have no direct evidence to show this. All we know from a letter of Mauclair to Clément-Janin,¹ and from other evidence in this chapter and elsewhere, is Mauclair's enormous regard for Les Fleurs du Mal and the Petits Poèmes en prose. On the other hand, very little is known about what he had read, and there is no reason to suppose that the posthumous edition of Curiosités esthétiques had not passed through his hands.

The opening piece, "De la Fiction", touches on two cardinal points of Mauclair's aesthetics: the moral obligation of the artist, and absolute representation in painting. For the former we read the first sentence or two:

On ne ment qu'à soi-même, partout ailleurs on imagine; et l'on peut cela seulement. Aussi l'honneur de l'homme git-il, depuis l'heure première, dans la fiction, qui est tout l'art; et la vie est un art individuel, étant recréée dans le silence de l'esprit. (p.163)

We must notice how the moral obligation of the artist - to be sincere - is extended into life; this is a point Mauclair returns to shortly. Here he continues, talking directly of painting:

La beauté de la peinture, s'il m'agréé prémént d'y toucher,² est dans ce mensonge muet que l'auteur se fait des choses à soi-même, et notre plaisir naît de savoir que cela est fictif. Troublante énigme qu'un paysage, alors que, contemplatifs de bonne foi, nous nous constatons joués par l'artifice de quelques mélanges chimiques dépositaires de

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² Is there not something of Baudelaire's "Salon" style in such a phrase?
nos mirages, ou toute l'émotion de la nature transposée vient se certifier issue de nous-mêmes! (p.163)

From this terminology Mauclair is clearly thinking here of purely representational art; although it is something of an anachronism to talk of representational as opposed to non-representational painting within the context of Eleusis, from what is said here, it does not seem that his ideas could pass beyond the seemingly absolute ideal of resemblance to the model. He certainly does not demand photographic verisimilitude - the realist school, whether in painting or literature receives as harsh treatment from him as from Baudelaire, and, though the pre-requisite for art is, for Mauclair, imagination or "fiction" in the sense outlined above, this is seen either as the innate gift of the painter who knows how to capture what he sees, or as an element of the sensitivity of the observer who knows how to appreciate the painter's efforts. In both cases, the essential emotional result stems from the illusion of reality:

Une des coquetteries désirables de la peinture, la dissemblance absolue de ce qu'il y a sur la toile avec ce qui y fut représenté. Car le dessin n'est pas la notation graphique des différenciations de plans colorés, mais le moyen d'en imposer l'illusion: et plus le dessin s'affranchit du graphique, erreur optique, plus il devient l'œuvre fictive de l'illusioniste, plus il vaut. Les interprétations de peupliers de Claude Monet, si sûres d'une vérité et pourtant si peu conformes, sont subtiles jusqu'à l'inconcevable dans ce sens. L'intérêt du site ne git pas dans son contour, mais dans sa matière plastique, et ce qui importe picturalement, c'est ce plasma.

(p.165)

In thus firmly placing the painter in the position of intermediary, Mauclair assigns to him the same role as to the poet as it was outlined in previous chapters, especially perhaps in "Du symbole". This chapter is mentioned in particular because there is more than a
passing analogy between the poet and the painter, predestined, inevitably gifted, their materials, words and colours, and their aim, a higher order of Truth. It is also their way of looking at the visible world as 'l'écriture du monde' and their assimilation of these 'symbols' ("j'appelle symbole tout ce qui paraît") which brings them together. That is why, no matter how much a painter alters the reality of nature, no matter how much imagination is given full rein, 'l'écriture du monde' must, for Mauclair, still be present in the final result.

Perhaps we see here a tendency to see painting from a literary point of view, and such a tendency would explain why, in order to end this section Mauclair suddenly cites Banville and Flaubert, not painters, as prime examples of "l'aisance dans le rêve". They are writers who are great because they are completely at ease in the most important artistic world, that of fantasy, imagination, or "fiction".

"Du caractère et du style" consists of eight fragments, some of which are hardly a page in length, and most of which refer to painting. The first of them is literary, however, and levels criticisms which are not new, for we have already seen the scorn with which Merrill's Les Fastes or Giraud's Les Dernières Fêtes were treated in La Revue indépendante in 1891. Here Mauclair re-states his opinion that there has been enough empty repetition of meaningless Wagnerian symbols, enough medievalising, enough misinterpretation of Gustave Moreau - in short, enough debasing of the poetic value of words. It is much more difficult to use words properly in

writing clear effective criticism - or on a higher plane, in true
poetry, created by the selective genius and originality of the poet,
not by the motley arrangement of empty "symbols":

Qu'on ne se contraigne point à des symboles inadé-
quats: à soi-même, mais qu'on les choisisse dans
sa propre existence intérieure. Il n'y a pas de
symboles fixes, un langage, un volapük de symboles.
La poésie n'est pas une langue chiffrée, une hiéro-
glyphie; ce que signifie l'Épée pour Henri de Régnier
ne répond en rien à mon sentiment, ainsi ne m'en ser-
virai-je probablement jamais. Si les motifs avaient
le même sens pour tout le monde, on serait condamné
au pastiche en fort peu de temps. (pp.169-170)

Henri de Régnier receives, here and elsewhere in the book, special
mention; Mauclair's friendship with him is supported by genuine ad-
miration for his work.

For Mauclair, "le style" is the easiest thing to acquire, for
it is merely a convention. "Son style", that is to say one's own
style is much more difficult to achieve, because it is an expression
of one's personality, and is supremely evident in Verlaine, Hervieu,
Barrès, Bourges, Flaubert, Delacroix, Manet and Puvis de Chavannes,
(an interesting list of 'Princes de l'Esprit') artists who do not
rely on catalogues of set values, or such puerile devices as the use
of capitals to designate "important" words (another Symbolist fail-
ing), but who can create masterpieces with only a few 'notes', a few
tones.

If one objects that Mauclair has already proclaimed "Un pein-
tre grandit plus sa palette est riche de tons", this only underlines
a basic characteristic of Eleusis : the discussion of one point in
reaction to another specific abuse (here it is empty ornamentation),
without reference to a general theory.

Although, in the second little section, Mauclair is repeating
a previous argument - that feeling ('faire sentir') is of greater
value than realism ('faire voir'), it is interesting here because precise examples are quoted: Maupassant and Gautier are considered much inferior to Flaubert, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Mallarmé. When we read further:

Les grandes phrases d'Axël, de la Tentation de saint Antoine restituent les paysages avec une puissance merveilleuse, l'eau de l'étang dans le Nénuphar blanc, chatouie avec une lucidité infinie - et toute l'âme des poètes y transparaît, (p.173)

and then read of Mauclair's passionate admiration for Akédysseril (especially the return of the victorious army to Benares), for Baudelaire's prose poem "Bienfaits de la lune", for Poe's "Silence", for Manet, as opposed to the meticulous Meissonier and the accurate David, we are close to the very nucleus of his artistic sensibility, just as we were when reading that earlier letter to Clément-Janin in which Mauclair described the books he had taken with him to Barbizon (Akédysseril, Bouvard et Pecuchet, Sagesse) and in which he complained of a recent publication which he felt had defiled Baudelaire's memory.

"Crimen Amoris" was referred to in a previous chapter; now the first line

Dans un palais, soie et or, dans Ecbatane

is quoted as the epitome of concentration and feeling. Baudelaire's supreme achievement is not to have written Les Fleurs du Mal, but to have written only that:

Hugo aurait fait un admirable et inégal volume avec chacun de ces poèmes. Mais se sentir assez géant pour aller de la Bénédiction au Voyage, et se retenir à ce point inouï, se concentrer, se tordre les ailes....

Pégase captif. (p.175).

1. 7 Sept. 1892, cf. p.194.
Some time has been taken to detail these references because it is felt that in this way we can gain some idea of the cast of Mauclair's mind and reading; from this list come the influences we have already seen in *Eleusis* and which we will see again in his creative work. When we are aware of them we appreciate that it is no coincidence that the text from Flaubert which Mauclair prints on the cover and the title-page of *Eleusis*, a text containing the essence of the book, comes from *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*:

> Il doit y avoir quelque part des figures primordiales dont les corps ne sont que les images.

Flaubert's very next sentence could be that of Narcisse:

> Si on pourrait les voir, on connaîtrait le lien de la matière et de la pensée, en quoi l'Être consiste!

One easily imagines the poet Mauclair's delight in the multitude of soaring images of Flaubert's *Tentation* would be just as great as the chronicler Mauclair's amusement at the irony of *Bouvard et Pecuchet*.

The next tiny section which defines perhaps the most elementary of Mauclair's critical yard-sticks - that character and style are identical in both life and art because when they are present we have the same feeling of harmony - may be taken with a later piece which suggests that beautiful things inspire a kind of mist which obscures ugly things -

> Et cette brume de beauté est peut-être tout ce que nous appelons l'âme, ou le sens du juste.

(p.163)

"La sensation d'harmonie", "le sens du juste" : how much Mauclair relies on these relative terms - which in fact define nothing unless

we know what Mauclair's values are, or unless we think along similar lines, as we may assume many of the young readers of *Eleusis* would do.

Much of the remainder of "Du caractère et du style" will be best discussed with other art criticism. Van Gogh is used to show how the indiscriminate use of the word "genius" is abused, for his letters¹ have revealed a hard-working conscientious modest person and not the "fou de génie" as many had held him to be. August Pointelin, a supreme creator of the 'caractère' of a scene, has been neglected; emphasis must be laid on the Impressionists' "respect" for beauty; Degas, Morisot, Armand Point, Aman-Jean, Henry de Groux, Maurice Denis, Vuillard – there are painters who know how to portray character in the way that Chardin could do with two plums and a bowl, in a way that the elaborate Bouguereau can never capture.

Mauclair's thoughts on the absurdity of attempts to find a "style XIXe siècle" are worth closer consideration. His opinion that such a style can never be consciously created, for it exists in each age, and only becomes apparent to the successors of that age, is predictable; his summary of the century of which he is the latest product is revealing:

Nous faisons depuis un siècle un profond retour sur nous-mêmes. Notre extérieur s'efface, notre vie intérieure ne s'intensifie peut-être pas, mais elle s'organise plus méthodiquement. Nous sentons fort bien que le luxe n'est plus notre fait, ni la pompe décorative. Pourquoi continu-erons-nous à orienter le style vers l'extériorité de la vie. Un style intérieur peut naître, il est peut-être né sans que nous le soupçonnions, alors que dans cent ans il apparaîtra caractérisé. (p.181)

This is one example of Mauclair's tendency to apply to what

¹. Van Gogh's letters were published in the *Mercure de France* at the same time as Mauclair's first pieces.
he sees a preconceived notion such as "le style intérieur", rather than to evaluate what he sees in terms of what it is.

The final section is in the form of a lyrical symbolist memory of "nos martyrs et nos chers morts" - Ephraïm Mikhaël, Laforgue, Rimbaud, Van Gogh, Seurat, Monticelli - a list which is prompted by the preceding sombre reflections on "originality". The conclusions of this one could imagine as being the products of a night of fever and despair: in art one is eternally condemned to pastiche and similarity, to mental promiscuity:

Nous ne nous appartenons pas, nous sommes des hommes de lettres, amuseurs, ou pis. La vie des hommes ordinaires, que nous devons subir, est déjà bien misérable; elle est prisonnière de tout, du déjeuner, de la pluie, du linge, de l'indifférence du ciel et du pavé. Et nous comptons la prison double. J'ai d'ailleurs absolument tort de me plaindre de cela, car ce martyr volontaire est la seule chose qui ne s'achète pas... (p.186)

How strange it is to recognise here the double force - "servitude et grandeur littéraires" - which Mauclair described thirty years later, but which had already begun to shape his mind.

* * *

Since we have examined at length in a previous chapter Mauclair's conception of Anarchism, there is not a great deal in "Du Sens de la Liberté" which needs detailed comment.

An artist's life and work are bound together because his watchword is: "se révéler". He therefore cannot accept authority - artistic, social or political - since this would mean renouncing his individuality. The idea of being a 'disciple' is only acceptable in the case of painting or sculpture where a certain number of technical
skills need to be learned, and even there, Mauclair feels, there is a growing impatience and a desire that the artist find out such skills for himself. Friendship (in the very special sense expounded in "Psychologie du Mystère") is the only valid area in which two artists may unite, because it should, according to Mauclair's ideas, leave the individual free.

One can also be subjected to the demands of time and place; these too the artist must reject, for only someone as insensitive as Zola could boast of writing for a fixed number of hours per day. The real artist does not know why he writes, he only knows that he must:

Cette belle nécessité n'est nullement en dehors de nous-mêmes, et nous ne devons rien à autrui de notre rêve intérieur. (p.191)

This section ends on the definition of a quasi-neologism which Mauclair feels would sum up his attitude: instead of "l'esthétique", we should write "l'esthéthique" because ethics cannot be separated from art. In a sense this is the personal equivalent of ideo-realism, for it indicates a desire forever present in Mauclair's theories, to unite the intellectual and the actual, to conciliate idealism and reality. In the idea of "esthéthique" we see a means of exalting reality through the perception of the artist, the "être d'exception":

Il y a un mot: se manifester. Tout y revient. Il n'y a pas deux façons de bien, l'une pour l'œuvre et l'autre pour soi; l'œuvre et soi, cela ne fait qu'un, et c'en est une marque profonde que les théoriciens de l'impassibilité se montrent quand même dans leurs plus froids écrits. Être sincère avec soi-même et s'estimer, voilà une règle d'éthique qui n'est pas moins esthétique. Construit-on sa vie autrement que son œuvre? Je ne le saurais assez nier. J'ajoute qu'il y a là une direction préconçue de notre esprit, car nous n'avons pas de mots distincts pour différencier
notre oeuvre de nous-mêmes. Individualité, caractère, sensibilité, voilà de communes désignations de la vie et de la composition d'art. (p.194)

* * *

"De la recherche du chef-d'oeuvre" continues the theme of absolute individualism, for Mauclair cries out: "Qui nous rendra libres des classifications et des estimations?" and points out that a masterpiece, by definition should be so overwhelming that we cannot fully tabulate why it is a masterpiece. And yet, because of education, we allow the critical faculty (which by rights can only be concerned with such things as technique and method) to usurp our instinct and sensibility, and so produce such absurdities as declaring that Delacroix cannot draw properly because a "wrong" line has been found here and there; we need only compare the "perfect" detail of Meissonnier to see how devoid they are of 'idéation'.

Just as the writer will accept no authority, no common solidarity with others, neither will his work. The critic, anxious to define, to reason, to make sense, has no right to compare one work of art with another, for they exist separately and individually outside the convenient classifications such comparison wishes to impose upon them. The process amounts to no more than this:

savoir gré à une impression esthétique d'être plus récente qu'une autre, ce qui est naturel à notre désir de joie, et fonder là-dessus des principes de comparaison qui supposent essentiellement une totale impartialité. (p.203)

The proof that the word "chef-d'oeuvre" has been over-used is to be found in the expression "petit chef-d'oeuvre" - which is a weak admission of the fact that there cannot be any number of master-
pieces, and, in Mauclair's mind there can be no such thing as a minor masterpiece. He could not have had his exalted idea of the poet without having an equally exalted notion of the true poet's creation.

In typical fashion the chapter again ends in a lyrical vein, as we read a series of questions designed to show that we simply do not have the power to decide arbitrarily what is a masterpiece, nor should we rely on the illusion of analytical classification:

l'assentiment de notre esprit ne se dose pas comme un élixir, mais il s'affirme conforme en sa non-limite à la palpitation de la matière active et universelle. (p.205)

* * *

"NOTES SUR DES ARTS FUTURS"

Je pense que certains phénomènes spirituels, jusqu'ici classés dans l'éthique par l'arbitraire de notre raison, commencent lentement de s'en évader et de s'approcher de l'expressivité proprement esthétique. (p.210)

This is how Mauclair defines one main factor in the series of ideas he is about to discuss in this sixth chapter of Eleusis. The second factor comes from the fact that since art and life go together for him, and art is amoral (there are no a-priori virtues and vices) we should not attempt to control and stifle what is inspired in us by so-called weaknesses, but should consider these as legitimate emotive issues worthy of inclusion in art. In short, outside the transitory and changing preoccupations of social convention, our life too should be amoral, as befits the individualist:
Car c'est peut-être une orientation moins contemporaine de notre véritable destin, que l'utilisation esthétique de nos défaites, et la notation de nos variations, supportée de l'intime volonté de ne rien repousser hors de nous-mêmes, et de ne consentir jamais à l'exil d'un de ces frères intérieurs que nous formons continûment, et que nous avons chériss pour y être un instant reflétés : nous ne devons pas avoir horreur de nous-mêmes, mais nous regarder passer en formes diverses, et l'on ne s'indigne pas d'une forme, mais on l'assimile et on s'y retrouve.... (p.214)

In the introductory pages just mentioned, Mauclair stated that he was aware that Death had in fact been used as a part of artistic realisation; his references to Masterlinck and to L'Intruse in the section following that introduction, "Sur la mort", leave us in no doubt as to the realisation he had in mind. It is interesting that Masterlinck, reviewing Eleusie, should have quoted at length from "Sur la mort", where he is first mentioned in the book. Furthermore, the closeness of parts of Eleusie (1894) with Le Trésor des humbles (1896) may well reflect the closeness between the two men at this time which we have demonstrated in Chapter Five of this study.

What Mauclair is trying to define is rather different from this use of death in art. He looks with some irony at the strange force death exerts upon the bereaved. From their black 'rags' to their obsequious, carefully polite gestures they are forced into certain attitudes. It is this usurpation of the individual's conscience which for Mauclair is a 'déchéance morale' which should be transformable into an aesthetic force.

He points out that it is only a minority of poets like Masterlinck who are able to interpret fully the symbolism of the events (as

1. In AM; this has already been quoted, cf. p.190.
2. The individual essays of this book were published in reviews earlier - one ("Emerson") as early as February 1894, others in NR during 1895.
opposed to the objects referred to later) surrounding death, and who can visualise the full horror and illogicality of a situation which, if all could see it, would lead to mass suicide, because there is nothing more banal and irrevocable than death. In consequence, our weeping and emotional turmoil seem strangely exaggerated. There must nevertheless be some force at work:

Evidence that this 'x', this mysterious force exists, Mauclair observes in our reaction to death. Even the humblest, least educated bereaved attach values to the things left by the deceased - "c'est une tentative directe de symbolisme". The fact that such objects begin to take on a significance different from their ordinary importance, is evidence of an aesthetic force:

Although we may appreciate where, in Mauclair's symbolist theory, such considerations find their place, his argument is inconclusive - as no doubt it was meant to be. It seems to demonstrate how the logical development of parts of previous theory (the usurpation of the individual, the "tentative directe de symbolisme") do not combine happily into a whole.

"Sur la sensualité" includes almost all of the article entitled "Éloge de la luxure" which Mauclair published in the Mercure de France in May 1893,¹ where it was intended as a commentary of

¹. MF May 1893, pp.43-50. In Eleusis all specific references to the novel and its author are omitted.
Rachilde's novel L'Animale, and of issues raised by it. The title of the article is clearly in conformity with Mauclair's intention in this chapter - to examine normally "immoral" notions in the light of possible aesthetic use.

Before arriving at the text of this article however, we read a few pages on slightly different subjects. In the first place, this section deals with sensuality rather than 'la luxure'. We must recall the part played by "la bonne ivresse d'EXISTER" in the formation of the poet in general; Narcisse,¹ and by the awareness of the "sensualité latente des choses" in the temperament of one poet in particular: Mallarmé.² Quite obviously, the poet has to be enchanted with what he sees, "l'écriture des objets" if he is to be able to fulfil his function. This is a re-statement of the constant duality in Mauclair's symbolism between art and life, the ideal and the real. It is this duality which largely explains why he was so scornful of the empty symbolism of Wagnerian jargon and medieval clichés, because this had nothing to do with life and its inherent symbolism.

Nowhere is this view of life better illustrated than in the following long but particularly evocative passage:

...J'aime l'étrange buée qui monte des pavés luisants à la fin des journées pluvieuses de novembre. C'est la mélancolique gaze polluée du voile de la chère luxure. Alors les femmes aux lèvres rouges, et les pales vagabonds pensifs dont la puberté fatigue les traits, vont brûlant de l'éclair sec de leurs regards levés des phrases écrites aux murs, de ces grandes gauches écritures d'école dont la banale netteté rend plus imprévu le trouble recédé au sens qu'elles fixèrent. C'est un des mots sur les murs baisés par les yeux des femmes câlines! Une humidité

¹ Eleusis, p.15.
Such description, even if it uses rather unconventional images to show aesthetic potential, is not at first sight so different from the Naturalism Mauclair abhorred. To understand the nuance which Mauclair felt lay between them (and which to him was much more than a nuance) we must refer to an earlier page of "Du Symbole" where we read:

Un naturaliste écrira : "Ses souvenirs étaient comme des fleurs fanées." Un symboliste dira : "Les fleurs de son souvenir se fanaient." Voilà la comparaison et l'allusion. L'un prend la matière intacte et la juxtapose à un sentiment ; l'autre transpose le sentiment en un médiateur plastique, qui n'intervient que pour lui prêter symboliquement sa forme. Il établit ainsi une harmonie entre le sujet et l'objet - expression même de l'esthétique.

Lucien Muhlfeld, in his criticism of Eleusis attempted to make some capital out of this passage by quoting only the first two pieces of direct speech, followed by the ironical question : "Quoi, Pierre Louys, ce n'est que cela?" - a wilful over-simplification. If we take the latter passage in the context of Mauclair's theory of symbols - "l'écriture du monde" - we see that he is obliged to use real elements as in the former passage; what we must judge is if he succeeds in conveying the sense of universality of which these objects
are the symbols, and our judgement must involve such factors as the
special role Mauclair assigns to words. In this way we see that Mau-
clair uses described objects for their potential, not for their pre-
sence, as would a Naturalist. This is why he considers "immoral"
notions may be used, not simply in themselves as "immoral" notions,
not simply because they are there in life, but because they reveal
another dimension of existence, another dimension of individual per-
ception.

When we return to our place in Eleusis, we see that on the
next page Mauclair does in fact tell us that what we have just obser-
ved in his description is the state of poetic awareness inspired by
"la sensualité", "l'ancienne joie de l'humanité".

In other parts of this section, when Mauclair comes to the-
crise on Woman (the *sumnum* of sensuality), we may feel that, as in
his earlier reduction of "le mystère de la femme" to the contradic-
tion between Eve and Venus, his ideas are limited in their applicat-
ion, perhaps because of the outlook of the period he is writing in,
perhaps because of his age and personal experience. For example,
there is no great validity in stating grandly:

> Il est décreté qu'une parole de femme blesse
toujours une âme lointaine ou présente... (p.224)

beyond perhaps its relevance to the little "Fragment de journal" he
then includes, describing in quasi-metaphysical terms what may simply
be a lovers' tiff.

Similarly, though we can see the point he is trying to make
when he declares that women consciously conform to "l'idée de la
femme" - to what is expected of them (they are therefore acting as
some kind of symbols), he becomes difficult to follow in such state-
ments as:
Ne pas craindre (avec l'habitude, ce n'est pas à craindre). Elles sont nées esclaves, la preuve est qu'elles séduisent (leur moyen). On ne séduit qu'un maître. On n'usurpe en riant les hommages divins que domine par un désir. L'homme en tient lieu. Ah! que les prostituées sont libres! (pp.226-227)

After this we come to the text of "L'Éloge de la luxure."

This is the central and most cogent part of "Sur la sensualité", and might have served Mauclair's purpose better without the additions with which he later surrounded it.

Once again we see militancy directed at hypocrisy and convention. Sensuality has always been part of aesthetics, he claims, the real nature of love has only been understood by a very few. Love is neither reproduction nor hygiene nor the innumerable idiotic social graces and artificialities of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" sexual union alike. Love is "l'ancien Éros" - the primeval fundamental instinct:

Il veut l'ombre, la dévotion intérieure, et la vie hypocrite, pour qui tout dépositaire de grandeur est haïssable, se défie de ses fervents épars. (p.229)

As such, 'la luxure' is "absorbante, dangereuse, triste et méditative", its power is enormous, far beyond the titillations and superficialities of the naturalist use of sexual themes - and its power surpasses the prurient laughter of obscenity:

À nos lèvres Baudelaire interdit ce rire pour l'éternité. (p.229)

For those who have this high conception of sexuality, the potential force of lust comes from the 'mystery' of the body, and the

1. Cf. in the text of the MF article: "Récemment, l'essai littéraire naturaliste nous valut, un grand nombre de fois, le procès-verbal moderne du viol : et nulle tendresse ne s'y trouva jamais, seulement une brutalité indifférente, de sèches silhouettes."
unplumbed depths it reveals to them:

Ainsi les passionnés d'abstrait sont-ils des luxueux par excellence, et toute grossière gaité nous blesse-t-elle, lorsque nous parlons des choses obscènes : car nous vénérerons notre corps pour ce qu'il nous fait deviner d'absolu dans son émoi. (pp.230-231)

Because 'la luxure' is in this way so closely associated with the highest faculties of the mind, it cannot be anything but modest, it becomes in fact a virtue. It is contemporary ambiguous attitudes to the venality of prostitution and to so-called lust that are anathema. For Mauclair the only morality is that which is based on the 'vie intérieure' - the individualist decision.

It is from these principles that 'la luxure' can be seen to be a force for future artistic expression:

Je ne vois pas que l'art ait un autre destin, et je sais que la luxure veut l'ombre, l'étude de soi, le silence, la gravité et la charité, comme l'art. Elle est vêtue de la joie de se donner, le rire lui fait mal, la polissonnerie la révolte, l'argent glacerait sa chair fiévreuse, la maison close l'étiolerait comme le feu derrière les grilles; elle se confie à l'harmonie naturelle, et sa vertu est fait d'impudreur, ainsi que le printemps. (pp.233-234)

Here the extracts from the article in the Mercure de France end. The remaining pages of the section continue the earlier theme of the inspirational powers of our awareness of the sensuous world. As in the first long extract quoted from this section, this is the symbolist world, of dusk, half-light, silence and mirrored mystery.

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In the final section of this penultimate chapter - "Sur l'interprétation des songes" - Mauclair follows the same pattern of thought as in the previous sections. He takes a part of human experience (in this case dreams) which at first sight appears to dis-
prove the supremacy of individual reason, and shows that this occurs only because we are content to follow preconceived, arbitrary modes of thought - tradition in the case of 'la mort', social conventional morality in the case of 'la luxure', and intellectual convention in the case of 'les songes'.

Thus he begins here by asking: what is "to see". Are the faces of passers-by any more "real" than the faces we see in our dreams, simply because in the first instance our brain tells us we are awake, and in the second, asleep? Indeed, were we to reason from the only known "fact" - the arrival of images in the brain - how could we be sure that such images belong to the past, not to the future? Can there therefore be any difference between a day-dream and a dream at night? It is from such an area of perception that Mauclair would wish to draw the force for future artistic expression.

It is clear that Mauclair's ideas on dreaming as he continues their development here are fundamental to his theory of the symbol, where man (Narcisse) is the centre of perception, and are the result of considerable thought on the nature of consciousness. The first of these is reflected in this passage, for example:

Interpréter la matière selon le contact direct de nos sensations, c'est rêver. Transposer en notions de composition, c'est parfaire une œuvre d'art. (pp.241-242)

The second is reflected in the extremely intriguing theoretical statement:

Encore faudra-t-il songer que nous rêvons parfois des sonorités. L'Onde sonore est une partie de la substance, un de ses modes comme le granit en est un autre; et l'audition d'une symphonie excite peut-être nos perceptions comme le déroulement d'un paysage, et il serait simple alors de
penser que la matière, malgré toutes les apparences, est aussi indéniable dans la musique que dans la peinture... (p.241)

The relevance of this passage to the 'fusion of the arts' and to the theatre is to be noted especially in the context of the dream-world of Pelléas et Mélisande.

Finally, on the basis of his questioning the modes and values of perception, Mauclair again argues (as in "Psychologie du Mystère"), that dreams are not evidence of the supernatural, but of the "rèserve spirituelle de notre conscience" which, according to our innate instinctive gifts, can lead to varying revelations or our "raison intérieure". In this way no doubt, dreams are a very essential part of the artist and his creation.

"FRONTISPICE D'UN DRAME IDEAL"

We may be quite sure that this chapter finds its birth in the "justification esthétique" which Mauclair wrote for his first (unpublished) play in 1891, and which appeared in La Revue indépendante in March 1892. This has been examined in the relevant section of Chapter Two of this study, together with the other articles and activities through which Mauclair described the form he considered drama must take if it was to play a significant part in modern art. What he adds to these ideas in this final chapter of Eleusis is the directive force of his symbolism as he has elucidated it in the book, and which both clarifies and unifies his dramatic theory.

This is an important fact, because it may help our understanding of the composition of the chapter. There is only one physical
break, which occurs almost halfway. What lies before this division derives logically and systematically from Mauclair's pronouncements on the function and expression of drama up to and including the Conference sur Stéphane Mallarmé; what follows the division derives no less from the same source, but also includes direct, careful reference to earlier parts of Eleusis. Such direct references are lacking in the first part, but naturally, because of the unity of Mauclair's theories, they are implied at every turn of the argument.

In this way it is reasonable to think that the two parts were written at slightly different times. In the second part two currents of ideas - the early interest in the theatre, and the formal symbolist theorising of Eleusis - come together in a particularly apt conclusion both to the book and to the years of which it is the product.

The chapter opens with a statement of faith in the importance of drama, and a succinct résumé of Mauclair's theory. It is this second paragraph which, despite its length, we feel must be quoted here to allow the detail of the argument to be appreciated:

L'intervention du personnage vivant, la conviction de la foule, voilà deux profonds caractères d'un acte moral, d'une foi, d'un culte - celui de l'homme. Je ne puis me défendre de saisir ici un symptôme vivace de l'union de l'esthétique à l'éthique, de la fusion de ces deux manifestations en le Beau. Le silence coutumier de l'artiste devant son tableau, son poème ou sa statue doit cesser ici : il faut qu'il parle, qu'il descende parmi les étrangers, qu'il élève la voix, et que l'homme se manifeste en lui entièrement, agissant et exprimant selon la même volonté, et dans sa plénitude de force et de libération. Il faut qu'il s'énonce, le poète, alors qu'il n'évoque plus la matière, mais la modèlentoute vive, alors qu'il ne sculpte plus l'idée des objets, mais ciselle sa propre image en pleine chair. Il vient vers la foule. Et comme il est sorti d'elle pour
annoncer quelque chose, il faut, pour la passionner, qu'il la persuade qu'elle n'a devant elle que sa pensée intérieure, ce qu'elle ne disait pas pour mille raisons passagères - son essence. Car l'approbation, et l'intérêt que nous portons à ce qui nous est dit, gisent en ce que nous nous y retrouvons agrandis et libérés : nous ne nous intéressons jamais qu'à nous-mêmes, et à l'amalgame des sujets de sensibilité au domaine sans cesse élargi de notre sensible. Aucun fait ne nous est étranger, et aucune parole n'est prononcée, que nous ne la passions aussitôt nôtre - autrement nous nous éloignons désappointés. Ainsi le poète, par le moyen du drame, nous révèle une contrée inconnue de notre conscience, et il le fait mieux que par tous les autres arts, en déposant ce nouveau trésor dans un être vivant, l'acteur, sur lequel toutes les formes esthétiques viennent s'unir; et nous nous délivrons en cette parole, sous le couvert de la convention, de tout ce que nous portions en nous-mêmes diffusément.

De la sorte, nous manifestons : libérant des amonindrissantes compromissions et de la nécessité journalière un être choisi, qui n'est que le dépositaire de notre beauté, nous touchons à notre énonciation, et nous nous passionnons pour nous-mêmes. Acte d'anarchie indubitable! Dans le héros du drame, nous retrouvons nos gestes et nos clameurs, nous le suivons, nous l'aimons, il nous entraîne là où nous voulions aller, nous abolissons avec lui les contentions momentanées, jusqu'à ce que le suprême mirage s'évanouisse avec la dernière parole, et que disparaissaît le fantôme de notre intérieure réalité, dissous selon le prestige de la fable en un consolant souvenir. Il entretient en nous le sentiment de notre destinée, notre protestation contre les urgences quotidiennes, une révolte, mais surtout la souriante sérénité, la coquette certitude que c'est là nous-mêmes, et que le reste n'est qu'un consentement. (pp.247-250)

Following this basic statement in which we see almost all of previous themes combined, Manolair touches on the freedom of the imagination, a freedom which no regime, political or social, can stifle; in this sense, in drama, the artist should perform the supreme act of intellectual anarchy, which in turn must liberate the spectator because he is a man like the poet and sees himself described in the poet's creation. That is why a realist, historical setting in the theatre has little value; such a setting implies a
fixed state and therefore limits the mind's freedom. The subject of
a drama ought not to be the analysis of a given series of actions in
a given place at a given time, but a synthesis of the emotional pot-
etial of man's general relationship with nature (by this Mauclair
means, as he later points out, the instinct). This is the language
of sensibility; not that of intelligence for, as Mauclair had already
said, "il faut sentir".

Exactly the same conditions should apply to what Mauclair
calls "le personnage", a term which is deliberately vague and cannot
be taken to mean "the actor" in general because as we shall see pre-
ently there is only one main figure, the others are merely comple-
mentary to it. Because "le personnage" is a symbol created by a
poet for the appreciation of the crowd, he must not be shown as an
ordinary human, for as such he would be a reproduction of the exter-
nal, not a distillation of the essential. In this wax-works come
alive, there is no room for the imagination. In such figures the
spectators can no longer seek their freedom that vision of themsel-
ves created ideally. The character must be "destiné à quelque con-
clusion", he must have a greater significance than mere resemblance
to a model.

In consequence, the "fable" can be seen to be a pretext for
the presence of the 'personnage', not an end in itself, as in the
'comédie d'intrigue' in which the humans are simply complementary
to the situation presented.

To throw his ideas into relief, Mauclair offers a brief com-
parison of his ideal theatre and what he calls the "genre bâtarde
la comédie de caractère". This involves a pseudo-synthesis in pre-
senting caricatures caught at a point of time and place, in a pre-
conceived arbitrary moral dilemma, such as adultery, none of which is sufficiently elemental to transcend the circumstantial and reach the symbolical. Similarly, the idea of the 'pièce à thèse' (Augier and Dumas are mentioned with considerable disdain) is inadequate because it attempts, within a specific social setting, to generalise according to pre-conceived notions which over-ride intellectual freedom.

There is only one permanent, inalterable subject for the theatre:

La relativité des êtres et des conditions naturelles, et cela seul, c'est-à-dire l'instinct. (p.257)

According to Mauclair all agree on what the instinct is - the dialogue between man and nature, whereas everything else lies in the domain of relativity.

C'est ainsi que je conçois le drame, mission de liberté, paysage de nous-mêmes, et fiction surtout! Car ce que nous sommes, c'est ce que nous nous préparons de tout notre esprit à devenir, et cela est fictif, et la seule vérité... (p.258)

It is on this note of conviction that the first part of the chapter ends. The somewhat general terms of this part (the above is an example) convey a dual flow of interaction from the poet through the actor towards the Essence, and then, almost in reverse, from the Essence through the actor to the crowd. This probably could never entirely take place except in the ideal drama to which we must remember this is the preface. It does however constitute a yardstick against which other plays may be judged, as we see for example even in the first sentence of this "Réponse à l'enquête Dumas" of a year or two later:¹

¹. MF Jan. 1896, p.52: "Réponse de Camille Mauclair à l'enquête Dumas."
Dumas fils a été un logicien brillant mais spécieux, doué d'esprit de suite, mais incapable de concevoir une morale au-dessus de l'époque.

Clearly the motif of futurity touched on in the passage quoted from page 258 above has links with Mauclair's ideas of the Universal Essence of which we are all part, and with his discussions of 'le mystère' and of dreams. In the same way, when, shortly before, he stated this:

Il est aussi faux de prendre en soi le personnage que de prendre l'objet en soi. (p.257)

we are reminded of his ideas in "Du Symbole". However, such appearances of his symbolist theories in his thoughts on the theatre suddenly become explicit and vital in the second part of this chapter, and present an alluring series of images concerning the poet and the actor.

In the first place he begins with an amplification of the ideas sketched out concerning the "personnage", referring now to the "acteur" and explaining how he becomes a symbol:

Voilà un être vivant qui, entré en scène, continue à vivre, et pourtant ne vit plus. Il y a substitution de personnalité spirituelle et permanence de personnalité corporelle. C'était un homme, ce n'est plus qu'une parole incarnée. C'était un homme parlant selon son âme, ce n'est plus qu'un homme parlant selon l'âme d'un autre, et s'y pliant selon tout son effort. L'acteur est cet être étrange. J'ai expliqué que nous étions souvent les symboles les uns des autres : celui-ci l'est perpétuellement, et par mission. Il est le signe de l'auteur : il est ce qui paraît du poète. Dans le drame, le poète existe spirituellement, l'acteur matériellement : ils se complètent, ils ne font qu'un, et pourtant ils sont deux, et de ces deux êtres de chair, il y en a un dont la chair est abolie. (p.259)

In the second place, the poet and the actor are seen as a
living re-enactment of the Narcissus myth. From the darkened wings the author looks at the actor, the intermediary of himself; in this union of the conscience and the phenomenon, of art and 'la morale' (l'esthétique), here is the evidence that drama in which the instinct is the sole subject must be paramount, because such drama is in itself a symbolisation of human perception.

In the third place, the actor is a priest, he does not exist for himself; he is an intermediary:

Il offre à la foule l'hostie de sa conscience, la pureté de son vœu intérieur, retrouvée par le poète, objectivée en une saisissante élévation. Le héros du drame est le prétexte d'un acte de foi en soi-même. (p.261)

Mauclair takes for his authorities on this view of the 'héros' Wagner and Carlyle - his mentors of 1891.

Mauclair considers it indicative of the supremacy of this form of drama that not only does it unite art and ethics, but also of the former almost all the means of expression are to be found in it. It is for this reason that he prefers verse1 to prose as a means of expression, because it brings together more than one factor. Firstly, it is more suited to the ebb and flow of human emotions than is prose (here one thinks of Mauclair's ideas on the 'vers libre'); secondly it can be used to convey a special ceremonial tone, as befits the actor-priest no doubt, and thirdly, it is closely related, through song and rhythm, to music.

This last is essential because Mauclair considers rhythm to be the basis of life and of drama. For the former, we recall the harmonious assimilation of phenomena through the double mirror of

1. It is significant that Mauclair consistently refers to the author of his "drame idéal" as "le poète".
the senses and of the conscience; for the latter, we turn back to that letter in which Mauclair described *La Ville* to its author in 'symphonic terms'. For here too he insists on symphonic construction in the theatre:

Allier le rythme multiforme au stable, voilà le but à saisir, et ce n'est que par le moyen de la symphonie qu'on parviendra - retraçant le thème de l'homme sur l'orchestration permanente des forces naturelles. Car il y a un rythme dans l'inertie comme dans la mobilité - et il dépend du poète de les combiner. (p.263)

From this it follows that the 'comparses' (another idea from "Notes sur un essai de dramaturgie symbolique" of 1892) are simply points of contact between various forms of artistic expression - "la sculpturalité, la couleur, la mimique, triple ordonnance du rythme" all of which concur to emphasise and clarify to the crowd the hero's words. They are the musical accompaniment.

Quite simply, Mauclair's first basic principle is this:

Tout concourt par réciprocité ou relativement à une figure seule,

- Mallarmé's formula which he quotes again here.

Bearing this tenet in mind, the physical aspect of the theatre comes under discussion, and follows this 'rule' intended to combine the physical necessary presence of the stage with the spiritual message of the play:

Suppression du détail de fixation - augmentation du détail de permanence. (p.270)

In other words, realist reconstruction, whether Racinian or naturalist, "local colour", such things are fixed and limited; the "truth" they seek to create is illusory and false because they stifle fantasy, they are too literal:
Rien au théâtre n'est fait pour demeurer,
tout y voltige selon l'illusion, tout y est
fable, prestige, et en quelque façon jeu
des reflets des lustres, qui sont peut-être
tout le décor...(p.266)

In a footnote Maucclair reminds his reader of the attempt
("bien que très incomplète") made in the setting of Pelléas et Méli-
sande to carry out these ideas. The passage to which the note re-
lates is highly significant in view of what we have already said
concerning the revolutionary setting of that play, in which a gauze
curtain hung between the actors and the audience. It is in Eleusis
that we find the theory behind this unusual device fully explained:

L'exigence optique du théâtre contemporain
exige un intermédiaire entre le plancher et
la salle. Il faut qu'on sente que les êtres
évolutant au prosénium ne sont pas des hommes
ordinaires, mais qu'ils sont réunis là pour
quelque conclusion spéciale. Voilà une seconde
condition du décor : accentuer l'impression
qu'ily a fiction, que quelque chose va être in-
venté. Et pour ainsi aller dans le sens du
drame, la suppression du détail dit réel s'im-
pose. Ce qu'il faut, c'est un cadre convention-
nel, agréable au regard et invraisemblable, un
isolateur - car il y a tableau de par l'arrange-
ment et la couleur de la scène; c'est un envelop-
pement qu'il faut souhaiter. (p.268)

This 'enveloppement' will be further conveyed by the application,
through the resources of 'decorative art' of what can best be de-
scribed in modern terms as "mood colours", avoiding of course, the
rigorous and artificial systematisation of the correspondence
theory which Maucclair has already decried.

These then, are Maucclair's ideas on the theatre as expressed
in Eleusis. Every detail has not been exhaustively examined here
because that would not be in keeping with the hypothetical nature
of the chapter as Maucclair wrote it. Whether or not his 'cérémonial'
owes a great deal to Mallarmé, or to his other sources, from Shelley
to Wagner, we must admire the skill with which he uses ideas in a constructive fashion, and remember too that he was able to leave derivative theory behind when he turned to help in the creation of l'Oeuvre.

The note on which Eleusis ends is strangely prophetic. Mauclair turns to Kant for the axiom which he feels justifies his exalted, unproven and perhaps totally impracticable theories:

"Il faut calculer non sur ce qui pourra prévisiblement advenir, en logique, mais sur ce qui devrait arriver, cela n'arriverait-il jamais." (pp.271-272)

It is this justification which will increasingly characterise Mauclair's directive criticism, and it contains in embryo his reactionary "crusader" spirit of the post-war years: we should not forget the high ideals, those explained in Eleusis, which inspired him.

Footnote.

The manuscript of Eleusis is to be found in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris under the press-mark ms 13957. It bears the date-stamp 1949 and was a gift from Edmond Jaloux, to whom it is dedicated in these terms:

À Edmond Jaloux qui aimait mes livres bien avant que la vie nous mit en présence je dédie ce manuscrit du premier volume de son ami

SMF Camille Mauclair.

This is the manuscript prepared for printing, and as such has very few corrections. The preface is dated January 1893 in the manuscript, but 1894 in the book; the latter date is more acceptable. On pages 154-155 of the manuscript one important omission from the book (p.168) is worth noting. It is this passage:
Dans Hérodiade, Stéphane Mallarmé n'a qu'un vers éclatant : "Hérodiade au clair regard de diamant!" et comme ce seul joyau révèle la splendeur de la reine terrible et la fait [?chatoyer] en un frisson!

This may have been left out because it weakened Mauclair's argument that the names of precious stones in lists were not poetry, especially as he continues : "C'est une puerilité absolue que de prodiguer ainsi..."

One other change is interesting. On page 137 of the manuscript (page 170 of the book) the name of Élémer Bourges replaces that of Marcel Schwob in the list of "éminents prosateurs" which also includes Barrès and Hervieu. This change may reflect Mauclair's meeting with Bourges in late 1893, or the appearance in March 1893, after a period of relative silence on the part of the author, of "Les oiseaux s'envolent et les fleurs tombent."

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It is proposed in this chapter to consider the train of events in Manet's life from about the beginning of 1894 until the winter of 1897; in order to understand more fully, she he understood the change of outlook during these years which was to determine his subsequent work.

As he enters this period he gives the impression of an essentially young, volatile spirit whose enthusiasm over new ideas is only tempered by his concern for the artistic Ideal. He saw his nearly three years later a much more sober person; he had rejected Paris and he had become the combination of a personal intellectual integrity with that concern for the high ideals implicit in art (as he understands them) which has always inspired him.

Let it be said at the outset that no violent change is indicated, nor does Manet deviate fundamentally from that traditional line of thought, inspired by the nineteenth century, which lies behind all his work. It was no doubt a probability inherent in Manet's rather curious nature (formed through illness and material difficulty) that he should eventually break with the superficial aspect of Symbolism (although we shall discuss elsewhere to what extent he was ever able to eradicate the more penetrating effects of ideas acquired in his early years). After several years of intense activity the break was as likely to occur at this time as at any other. It is our contention here that it was the particular personal circumstances of these years, as much as external artistic influences, which precipitated this break.

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Much is admittedly conjecture, for we are dealing with the subtleties of Mauclair's affective life. It can only be hoped to
indicate by events and dates as much as by the increasingly harassed, slightly embittered tone of his letters or articles, the probable train of events which links together the diverse elements we have mentioned, and results in a modification of his outlook.

Although it could be argued that the seeds of this modification are present in anything Mauclair wrote in the early 1890s, its early stages do not really become apparent until the second half of 1893.

Initially, at least, financial pressures may be held responsible for the increasing references in his letters to the amount of work he has to do, to his lack of free time, and to his attempts to find some employment which will allow him to live, and yet have enough time to write. Whether this was a direct consequence of the death of his uncle in July 1893, we cannot be sure, but, since Mauclair did explain to Gide that "Mon oncle nous aidait le plus possible chaque mois, en attendant que, libre de la contrainte militaire, je pusse songer à trouver un poste quelconque",¹ and since Mauclair must have been exempted from military service in April 1893,² when he attended the 'révision', it is clear that he must have been thrown on to his own resources, which were virtually nonexistent.

Of course it is true that Mauclair was bound to be pressed for time because of his work. He was busy with the new productions of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre which called for a great deal of arranging and organising, and he had his articles, Eleusis, and Couronne de clarté which he had just begun. But whereas in August 1893 he

¹. Letter of 5th July 1893.
could write:

Je vais bien, je travaille beaucoup, je ne me plains pas trop. 

in November, when he expected to find a post, we read:

...je vais me cloîtrer sept heures par jour pour pouvoir au moins penser en beauté le reste du temps et m'isoler.

and by January of the following year he admits:

Je travaille comme un sourd et suis fatigué.

Indeed at the beginning of February he explained to Geneviève Mallarmé that one of the reasons he had been obliged to give up his work with the Oeuvre was as follows:

ma vie se modifie en ce moment, je n'ai plus ma liberté, et j'ai dû renoncer à m'occuper de ce théâtre...

Finally, at the beginning of the following month we may read this complaint Mauclair makes to Mallarmé:

Je fais un roman à date fixe pour le 15 Avril et je travaille neuf ou dix heures tous les jours, plus cent ennuis et quelque malaise physique et moral.

Nevertheless, it could justifiably be argued that these statements do not amount to any more than the pressures to which any artist is subjected, and farther, since there is no evidence that Mauclair had as yet found any steady employment (he only mentions 'de petites affaires' such as his tutoring Berthe Morisot's daughter and niece), his primary source of worry could only have been financial, the position of other young men at the time.

1. Undated letter to Gide; dateable by reference to Mauclair's article on Le Voyage d'Urien which appeared in the August issue of MF.
2. Letter to Gide, 17th Nov. 1893.
3. Letter to Gide, 8th Jan. 1894.
5. Undated letter; dateable by reference to Mallarmé's trip to England in March.
This observation is valid; what we wish to stress is his reaction to his circumstances. It was, quite simply that he could no longer indulge in any flights of fancy; he had to adopt a positive attitude within the limits of his idealism. There is in fact an admirable contrast to be found in Mauclair's letters to Gide in the autumn of 1893, because of the respective situations of the correspondents, the one wealthy, in Algeria, the other, penniless, in Paris - and yet united by their common preoccupations and by their friendship which was, on Mauclair's side at least, probably as intimate as ever before or after. It appears that Gide's first letter from Africa considerably upset Mauclair because it revealed his friend's dark, despondent frame of mind. His reply tells us a great deal about himself, and especially about resolute, positive attitude towards life:

Pourquoi fais-tu tout cela, imprudences, fatigues, est-ce exprès, et que caches-tu en toi qui t'y contraigne? Que n'installles-tu à Antibes, ou sur quelque côte gênoise ou italienne, douce et heureuse, puisqu'il nous faut à tous deux une vie sans secousses physiques? À notre âge l'hémoptysie n'est rien. Je sens la mienne se cicatriser et le goût de la vie m'égaie les livres. O mon cher, il ne faut pas céder à ce qui n'est pas, ou se retourner vers ce qui est fané avec un visage attentif. Il faut regarder devant. Je n'ai jamais osé te demander le fond de toi-même, parce que je ne m'en connaissais pas le droit, mais à présent il faut que je te prie de penser à vivre selon la force et de t'y tenir ferme parce que je t'aime bien, et que tu es créé pour écrire de belles choses. Veux-tu vivre ou bien le refuses-tu? C'est le moment d'y choisir et de s'y confier.

"Il faut regarder devant" wrote Mauclair; despite his worries, he would continue to devote what time he could to the pages spread

around his lamp. After all did he not have the example of Mallarmé, 
or of the friends with whom he was at the time when he wrote to 
Gide - Bourges, Point, and Margueritte?

Mauclair's reply to Gide's letter of doubts is perhaps not 
immediately relevant, but it does in fact provide us not only with 
an indication of Mauclair's frame of mind at the time, but also 
with a very important link between the very early critical pages 
when he refused the fashionable pessimism of his contemporaries, and 
the serious art-critic castigating the trivialities (as he saw them) 
of the younger generation. This letter shows that positive preoc-
cupations direct Mauclair's thought, (expressed elsewhere in his 
idealism and individualism) not gratuitous negative superficiality 
as some critics would have us believe.

An example of this presented itself almost immediately. In 
January 1894, Mauclair wrote to Gide expressing his unbounded enthu-
siasm for La Tentative amoureuse; he continued with a few words on 
Louÿs' Léda.

qui est une très-jolie chose; mais truquée avec 
toutes les bimbeloteries de Gustave Moreau! 
Dieu que ce garçon-là est tortillé! C'est une 
âme mécanique, j'ai peur qu'il y reste, avec 
toute son élégance et son chic intellectuel. 
Car tout ça, genre Oscar Wilde, ça ne vaut pas 
un cri de l'instinct, dis? Au fait c'est vrai, 
j'oubliais... je me remets à admirer Hoendel [sic], 
Courbet et Monet, et je ne puis plus voir l'Im-
pressionnisme et la subtilité depuis un mois...

He goes on to admit that this is probably just one of his usual 
'lubies' and so it may be, in the examples he chooses; in its essence, 
however, this admission is symptomatic of a more fundamental change 
of outlook which was taking place in him, though its final expression

did not occur until some years later.

Another facet of this change was Mauclair's increasing regard for those artists he called the "ainés" and we have already seen how contemporary reaction to Eleusis only confirmed his reliance on the esteem of men such as Heredia, Maeterlinck, Huysmans - "nos êtres chers" as he said to Mallarmé who was, of course, perhaps his most important mentor at this time. Evidence of this is clearly given in a letter that Mauclair sent to Mallarmé from Bruges, where he was taking a vacation in the company of his friend Robert Scheffer:

Je viens de traverser une crise très cruelle. J'ai souffert mille morts morales depuis deux mois. Enfin vous savez que j'existe assez volontairement pour surnager et vous serez content de moi.

Does the last phrase not speak volumes about Mauclair's admiration of the older man and about his desire to be worthy of his friendship? As we shall see, this was only the first of many 'crises' - and that at a later date Mauclair was again to turn to Mallarmé.

We cannot be sure what was the precise reason behind the "crise très-cruelle" mentioned above. In itself it may not be of great significance except as an indication of Mauclair's rather intense, possibly over-dramatic description of his own life at this time. Perhaps Mauclair was exaggerating events, for Robert Scheffer, who was his particular friend at this time, soon after quarrelled with him, and wrote an article about his former friend, which despite its injustice and crudity does stress the feverish melodramatic personality of "le sempiternel adolescent qui aille sa mère" - comments which are almost certainly based on their friendship.

1. Letter of 10th April 1894.
during 1894.  

Apart from the financial and other pressures alluded to already, we must remember that in July 1894 Mauclair was to tell Gide that he had just come through "une crise de six mois de passion folle" and that it is just such a situation as was described in an earlier letter which would provide us not only with the final element needed to be able to complete the picture of Mauclair's personality in early 1894, but also with a rather typically 'symbolist' reaction:

Et ajoute à cela [his unsuccessful attempts to find employment] le pire de tout qui est que je suis amoureux d'une femme malade, mais amoureux à en perdre la raison, et je pleure tout le temps à l'idée qu'elle va peut-être mourir... Il me semble qu'il me coule des prunelles des siècles de sensibilité meurtrie. Je ne puis arriver à comprendre comment j'ai laissé entrer cela dans ma vie, je crois parfois que c'est un fantôme, enfin, ça y est. C'est tout à fait abominable d'aimer une femme qu'on ne pourra jamais posséder, et nous passons des heures à déplorer notre impuissance, elle défaillante, et moi attéré. J'en deviens ascétique et brûlant de sensualité refrénée tout ensemble...

However, in the sentimental domain, this was a mere prelude to the very important train of events, centring round the relationship between Mauclair, Georgette Leblanc, and Maeterlinck, from mid-1894 onwards.

There can be little doubt that in the second half of 1894

1. In letters of March, April (cf. above) and August 1894 Mauclair mentions 'notre ami Robert Scheffer' to Mallarmé. In a letter of 29th Jan. 1896 Mauclair tells Gide of Scheffer's sudden change: "Scheffer est devenu, sans motif, un ennemi acharné pour moi. Il m'inonde de lettres d'injures, et va partout colporter sur moi des accusations absurdes et basses, qui d'ailleurs n'ont pas de créance."

Scheffer's article in Plumes d'ois et plumes d'aigles is dated 'mars 1909'. (Editions de Pan, 1911).

Georgette Leblanc was Mauclair's mistress; that he introduced her to Maeterlinck's preface to a translation of Emerson's Essays, and so inspired her overwhelming desire to meet the Belgian poet in person, which she did in January 1895; and that after many months of what can only have been for him an extremely difficult relationship, Mauclair was obliged to break with Mme Leblanc and Maeterlinck, in January 1897.

The importance of these events is not confined to the mere elucidation of a banal, even if intriguing triangle in the world of letters. There is an equally important parallel theme in his letters which follows the development of Mauclair's financial and material situation, and which leads eventually to his complete disenchantment with the artistic milieu which, by 1894, he had come to know well. Perhaps his emotional entanglement might have offered him some solace from his increasingly difficult life. When however this possibility collapsed, his reaction was to reject finally and absolutely the society in which he was already ill-at-ease. It is too much to say that he rejected Symbolism because of his sentimental affairs, but, as we hope to show, the two currents, disenchantment and sentiment, are inextricably linked.

To understand why this relationship between Mauclair, Maeterlinck, and Georgette Leblanc must be considered of primary importance, we must recall what Maeterlinck's friendship must have meant to Mauclair. With Mirbeau's famous article of August 1890 the Belgian had come to the attention of Paris - in the same year as Mauclair's own entry into the literary world. Shortly afterwards their correspondence had begun, which, whatever its frequency or intensity, was to lead to the production of Pelléas et Mélisande, the end-
product of Mauclair's intense interest at that time in the Symbolist attempts at dramatic expression.

Moreover, apart from this collaboration, Maeterlinck was of the type admired by Mauclair for more profound reasons, as is very clearly shown by the following letters written in 1894. In February at the time when Mauclair was writing very affectionate letters to Gide in Algeria, he exclaimed:

Il y a Maeterlinck et toi que j'aime et à qui je tiens, et je ne vous vois jamais ni l'un ni l'autre. Comment ferai-je? Je ne tiens à rien de vivant hormis vous deux...

He then continued to explain how much he admired the Préface Maeterlinck had just published for a translation of Emerson's Essays. His reason for admiring it, his comparison with his contemporaries, and his identification with his two friends are all particularly revealing:

Tu n'as pas idée de vingt pages comme ça, avec une clarté métaphysique, une beauté de langue, une pudeur de l'abstrait, tu sais, les choses immaculées de nous autres... Il y a tout ça à un degré de génie incomparable. Ici tous nos petits polisseurs de sardines se tiennent cois devant ça. Ce qui m'a bien plu, c'est que Maeterlinck, toi et moi, c'est les mêmes idées tout à fait. Nous sommes très-unis, tu sais, intellectuellement? (J'ai l'air de découvrir la lune, mais vraiment, ça m'a frappé, des choses que Maeterlinck écrit et que toi et moi avions dites ou songées, et très fréquemment).

This revelation is especially interesting because we can turn to an earlier text to read what were the qualities Mauclair attributed to his friends, and by extension, perhaps in a lesser degree to

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himself. In August 1893, writing on Le Voyage d'Urien in the Mercure de France, Mauclair described Maeterlinck and Gide as "deux familiers du rêve", then continued to explain that they were both endowed with the mysterious power of being able to reveal by ordinary words "une signification spéciale des événements". For them "le mystère" was not an assumed quality, but an essential condition of life. This quality gave them a strange aura of intangibility, for they are part of a pre-destined Elite:

Not only does this text provide an extremely sensitive statement of the qualities Mauclair sought after in other artists, but, by comparison with a letter written to Gide almost exactly one year later, it enables us to see that this attitude was carried over into his personal relationships. To paraphrase the following letter would destroy the particular intense temper of Mauclair's phraseology, which demonstrates how, at this time, at a certain level of perception, Mauclair's life and work were passionately inter-dependent:

Ta lettre touche un point assez obscur. Je ne sais pas moi-même ce que je pense touchant cette intangibilité dont tu t'offrais de me voir parler. C'est vrai que Maeterlinck et toi vous m'avez toujours donné cette sensation de l'impénétrable, quelque profonde et vraie amitié je vous sente : à présent, peut-être que je la donne aussi, et aussi tous les intellectuels ardents à notre degré. Mais je crois qu'on ne s'en aperçoit pas pour soi, on croit s'ouvrir normalement, et on se garde chez lui-même. Moi, je demande à l'amitié une si passionnée pénétration, presque un viol... Et puis je crois que peut-être aussi j'ai le coeur plus simple que toi. Tu sais, autant j'ai l'air compliqué d'esprit (au fond très lucide, très en ordre) autant je suis gros- sement simple du reste. J'aime goulûment et tant que je peux, et je ne distingue pas entre l'amitié et l'amour. Je ne comprends pas la subtilité avec un ami. Je dis tout et je ne re- tiens rien. Je suis presque femme du peuple à ce point de vue. Je crois que tu es, toi, plus chantourné, et même ta simplicité vient de loin à travers une foule de cristaux et de songes. Au fond tu souffres plus que moi, et c'est ce qui me met en colère. Je sais que tu m'aimes infiniment, et ta froideur apparente laisse tout comprendre; je crois que je suis plus violent et plus démonstratif et que cela te choque quelquefois un peu. J'ai l'air moins métaphysique que toi, je bavarde, je vis matérielle plus. Mais ce ne sont que façons diverses de la même chose. Tu m'intimides un peu quand tu es là, et je n'ose pas te dire toute ce que je veux, j'ose seulement l'écrire. Mais jamais je n'ai été seul près de toi. Près de tes rêves, oui et cela est bien, et cela doit être pour l'intégrité de nos avenirs, car Maeterlinck toi et moi nous sommes pareils et nous voulons des choses aussi éloignées et hautes, au-dessus du temps. Crois donc à l'entièr e sincérité de mon sentiment pour toi et ne te tourmente jamais de nuances en ceci - je reprends vie, j'ai des difficul- tés matérielles à vaincre tout le temps et une foule de choses encombrer mon existence, voilà où j'apparais violent et extérieur. Et puis je suis plus d'action que toi. Mais notre vie serait semblable, dans la même solitude, que tu me verrais comme ton frère silencieux et semblablement calme.1

Despite the fact that this letter discusses Mauclair's relati-}

considers that their friendship was largely epistolary) there can be little doubt that Mauclair must have regarded Maeterlinck in much the same light, especially as once again he takes pains to point out the special relationship he felt existed between all three. Indeed, the solid, reticent, independent Belgian may have inspired an even greater admiration in Mauclair because he had many of the qualities which Mauclair in the above letter clearly showed he wished were his. In the description of the events to come, let us not forget either Maeterlinck's special importance in Mauclair's eyes or that phrase: "Je ne distingue pas entre l'amitié et l'amour."

Nor should we neglect the significance of Georgette Leblanc. Much more than a minor figure of the demi-monde, she was a woman of decided character and beauty; an actress and singer of talent; on her own estimation, a person of pronounced literary and philosophical gifts. Her appeal must have been considerable. And there may have been, added to her youth, beauty, talent and vivacity, a maternal quality which is so often apparent in her Souvenirs. After all, as she was an indubitable source of inspiration to Maeterlinck in the early years of their liaison, then could not her appeal and talents in a lesser fashion have already been so for Mauclair?

Therefore, would the loss of her, to say nothing of the anguish due to the inevitable break with the friend he so admired, not have been all the more severe and significant for Mauclair?

Finally, since we are discussing subtleties of character, we ought to think briefly of that state of hurt pride implied by the loss of Georgette Leblanc in 1897. There is little to suggest that the relationship was common knowledge, especially as the main events took place far from Paris. Nonetheless the bare bones of the affair,
if not the intimate motivation, must have been known. Many years later Paul Léautaud recorded in his *Journal* a conversation in which Valette had spoken of Mauclair "très menteur, très vantard, se vantant partout d'être l'amant de Georgette Leblanc, qui venait chez lui nue sous une simple fourrure, etc, etc...."\(^1\) Taken at its face value, Mauclair's reaction to the sentimental crisis - to adopt a moral position far superior to that of his 'comrades', and to discuss coldly and portray certain aspects of what had taken place,\(^2\) could be one reaction in accord with a movement of self-defence. It is revealing that even after many years none of the main characters in this affair wished to discuss it. Though Mauclair deals at length with his early friendship with Maeterlinck in both *Servitude et grandeur littéraires* and *Mallarmé chez lui*, he at no time mentions any discord. Maeterlinck's biographers seem unaware of it. It is however of relatively little importance in understanding Maeterlinck, but of great use to us in forming a picture of Mauclair as a person, as we follow the events of these years.

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Mauclair's relationship with Georgette Leblanc is made explicit when, in the autumn of 1894 he takes Maeterlinck into his confidence and explains:

> Je peux te dire les choses exactement et entre nous deux. Mme Leblanc, que tu ne connais pas, est une chanteuse du monde, très-belle, très-jeune, et qui est très-connue parmi les artistes nouveaux d'ici. C'est ma maîtresse depuis six

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2. In *Le Soleil des morts* and in certain articles, which will be discussed in due course.
mois. Je l'aime beaucoup. Elle a une nature d'artiste réelle, je lui apprends à dire des vers, et je crois qu'elle viendra cet hiver jouer Yseult à la Monnaie.

In a similar vein, but revealing more of the effect 'Isolde' had had on him, at the beginning of September 1894 Mauclair exclaims to Gide:

Je suis pris depuis trois mois par une grande passion : J'ai rencontré Yseult! Tu sais, la réelle Yseult - et sans le wagnérisme qui te déplait. Je vis une vie de tendresse et de passion, des étreintes intellectuelles. C'est une femme purement belle et qui chante comme il faut que chante Yseult. C'est si bon que je ne sais ce qui m'arrive. Nous nous aimons et nous ne faisons attention à rien. Et puis nous allons peut-être nous quitter (elle va aller à la Monnaie de Bruxelles) et cette peur d'adieu nous fait vivre plus intensément encore. Je vis pleinement.2

1. All but two of Mauclair's letters to Maeterlinck seem to have disappeared. Both are undated. A résumé of one ("juin-juillet 1894") is given in the Annales de la Fondation Maeterlinck Vol.11 p.50); it is of minor interest. The other, quoted here, is in fact only a fragment, the second folded sheet (pp.5-8) of a letter. There is no envelope and no watermark, but it is signed, and is undubitably in Mauclair's hand. It is held by the manuscript department of the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels. Though it is not dated positively in any way, it must be prior to November 22nd 1894, since by that date (as Mauclair tells Gide) Mme Leblanc was already in Brussels. In the fragment Mauclair also speaks of the summer as past : "Il était convenu que je ferais avec Fabre cet été un poème lyrique." The period of three months given in the letter to Gide subsequently quoted above would place the beginning of Mauclair's relationship with Mme Leblanc in early June. Conversely the period of six months of this letter to Maeterlinck would then imply a date in November, but, as we have seen before the 22nd. However such vague dates are unreliable especially as on the 21st July, writing to Gide, Mauclair does not mention C. Leblanc but rather announces the end of "une crise de six mois de passion folle" concerning someone else. To complicate the question farther, Mme Leblanc in her Souvenirs (p.11) first mentions "mon ami, C.M." in a context dated vaguely as 'Spring' [1894]. Therefore, "mid-1894" seems the most likely date for their meeting, and "Autumn 1894" for this letter to Maeterlinck.

Finally Mme Leblanc herself tells us that in the Spring of 1894 she was rehearsing the part of Yseult.¹

As regards Mauclair's life at this time, he seems to be fairly settled and it is clear that already he is moving away from the artistic milieu:

Ma petite vie s'arrange un peu. J'ai un bureau où je vais la journée, deux ou trois leçons jusqu'au dîner, et les soirs pour écrire. Je vis ainsi avec ma mère, proprement et sans voir personne, car la vie littéraire me dégoute et j'ai bien fini de m'occuper de nos camarades, qui sont affreux dans la vie pratique. Voilà où j'en suis. Je n'attends rien que de mon travail pour la vie et la joie.²

It seems highly likely that the new-found calm which Mauclair expresses here was a direct result of his new friendship with Georgette Leblanc. It was not to last however.

Soon after the above letter, Mme Leblanc must have moved to Brussels, leaving Mauclair in Paris, for on the 22nd of November 1894 he declares possessively to Gide:

Au fond, je vis à Bruxelles avec cette admirable chérie qui est mienne, dont j'ai fait l'âme à l'image de la mienne et qui me figure présentement tout l'art et toute la beauté.

This absence was not without its effects as the same letter shows:

Je suis tout seul. Ma mère ne comprend plus du tout... et depuis que mon amie est partie, je suis exténué de regret, de luxure cérébrale, de rêves de pureté, de travail et de débauches. Je ne vais pas très, très-bien encore... Je n'ai pas le sou...

Georgette Leblanc had in fact signed a two year contract to play at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, which meant of course

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2. Letter of 12 Sept. 1894, to Gide.
separation from Mauclair for most of the time. He did spend the early part of December in Brussels however, and on his return to Paris wrote an enthusiastic article in *La Cocarde* on *La Navarraise* and Georgette Leblanc, who he felt alone brought the production to life:

On vit pourtant s'animer cette mauvaise chose choquante, du fait de l'interprète; et par elle seule soudain apparue humaine, belle et passionnée sur ces planches, un drame illusoire jaillit de ce néant. Mme Georgette Leblanc, s'intéressant à jouer cette farce en grande artiste de la grande école lyrique, créa de la salle à la scène l'électricité des chefs-d'oeuvre, du fait seul de ses cheveux d'or, d'un corps grec moulé dans un fourreau noir, et d'un impérial regard de flamme contrayant jusqu'à son triste amoureux de ténor médiocre de devenir auprès d'elle, pendant une heure, quelqu'un. (...) La tragédienne joua comme elle eût joué Yséult. ¹

From this time on Mauclair was seldom able to be with Mme Leblanc. Yet he seems to turn this fact to his moral advantage when he can write a year later:

Moi qui suis depuis un an occupé à purifier par l'absence une essentielle et vivace passion, je commence à penser à l'amour avec des idées qui me surprennent.²

When however we turn to Mme Leblanc's *Souvenirs*, it appears that whatever the degree of Mauclair's passion, it cannot have been fully returned during that year. She states that "un ami, C.M.", had brought her a translation of Emerson's *Essays* with a preface by Maeterlinck.³ She was so enthralled by this preface that she spent the night reading it and in the morning she was certain that Maeterlinck was the only man in the world she could ever love. According

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². Letter of 3 Dec. 1895, to Gide.
³. *Souvenirs*, pp.11-15. Clearly Mauclair would have communicated some of his own admiration for Maeterlinck's preface.
to her it was only a few hours later when Calabresi of the Théâtre de la Monnaie made her an offer to come to Brussels. She already knew from "C.M." that Maeterlinck lived in Belgium, and, as this was one step nearer to him, she accepted the offer, at half the remuneration of her Paris contract which she immediately broke. From that moment on, and even after her début in Brussels in La Navarraise, she tells us she kept secret from everyone the real motive behind this disadvantageous step. Her wish was at last fulfilled when, through Octave Maus, on 11th January 1895 she met Maeterlinck for the first time at a dinner in E. Picard's home, after the performance of Strindberg's The Father at the Théâtre du Parc. It is obvious that her thoughts were elsewhere.

There is, of course no guarantee that the initials "C.M." of Mme Leblanc's book refer to Mauclair, but in the light of the letters in which Mauclair speaks of her to Maeterlinck and Gide, it is highly likely that she was indeed referring to him. If this is so, then there can be no doubt that he knew that Georgette Leblanc had achieved her desired aim - to meet Maeterlinck - for in her Souvenirs we read: 1

En rentrant de Malines (early 1895), à la fin de la journée je trouvai un mot de C.M. Il me renvoyait une lettre de Maeterlinck où le poète lui écrivait qu'il m'avait rencontrée...

We ought to remember too that since Mme Leblanc's intention in her book was to show her influence on Maeterlinck, she was likely to over-dramatise the 'coup de foudre' of the Emerson preface, and over-stress the subsequent single-mindedness of purpose with which she pursued her objective: to meet the author. It is probable, at

least during this early period, that Mauclair did mean more to her than she admits or than would suggest this veiled allusion which may well refer to Mauclair:

À l'époque de ma première saison à l'Opéra-Comique, mon apparence décorative avait attiré des hommes riches et oisifs qui ne m'intéressaient pas... Deux parmi mes amis avaient inquiété ma pensée :... Le deuxième, jeune poète, écrivain d'avenir retint plus longtemps mon intérêt. Disciple de celui que je devais aimer, il m'apportait le mirage des horizons spirituels qui allaient bientôt fixer ma destinée. Il eut le triste sort de m'acheminer vers celui qu'il considérait comme son maître. 1

Mme Leblanc's book is however not completely reliable. Perhaps wishing to show her influence on Maeterlinck, she distorts, deliberately or not, any clear account of their liaison, by interspersing details of their meetings with references to letters and events which must belong to a later date. It therefore comes as a surprise to realise that the letter she quotes as being a reply to her first letter to Maeterlinck, is dated '7 mai 1695', 2 a full four months after their first meeting in Brussels. Although it is true that they had visited each other in Ghent and Brussels, and had spent time travelling in Dutch Flanders during these months, it is nonetheless possible that they had not reached the depth of friendship Georgette Leblanc would like us to believe.

It is important to establish this because Mauclair spent most of March 1895 in Belgium. From letters to Verhaeren 3 we see that he was in Brussels by the fourth of that month; he delivered his talk "L'Aristocratie intellectuelle"at the Salon de la Libre Esthétique on the following day; on the 6th he gave the same talk in Antwerp, due

1. Souvenirs p.58.
2. Ibid., p.30.
3. Letters in B.R.B. - M.L.
no doubt to the aid of Elskamp, with whom, as we saw at the end of 1893, Mauclair had already discussed the possibility of a lecture tour of Belgium. Indeed, it is quite possible that it was for that reason that Mauclair spent Saturday and Sunday (9th and 10th) in Ghent, and that after lunch with Octave Maus on Monday he travelled to Louvain, returning to Brussels on Wednesday (13th). The following Sunday he spent at Verviers. Though such details are not of paramount importance in themselves, they do serve to illustrate how well Mauclair was becoming acquainted with the "Pays de légendes" in which, he had told Elskamp, he wished he had been born.\(^1\)

But by far the most important reason for being in Belgium was (as Mauclair had said to Gide),\(^2\) to be with Georgette Leblanc:

\[\ldots \text{je me console avec ma mystérieuse Isolde de la vie de Paris et de la gêne et de tout.}\]

Was Mauclair aware of the deepening friendship of Mme Leblanc and Maeterlinck at this time? Perhaps not, for, while he was in Belgium, Maeterlinck was in Paris for the première of Intérieur on the 15th of March,\(^3\) then he accompanied the Oeuvre on a tour of Holland, and he was still with them when they crossed to England to begin a repertory week in London on the 25th of March. It is therefore unlikely that Maeterlinck could have been present, (as Mauclair almost certainly would be) at a concert given by Georgette Leblanc under the wing of the Libre Esthétique on the 28th March, when she sang, rather symbolically, a piece by Maeterlinck: "La Chanson de Mélisande", and another by Mauclair: "Les Amoureuses aux Matelots",

\[1. \text{ Cf. Chapter 2, pp.67; 68.} \]
\[2. \text{ Letter of 12th Feb. 1895.} \]
\[3. \text{ Mauclair did write a 'compte-rendu' of the performance of Intérieur for the Revue encyclopédique, though it is hardly possible that he could have been there in person.} \]
both set to music by Gabriel Fabre. Maeterlinck did however meet Mauclair on his return from England, for, writing to the painter William Rothenstein to apologise for not keeping an appointment, the Belgian added:

J'ai vu hier, à Bruxelles, Camille Mauclair, qui m'a dit de vous tant de bien que cela vient encore augmenter ma confusion et mon regret.  

By the 2nd or 3rd of May Mauclair was back in Paris. Perhaps at this point it is still too early to think of him as caught between two poles of affection.

As regards the parallel current which concerns Mauclair's life, we can not do better than consider the following admission - or rather, declaration of faith - which Mauclair confided to Mallarmé in July, when he wrote to thank the older man for a letter concerning Couronne de clarté:

Vous savez bien que je suis de la génération que l'âge me donne pour ainée. C'est avec elle que je sens, et mes moeurs sont les siennes, je le vois de plus en plus : en elle j'ai trouvé les seuls amis, comme vous, que je sence me comprendre, me soutenir et m'accepter.

As we shall see, Mauclair's reaction to the satire contained in Gide's book Paludes was totally in accord with this letter.

There is no doubt that Mauclair thought of Maeterlinck as a member of the 'génération aînée'. Paradoxically enough, from now on, as Georgette Leblanc grows closer to Maeterlinck, so too does Mauclair. In January 1896 he told Gide of their deepening friend-

3. Cf. Letter from Mauclair to Mallarmé dated by postmark 3 April 1895: "Je suis revenu hier soir de Bruxelles..."
Maeterlinck et moi devenons plus intimes que jamais et cela me console des autres. 1

But even before this date, their intimacy is indicated by references to Maeterlinck's good opinions in Mauclair's letters to Mallarmé and Gide. Maeterlinck also wrote an article on Mauclair's Couronne de clarté in the August number of the Mercure de France, and his preface to Mauclair's essay on Laforgue was published in the same review in May 1896. Active support was Mauclair's expression of friendship too; in December 1895 he talks of bringing Maeterlinck's English translator, Alfred Sutro to see Mallarmé, 2 and in March 1896 he reviewed Le Trésor des humbles for La Nouvelle Revue:

Qu'une amitié profonde pour l'homme ne fasse pas suspecter la modération de mon jugement sur le penseur. C'est vraiment selon la froide et logique sincérité que j'appelle le Trésor des humbles un chef-d'oeuvre. 3

Conversely, in the second half of 1895 his passion is undiminished. Mme Leblanc does not seem to have left Belgium for any length of time, but, though Mauclair spent at least part of the summer with Georges and Marie Rochegrosse in Barbizon, (from where he went by bicycle to visit Bourges and Mallarmé on the other side of the forest), he also may have made at least one trip north in the Autumn, as we learn from a letter to Elskamp:

2. Mauclair mentioned Sutro to Mallarmé for the first time on 8th Dec. 1895, and several times thereafter. Sutro, in his book of memoirs, Celebrities and Simple Souls recalls Paris of the 1890s, Lugné-Poe, Mallarmé, etc. There is however only one passing reference to Mauclair. This is a little surprising since Mauclair introduced him to Mallarmé and then, in 1897 dedicated OV to him with the words 'très affectueusement'. Sutro's attitude is no doubt explained by Mauclair's brouille with Maeterlinck, for he later became a close friend of the Belgian; The Life of the Bee is dedicated to him.
Je suis venu deux fois en Flandre, mais si précipitamment et pour des raisons si intimes et si poignantes que j'ai pu nullement quitter Bruxelles.

Similarly, the November issue of the Mercure de France tells us that Mauclair had visited the 'Salon de Gand' during a trip to Flanders.

One wonders how often he did in fact return and, especially when we read the letter to Elskamp, why?

When he met Maubel in Brussels, probably on one such trip, Mauclair heard from him of Gide's marriage; his letter of congratulation to his friend contains this reflection:

Tu m'écris que tu aimes celle que tu auras près de toi. En des apparences diverses au point de vue du monde, mais intérieurement semblable, je vis trop moi-même sur la beauté constante d'un grand amour inespéré depuis deux ans pour ne pas comprendre où tu en es moralement.

From a subsequent letter of the beginning of December, we can add one more important detail to the list of what Georgette Leblanc meant to Mauclair. After telling Gide that for a year he has been forced to 'purify his love by absence' (this part of the letter has already been quoted) Mauclair goes on to say:

Dire que j'ai voulu me tuer et qu'à cause de ce visage et de cette voix j'y ai renoncé. Il y a vraiment des hasards.

Quite clearly then, at the beginning of 1896, Mauclair's sentimental position, as he saw it, can hardly have been an unhappy one. Indeed, at the end of January he explicitly confided to Gide:

1. This is the third of seven letters to Elskamp (B.R.B. - M.L.). It is undated but may be situated by references to the first part of Mauclair's essay on Laforgue, published in MF Feb. 1896.
2. MF Nov. 1895, p. 253, Choses d'Art.
Au moins une question bête : es-tu heureux?
Moi je le suis infiniment du côté coeur, et le reste, je m'en fiche.¹

Unfortunately, despite Mauclair's reiterated intention to ignore 'le reste', his material position, and consequently his psychological demeanour, seem to have become increasingly intrusive. At the beginning of December 1895 he informed Gide of what he was doing. When he talks about his 'sales petits articles' there is a hint of irony, for he certainly thought of his present activities as a temporary expedient:

Je continue à lutter contre la vie quotidienne, sans dégoût d'ailleurs, fabriquant des foules d'articles (mêmes industriels) et m'amusant à scandaliser les purs artistes que tu sais bien.²

Nevertheless, despite his irony, Mauclair the idealist could not have 'amused himself' as a hack-writer without becoming dissatisfied with what he was doing. His dissatisfaction with himself does not become immediately apparent, but the culminative effect of his hack-work at this time is a force to be reckoned with.

Apart from everything else, there was, it seems, little inspiration to be found amongst his contemporaries:

Tu sais [he wrote to Gide] qu'ici nous menons (je parle pour moi aussi) la vie la plus fétide, de rats dans une cuisine, et toujours les mêmes visages, et les mêmes potins, et les mêmes truismons, et chez les vieux la même sottise, et chez les jeunes la même fatuité!³

Although such criticisms such as these are to be found in Mauclair's earlier work, they take on a special relevance at this point because they reflect his own dissatisfaction; they are, in a sense, his self-defence. He certainly felt that if he was able to achieve something

². Letter of 3 Dec. 1895.
³. Letter of 29th January 1896 to Gide.
valid in spite of his tribulations, then it was worth as much, if not more, than the dilettante productions and superficial preoccupations of some of his contemporaries. He could not afford to divorce his work from his life:

Je travaille beaucoup à une foule d’articles pour vivre

he declared to Gide, in a phrase which was to characterise his work for many years to come, perhaps even for the rest of his life.

Furthermore this was not an attitude adopted in order to point the contrast between himself and his more fortunate friend, Gide.

Mauclair wrote in a very similar vein to Elskamp, whom he did not know so well, at about the same time. In this letter Mauclair admitted that to Elskamp, in the calm and peace of Antwerp, it must be difficult to imagine that someone should be so busy as to be unable to write to a friend. Yet that is his position:

Je mène la vie la plus précipitée et la plus fiévreuse, j'écris tout le temps et je n'arrive pas, parmi tout ce sale journalisme et ces besognes de revues, à toucher sérieusement à mes livres. Je n'arrive à rien de valable intellectuellement, et il me faut mille diplomaties pour m'offrir de temps à autre une page de style.

Here Mauclair was referring to his essay Jules Laforgue. Perhaps it adds nothing to the intrinsic value of the Essay to know of the difficult circumstances which surrounded its composition, but in terms of Mauclair's work alone, such a letter as that quoted shows how much value Mauclair himself attached to some of his work which still represented his underlying Idealist convictions.

1. Letter of 29th January 1896, to Gide. When Louis took Mauclair to task over writing 'dans ces choses basses et insanes qu'on appelle les journaux' Mauclair's reply was: "Êtes-vous disposé à me nourrir? Je n'ai pas votre fortune, ni celle de votre frère." ML p.27.

2. Undated letter to Elskamp. (Cf. p.301, note 1).
However, within the context of Mauclair's relationship with Masterlinck (or Gide or Mallarmé or any of the other 'true artists') we need to know more than that he was suffering from dissatisfaction and over-work. In his congratulatory letter after Gide's marriage, Mauclair admitted:

\[ J'ai\ \text{besoin\ de\ m'appuyer\ sur\ des\ âmes\ comme\ la\ tiennes\ dans\ la\ médiocre\ et\ difficile\ existence\ que\ je\ mène.}^{1} \]

This is an even more important characterisation of Mauclair in the years to come. When, as we shall see, he turns away from Paris and the literary circles of his youth, it is from the 'grandes âmes' whom he has known and from the 'princes de l'esprit' in the past that he will increasingly draw his intellectual sustenance.

In the context of 1896 there is an equally important meaning to this phrase. Mauclair was relying heavily, in different ways on his friendship with Georgette Leblanc and Maeterlinck. It was not to last.

Whether Mauclair realised that his position was becoming untenable when he spent about ten days in Brussels in February 1896 partly in order to attend the Banquet Verhaeren - (where he gave the final toast, and, no doubt, met Maeterlinck) - which took place on the 24th of the month,\(^2\) we cannot know. Certainly, by May 1896 the particular circumstances of the previous year and a half are beginning to tell. In order to appreciate Mauclair's psychological position we must quote at some length this letter to Gide:

\[ \text{Je ne suis pas de ceux à qui laisse intacte [sic] la joie de l'amitié. Je ne sais plus (j'ai su) étreindre le vide et m'illusionner, j'ai besoin de} \]

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1. Letter of Nov. 1895 to Gide. (Cf. p.301, note 1).
2. Details of the Banquet Verhaeren, plus the text of Mauclair's speech are to be found in L'Art jeune (Bruxelles) of 15 March 1896. (2e année, No.3).
chères présences et il se trouve malheureusement depuis un an et plus que les deux ou trois êtres à qui je me sens lié profondément sont éloignés de moi. J'en suis triste au point de ne plus travailler. Depuis un an j'ose ma vie à des besognes mensuelles, des tas d'articles sans intérêt. C'est à peine si j'ai pu faire quelques essais comme le "Laforgue" et deux cents pages d'un roman qui m'ennuie bien à finir. Avec cela je suis malade par intervalles; j'ai trouvé un exquis médecin et un remède infaillible, mais j'aurai longtemps encore des rechutes, on peut les arrêter et non les prévoir, et cette maladie donne le spleen, c'est cela qui est pis que tout. J'ai des accès d'humeur noire qui me lassent beaucoup. Mais enfin l'énergie reste tout de même au fond : je voudrais faire plus de choses, je me reproche de n'en pas faire assez. Je te dirai que je suis surtout occupé de perfectionnement intérieur depuis dix-huit mois, je crois que j'ai mieux compris, que je suis mieux qu'avant. 1

The period mentioned in this last sentence takes us back to December 1894, and so Mauclair's 'perfectionnement intérieur' corresponds to the period of separation from Georgette Leblanc.

It is strange that this rather despondent letter should come at this time, for Mme Leblanc claims that Maeterlinck had proposed marriage to her in the spring of 1896. 2 Even without this, subsequent events show that she and Maeterlinck had by this time made their choice. Indeed it may have been made much earlier, and Mauclair may have been following a phantom for some time; or had some kind of pact been entered on? We cannot tell, but in any case the emotional turmoil involved, added to over-work, recurrent ill-health, and depression must have been considerable.

In view of these events, should we be surprised to learn that in June 1896 Mauclair has almost been out of his mind with worry for several days over an illness of his "amie"? 3 There is no proper name

2. Souvenirs, p.53.
and so no grounds for thinking this to be Georgette Leblanc, except
that in the same month she did go with her brother Maurice to Germany
for a 'cure de gorge'; and that in the same month Maeterlinck was in
England. If the supposition that Mauclair's letter does refer to
Mme Leblanc is correct, then in her book she would hardly have enlarg-
ed upon this illness in the full flood of memories relating to her ro-
mance with Maeterlinck.

By July a crisis point seems imminent. Distraught and exhaust-
ed by events, Mauclair writes to Abel Pelletier:

Il y a eu chez moi bien des ennuis, des maladies, des complications... Je suis très-souffrant depuis cinq jours, et il faut que je parte à la campagne une huitaine pour me remettre, car je n'en peux plus... Si vous saviez par quelle sale série d'embêtements j'ai passé... Je change beaucoup mon cher ami, et je crois que c'est en bien intérieurement. J'ai eu de grandes secousses. Il faudra faire de belles choses avec cela... ³

This final resolution seems to inaugurate the first phase of Mau-
cclair's 'moral regeneration', that which leads up to the definitive
break with Maeterlinck and Georgette Leblanc in January 1897. The
second phase of the change in his attitude belongs to the first eight
defri months of that year.

Although we know from a letter to Mallarmé that Mauclair had
returned to Paris by the 21st July, from then on until December, a
marked silence intervenes - not only in his contributions to reviews,
but also in his correspondence. Of course this lapse may be illusory,
and due quite simply to a lack of material available today, but an-
other explanation - an extremely tentative one - suggests itself.

1. Souvenirs, p.82.
2. W.D. Halls (op.cit.) p.55.
3. Letter of 1st July.
4. The letter Mauclair wrote to Mallarmé on this date concerns
Bourges and the 'legs Goncourt'.
A few months later, in May 1897, *La Nouvelle Revue* published an article by Mauclair entitled: "Comment j'étudiai la tristesse".\(^1\) In it he purports to examine in detail the effects of "un chagrin durable et extrêmement violent" which affected him in the late summer and autumn of 1895. While it is possible that a few of the events described in the article agree with what is known of Mauclair's activities in late 1895, the state of mind he describes, and especially the conclusions he draws, appear to be in far greater harmony with his letters and work which followed the lapse we have just mentioned of the late summer and autumn of 1896. Did he antedate his article for personal reasons?

The substance of "Comment j'étudiai la tristesse" is this:

Since the causes of his sorrow were obscure, part of the "lois abstraites de l'existence", no action could be taken against them without causing distress to all around him, his only alternative was to withdraw into isolation, silence, and introspective meditation. "Seul, dans un village auprès d'une forêt", he gave himself over to self-examination, his state of mind aggravated at first by fatigue and debility, and then by the lucidity brought about by the restorative country air. He then decided that he would attempt to lessen his depression by making a detailed analysis, in three 'albums', of the symptoms, of the progress of the analysis, and his feelings on the lessening of the crisis, if any. Thus the value of the article would be as a case-history, for use in studying the physical and moral effects of sorrow, as observed by a writer, at first hand, before their transformation, or deformation, into literature. After remarks on the relation between the author, his sufferings and the

\(^1\) *NR* 15 May 1897, pp.231-254.
characters he makes of them, Mauclair passes to a detailed account of the stages of the physical and mental effects of his 'maladie': the perverse pleasure of enjoying his suffering; langour, and the "consumption de l'âme" accompanying a general physical malaise; the incapability of work; the effect of autumn upon him; spleen, compounded of doubt, a stomach ailment which had no physical cause, and odd introspective enjoyment of this state, and dissatisfaction with himself, leading to hyper-criticism and the destruction of his own personality. It was at this stage that the tide turned and his way out of the emotional morass became clear:

J'avais perdu sans hésiter la coquetterie étrange d'une âme désireuse de souffrir avec rareté, mais le mesquin me rendait au cas général, me remettait dans le courant des autres hommes.

Having now realised that his case was not unique, his next resolution was to pass beyond the pitiable aspects of it (as revealed by the stage of self-criticism) and to relegate his past pain to a "cimetière intérieur":

Je n'exposerai pas comment un nouveau souci s'empara de moi : utiliser ce qui m'était arrivé pour l'affermissement de mon caractère, l'élargissement et la pacification de ma vision de l'existence.

Is this not akin to the phrase from the letter of July to Pelletier:

J'ai eu de grandes secousses. Il faudra faire de belles choses avec cela...?

Since Mauclair introduces his article as being a case-history of 'tristesse' for use as an example with Maurice de Fleury's book: La Tristesse et son traitement, which had recently been discussed in La Nouvelle Revue, it was presumably written in early 1897, and so, its conclusion, beginning with the words "à présent", may be held to represent Mauclair's convictions at that time:
À présent, je vais tenter d'être simplement un homme comme les autres, et comme cela veut dire, au vrai sens du terme, aussi bien Hamlet ou Siegfried que n'importe quel passant, il y a encore beaucoup à faire pour mes humbles forces dans le sens de la vérité.

* * *

The conviction that Mauclair is describing in this article events of late 1896, not 1895, is inspired by his silence at that time, the tone of the article, and by what is known of Maeterlinck and Mme Leblanc during the months in question.

After her 'cure' in Germany, Georgette Leblanc joined Maeterlinck for a holiday in the Vosges and then in the Vendée. Could it be that she had finally decided to end her relationship with Mauclair – or that this holiday made the situation clear to him?

It is significant that during this holiday Maeterlinck completed his drama Aglavaine et Séléysette. To wish to draw too close a parallel between this play and the events of the previous eighteen months would be temerity itself, given the lack of proven knowledge about the relationship of Mauclair, Maeterlinck and Mme Leblanc. However, the fact that this relationship did seem to last eighteen months implies either an uncommon degree of deceit – or of mutual understanding. If it should ever prove to be the latter, then a re-examination of the play could be fruitful.

Of course Maeterlinck does not write banal autobiography in this play; he had other artistic and poetic preoccupations to inspire his characters and the development of the themes far beyond any actual events. The play does however show two people together (Méléandre and Séléysette) the depth of whose love for each other is
only realised by the coming of Aglavaine who, in turn, inspires in each of the others love for herself. The play is a delicate web of love and esteem, of beauty of souls for whom there is no way out - until Sélysette commits suicide.

In the light of vague feelings inspired by the play - that Aglavaine is inspired by Mme Leblanc, (this much is commonly accepted),1 Méléandre by Maeterlinck, and Sélysette by Mauclair, - one might come to the conclusion that the tragedy of these years for Mauclair was not so much the loss of Georgette Leblanc, but the loss of Maeterlinck.

Leaving the world of conjecture, we return to December 1896, after the months of 'silence'. There are three extremely important letters to Gide (two in December and one in January) by which we can witness the end of the triangle.

The first of these2 opens with an obscure reference to Ubu Roi, followed by this information which is difficult to understand, because Aglavaine et Sélysette was performed at the Odéon on the 14th of December:

Il n'est pas plus vrai que Georgette Leblanc doive jouer Aglavaine. Il est même à peu près certain qu'Aglavaine ne sera pas jouée. Ceci entre toi et moi seuls, naturellement.

Could Mauclair's interest in the play have any connection with the tentative interpretation of it discussed above? Strangely enough, what has been said regarding the conduct of love and esteem of the characters in the play is echoed in a minor key by the next paragraph of this letter:

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2. The digits of the post-mark of this letter are not clear; the eleventh of December seems the most likely date.
Notre situation est plutôt éclaircie. Il n'y a en présence que des êtres de bonne volonté, mais nous souffrons de différences de nature et de sang, décidément. Le parti à prendre n'est pas encore pris, il est juste que lui et moi ne le prenions pas sans la consulter. En tous cas, l'entrevue d'hier m'a confirmé ce que j'avais toujours espéré et cru au fond de mon cœur, à savoir qu'il n'y aura jamais une décision petite et un acte médiocre entre nous trois. En sorte, André, que je ne sais trop que te dire encore, sinon, peut-être, que l'amertume chez moi est un peu moins amère depuis hier.

After this letter Mauclair leaves Paris for an unknown destination. On his return he writes immediately to Gide; this letter is once again very revealing for not only does it expose in detail his moral position, it also foreshadows the article "Comment j'étudiai la tristesse":

Je rentre très-las d'une bronchite tenace, très-troublé d'art, et très-excédé d'angoisse morales (...) Je suis, je crois, sur le retour de l'abominable chemin psychique dont aucun retour ne m'a été épargné depuis quinze mois; et je redescends la côte en manquant glisser à chaque pas, mais enfin, je redescends. Je viens encore, dans ce triste voyage de souvenirs cruels, de médiocriser, et d'affadir quelques sensations de jadis, dont le souvenir de beauté me rendait plus dure la partie. Je viens de me saturer d'ordinaire et de m'humilier, et peut-être deviendrai-je un être plus fatigué mais meilleur. C'est tout ce que je puis démèler. J'ai vu d'autres douleurs là-bas, effleuré d'autres secrets, (car le mal de la visiteuse d'âmes avait touché d'autres pauvres), et je ne suis plus seul à avoir mal. Je vais - et c'est ce qui m'ennuie un peu - traverser trois ou quatre mois de très-mauvais travail et de maussaderie, mais après je guérirai. La solution que tu me conseillais, mon cher André, viendra du mouvement même de mon âme, car je découvre avec une certitude de plus en plus grande que ni lui ni elle ne pourraient l'inventer tant 'ils comprennent peu'. Ainsi tout se pacifiera sans qu'intervienne le ridicule d'une brocaille extérieure et tardive. Voilà obscurément où en sont les choses.

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1. Letter of 27th Dec. 1896. Where ever Mauclair had been, he had met André Ruyters.
This letter presents a remarkable unity with other elements of the train of events, and especially with the article "Comment j'étudiai la tristesse" of which it is almost a résumé. Mauclair's reference to fifteen months of mental torment takes us back to late 1895, and consequently to the period of the two journeys "pour des raisons si intimes et si poignantes" of which he wrote to Elskamp in early 1896.

If, in these letters Mauclair shows a state of indecision, it was not to last for long, for the final step was taken a few days later, as we may read in this letter of the 7th January 1897 to Gide:

Je viens enfin de trouver le courage nécessaire pour dénouer ma situation. J'ai écrit hier à Maeterlinck pour lui dire que notre crise morale était mortelle pour moi, et que ma décision de rompre pour toujours avec elle et lui était irrévocable, parce que la fausseté de notre accord, et l'épuisement de l'absence, me menaient à l'extinction lente, ce qui est exact.

Je vais tâcher maintenant, non d'oublier, ce qui est impossible, mais de trouver dans la vie et dans le sentiment de mon devoir les forces pour l'avenir. J'examine mon état - il est effrayant. Mais je crois avoir pris le seul parti conforme à la vérité et à ce que je me devais, puisqu'ils n'osaient pas le prendre et préféraient trainer et me faire mal par petits coups...

(...) Cette séparation, comme tu penses, n'a rien d'une "brouille" bête, et reste secrète. Nous nous éviterons, et je compte que lui, au moins, sera suffisamment muet ou évasif pour ne pas faire bavarder les curieux.

This letter, perhaps more than the others, provides the evidence that the relationship we have been discussing did have a great effect on Mauclair. Not only do we have in it some proof of an agreement, but too, some indication of the state of emotional upset in which Mauclair had been for some time. When we read his resolutions for the future, we realise that he is reacting according to the tenets of that Individualism which he had expounded in 1892. It is quite obvious
that several pressures had come together, and that for Mauclair the only way to resolve the resultant dilemma was to take strong action according to his high ideals.

* * *

Now that Mauclair's emotional entanglement has come to an end, we shall witness his recuperation in 1897.

One significant trend is clear: whereas Mauclair turned to Gide as a confidant during the previous two years (perhaps for the very reason that Gide was far from Paris and could therefore serve as an 'alter ego', rather in the manner of a diary) when he had to extricate himself from emotional turmoil, it was to Mallarmé that he turned. It is immediately apparent from his letters to the older man that in his avowed search to unite personal integrity with integrity of artistic aims, he was inspired by Mallarmé as a person more than by his work.

Almost immediately we see the beginnings of a new attitude. For example, on the 28th January, three weeks after his letter to Gide quoted above, Mauclair declared to Mallarmé (who had written to thank him for Les Clefs d'or):

C'est mon dernier livre de jeune homme pas souvent heureux, à présent je vais faire autre chose, mieux ou plus mal, je ne sais, mais moins petit.

The main reason for this letter was however to thank Mallarmé for the copy of Divagations he had sent his young admirer - and yet Mauclair does not seem to have attended the 'banquet' given to celebrate the publication of the book a few days later. Indeed, during the early months of 1897 little is known of Mauclair's activities. It is perfectly legitimate to suppose that he was undergoing the
'trois ou quatre mois de très-mauvais travail et de maussaderie' which he had predicted to Gide the previous December. Nor should we underestimate the effect on him of the previous months:

Je suis plein de spleen, j'ai à travailler follement et voici huit jours que je m'enferme avec mon papier sans tirer un mot de ma pauvre tête. Les choses que je croyais éteintes, ou en voie d'oubli, me ressaisissent à la gorge avec une étrange aprèt et je crois, entre nous, que je suis très-mal fichu moralement. Mon cher, je ne voudrais pas t'embêter et troubler la paix de ton âme, mais si tu savais comme j'ai besoin qu'on m'aime en ce moment! Rêlelement, j'ai trop joué avec mes forces, et ça ne va pas, et j'ai je ne sais quel besoin d'expansion enfantine qui se heurte à des murs glacés. Je voudrais rencontrer des visages qui ne soient pas raisonneurs et toucher des mains qui recèlent de la compassion.

It would be too facile to suggest that in such a letter Mauclair is simply indulging a tendency to melodrama. In the first place we should remember the special relationship which he considered existed between himself and Gide, in the second place, the feelings which this letter expresses are in keeping with his actions before and after. Whether or not he exaggerated to a sympathetic listener, he had obviously suffered considerably.

In April or May l'Orient vierge was published, and soon after Mauclair must have turned to Le Soleil des morts, the book which was to reflect most of all the events of the past three years.

In March he wrote to Gide of a quarrel with the staff of the Mercure de France, and even went so far as to consider a duel with La Jeunesse, a fact which may have a connection with this unedifying

1. This letter is not dated, but from its subject, it must almost certainly belong to the early months of 1897, in fact to the position assigned to it above.
2. Letters of the 8th and 9th March. He considered asking Jules Huret to act as 'témoin'.
passage from the latter's book Les Nuits, les ennuis et les âmes de nos plus notoires contemporains, published in 1896:

Le long des parapets tranquilles de la Seine
Je me promenais en pleurant sur Paul Verlaine
Et Monsieur G. Ohnet. Un cochon au poil roux
(De croyez pas que je l'avais au nez ; je vous
Affirme que j'étais à vingt pas de la bête)
Hurlait - tel un Mauclair - et se payait ma tête.
Et je ne pouvais pas, poète aux cheveux gras,
L'éventrer je devais subir ses mornes cris
Comme j'aurais subi - dût-il beaucoup m'en cuire!
- Les vers de sir Francis Vielé-Griffin esquire.

Léon Daudet offers much more detailed information (though unfortunately without giving any date) which gives a very different picture of the Mauclair we have met so far:

Insolent avec les timides ou les malades, il
[La Jeunesse] était peureux comme une larve
et filait doux avec les gens décidés et solides.
C'est ainsi qu'ayant insulté, en je ne sais plus quelle occasion, ce brave homme et écrivain de grand talent qu'est Camille Mauclair, il raconta de lui, dans le restaurant du Journal, une de ces piles qui font date dans l'existence d'une fouine enragée. Mauclair commença par le gifler, puis, la Jeunesse l'ayant griffé, le retourna par les épaules et lui bota le derrière en cadence une douzaine de fois. Ensuite il lui versa, sur ses cheveux hérissés et raides, un verre d'eau et de vermouth en guise de schampoing, et finalement le précipita contre une pile d'assiettes, qui s'écroulèrent avec un tintamarre inouï. A ce moment survint Henri Letellier, directeur du Journal, précédé de son invraisemblable blair, et rien n'était comique comme les efforts de La Jeunesse pour se conserver une contenance, assis au milieu de cette vaiselle en morceaux, les giroflées de Mauclair visibles encore sur ses joues roses, enflées et flasques.


== Cf. this letter from Gide to Jammes of the beginning of June 1897: "J'envie ta calme existence. Ici nous avons des philhâllènes, des comités d'action, des jours gras, des duels. Qu'eût fait le faune? On se demande avec Rouart: qu'est-ce qu'il dirait à La Jeunesse? Saurait-il ne lui serrer la main? Aurait-il dit comme Mauclair: "Monsieur La Jeunesse, sortez d'ici"? Aurait-il applaudi ces paroles? Aurait-il refusé de se battre? Aurait-il eu recours à des témoins? Exténuante existence... La fuir!"

Correspondance Gide-Jammes, Gallimard p.110.
Despite this amusing description the reason for the dispute remains uncertain. Certainly Mauclair's attitude towards his colleagues must have become increasingly uncompromising, and not all of them would witness without comment his moral 'rebirth'. In fact, Mauclair's collaboration on the Mercure ended in December 1897.

Other writing towards the middle of the year allows us to judge Mauclair's change in outlook. He published several articles which criticise contemporary life, and its lack of positive ideals and constructive action. This, for Mauclair was most evident in the effete, artificial Symbolist milieux, but it was also to be seen in political life, and elsewhere. Articles of this type are : "Blanqui et l'énergie présente", which was published in the Mercure in September 1897, but which bears the date of composition of July, and "Réflexions sur les directions contemporaines", which, though it was published in the Mercure of November, was composed in September.

However, to understand the intimate motivation of these articles we must turn to a number of letters to Mallarmé, to which we are fortunate enough to find some replies published in Mallarmé chez lui.

On the 24th September Mauclair wrote:

Depuis dix-huit mois ma vie intérieure est si modifiée, que je ne sors presque plus et que je vis dans l'isolement, trop occupé à mettre de l'ordre dans ma pensée pour affronter de visage des autres êtres qui pensent de leur côté. J'ai eu un très-grand chagrin, qui me

1. In ML Mauclair quotes two letters from Mallarmé which he places in the same week of September 1897; from the content of the letters however, the more logical order is:
   1/ Friday 24th Sept. Mauclair to Mallarmé.
   2/ "Valvins, septembre". Reply Mallarmé to Mauclair,(ML pp.118-120).
laisse encore malade, et il se compliquait d'une crise dont vous sentez la gravité : le passage de la jeunesse à l'âge d'homme, qui est pénible et si plein d'angoisses pour ceux qui demandent à la vie une route hors des chemins trop hantés. Je crois que le plus ingrat de la tâche est faite à présent, et cependant je n'ose encore me risquer à rentrer dans le courant. A nul autre que vous certes, je ne trouverais suffisant d'alléguer une excuse à un si long délaissement de pure raisons morales de ce genre. Il est pourtant véritable qu'elles entraînent toutes les autres.

Mauclair then goes on to say that since January he has been obliged to work extremely hard - but that this work is like an opiate, his only way to dull his sensibility, and to forget 'things'. Solitude has become his way of life; he views the opening of the Season with trepidation. He ends this long letter with a detailed discussion of the book he is writing, and which portrays "l'opposition de l'élite et de la foule à l'heure actuelle, aussi bien dans l'art que dans la vie courante." How intimately the future Soleil des morts is connected to the events of the author's life, for a first draft of it at least must have been written in the early part of 1892, the time when Mauclair was certainly 'recuperating' after the emotional crisis. The period of eighteen months which he mentions at the beginning of the above extract would begin about March 1896, that is not long after his visit to Brussels for the Banquet Verhaeren, when he may have realised that all was not well between Mme Leblanc and himself.

In Mallarmé's reply to this letter, it is the older man who is willing to draw the parallel between his own position and the moral decision of the younger:

1. *SM* is included in the list of works "pour paraître" included at the beginning of *OV*, published in early 1897.
Je vous admire beaucoup, votre générosité à vous replonger au moule, votre vaillance de labeur... J'ai assisté déjà à plusieurs vous, considérables et qui suffiraient à tels et tels superbelement; mais vous en cherchez un autre, qui est. J'aime cet effort même désespéré, je parle pour moi; parce qu'au fond et en dehors du Monsieur très fixe et sur lequel les regards ont pu s'arrêter, j'en suis encore là, éperdument.

Certainly Calixte Armel in Le Soleil des morts is modelled on Mallarmé. However, could this figure have been drawn as it is, if Mauclair had not lived through his own 'angoisses morales'? That is one reason why it is useful to know the emotional content of the years we have been considering.

Mauclair's reply to the above letter followed immediately, on the 30th of September. In it he stated his debt clearly:

J'essaie d'aller, comme vous l'avez fait, à l'unification de mon caractère et de mon art. Vous m'avez été pour cela un modèle constant, vous me le serez plus encore, et c'est, plus que toute admiration littéraire, le secret de l'attachement que je vous porte, et qui ne se démentira jamais.

After this he mentions the two articles on contemporary life which were appearing at that time in the Mercure; significantly, he claims that these are only the external, easily visible signs, which show little of the interior stresses to which he has been subjected.

October brings two letters to Mallarmé. The first deals at some length with Un Coup de Dés...; the second with the articles Mauclair has published, or is about to publish; those in the Mercure are directed at the initiates, with whom points of detail may be discussed, whereas his "Souvenirs sur le mouvement symboliste en France (1884 - 1897)" in La Nouvelle Revue are rather for the 'bourgeois

1. ML pp.118-120.
audience’. As regards this last article, the dates are precise, but
one may ask whether they correspond to the evolution of literature
or to that of Mauclair’s own attitude? This letter also contains a
clear, concise passage which is an admirable statement of his new
outlook:

Je suis extrêmement heureux de voir que vous, puis Adam, Verhaeren, Gide, et les quatre ou
cinq autres qui me semblent justement avoir été ce qu’il fallait, dans leur art et dans
leur caractère, compreniez et estimiez la
gravité et la sincère conviction qui me guident.
Alors que les lettres que je reçois, les grimaces signifiant que qu’on me fait parmi les
autres, me montrent trop que, malheureusement, ils ne peuvent plus éléver un débat d’idées au-
dessus des questions de personnes, vrais fils de la bourgeoisie et du snobisme en ceci, malgré
l’apparat aristocratique et fermé de leurs écrits.

Mauclair’s crisis is over; his personal and artistic principles are formed; it is his duty to act accordingly, scorning the opinions of all but the Elite.

Although Mauclair wrote to Mallarmé several times before the end of 1897, these letters tell us little more concerning his ‘change-ment intérieur’. It is clear that by the autumn of that year, the change, begun over two years before, and precipitated by the break with Maeterlinck at the beginning of 1897, was complete. Of course we cannot think of such a change in outlook as having a precise beginning and end; part of Mauclair’s attitudes were already present even in 1889, the point of view he came to adopt remained with him to the end of his life fifty years later. The crucial period was however between 1895 and 1897.

As is to be expected, though the train of events examined above is the most important and revealing aspect of Mauclair’s life in the years under review, not all of his activities are taken into con-
sideration. Much of these are not yet known; others will be taken into consideration in the following chapter, for it is of obvious interest to know that Mauclair attended Verlaine's funeral, that he gave the oration at the inauguration of a statue to Banville in Moulins, that he spent several holiday periods near Fontainebleau and consequently got to know Bourges, Point, and the artistic society of that area very well, or that he met Henri le Sidaner (probably through their common friend Gabriel Fabre, the musician) and spent one summer in Paris painting with him. Such details would, however, detract from the main events of these years, which, in conclusion to this chapter, are reflected in the manner of the artist, in the following, rather poignant piece:

*L'Heure où tout s'atténue...* ¹

J'attends
Celle qui n'est semblable à personne,
Dont les yeux disent toutes les fontaines,
Et dont l'âme à la douceur d'un fruit
Ou d'un baiser à la nuit tombante.

Moi, pauvre enfant qui l'ai aimée
Comme la seule vérité,
Moi, pauvre coeur qu'on ne sait pas,
Je cherche celle qui, à la mi-été,
A pris ma joie entre ses lèvres.

Du jour où je l'ai rencontrée,
Toute mon âme s'en est allée en elle :
Mais le soir où je l'ai quittée,
Tout avait la couleur de la mort.

¹. This poem is taken from *L'Almanach des Poètes pour 1897* where it is given under the month Octobre. Presumably the *Almanach* was printed at the end of 1896 for the following year, in which case we may think of the above poem as being written in the autumn of that year, probably at the time when Mauclair was passing through the months of silence described in "Comment j'étudiai la tristesse," and just before the final break in Jan. 1897.
À présent, voici l'automne et j'ai mal.
Les villes sont dures à celui qui rêve.
À présent, je sais bien que je suis pâle,
Et que rien de moi-même ne s'élève,
Et que, si je ne la revois, je vais mourir...

Je pourrais bien le lui écrire,
Elle est bonne et reviendrait,
Mais quel que soit le mal qui tue en secret,
Il faut laisser libre le destin de ceux qu'on aime ;
C'est pourquoi je ne lui dis rien de moi-même.

Elle partit, je la songe bien loin.
Voici Octobre, et l'exil, et la brume,
Mon cœur sans témoin,
Je dis à mon isolement ce que nous fûmes,
Elle et moi,
Et l'odeur de l'oubli plane dans les fumées.
Je dis très mal ici ce que je sens ;
Le ciel figure tout ce que je pourrais dire,
Et j'aime mieux songer qu'écrire,
Et je n'attends miséricorde que du silence...
Tout ce que vous voulez de son âme est dans la vôtre,
Et dans la sienne il y a tout ce que je pense.

Hélas ! paysage, tes soirs purs et tes feuilles,
Orfévreries éteintes qui vont flottant,
Ce sont bien ses cheveux qui, s'il ne fait plus clair,
Gardent une tremblante clarté pourtant :
Ses yeux sont exprimés par tes eaux immobiles,
Tes roseaux sont fidèles à ses cils,
Tes canaux courbes disent sa taille et ses robes
Et les plis où le geste hésite et se dérobe,
Ta nuance fanée est celle de ses traines,
Et la tristesse que tu inspires, c'est la sienne!

La douleur montant au milieu des vallées,
L'incertitude qui émane de la rivière,
L'horreur qui se propage au fond de la forêt,
Paysage, paysage trop réel,
C'est bien aussi ce que je reconnais
Lorsque peureusement je pense à elle.
Je ne sais point tes fruits, octobre, ni tes fleurs,
Je sais que tu es l'automne et je vais à toi
Puisque tout, quand tu viens, comprend mieux ceux qui pleurent
Je suis celui de seuil qui s'use avec les heures
Je suis celui qui songe au destin de la route.

Je suis le simple qui a donné sa foi toute,
Et, las des villes, j'attends celle qui est la nature.

Je ne sais pas chanter les saisons comme un poète,
Je n'ai que mon âme et je la donne :
Je voudrais que mes mains touchent lentement la tête
De tous ceux-là qui ont le mal d'automne,
Et qui sont seuls, et sont désespérés
Sans que ce soit la faute de personne.
Bien aimée, je te confonds avec cet automne,
Avec le ciel, avec les fleurs, avec l'eau,
Avec tout ce que j'aime sans le savoir,
Bien-aimée, je te confonds avec Jésus,
Avec tout ce que je puis penser de noble,
Bien-aimée, tu es mon cœur dans cet octobre.

La maison est calme, je lis tes lettres,
Elles sont paisibles et fraîches
Comme les mains de cueilleuses que l'on voit
Au bout des parcs, dans les jardins :
Les chrysanthèmes vont s'ouvrir sous les fenêtres,
Je lis tes lettres, tu es loin,
Les meubles vieux sont d'une époque morte,
Bien des années ont pleuré ou souri devant la porte,
Une carte au mur dit l'Océanie,
Tout parle de distances infinies...

O toi, tout de même je travaille,
Tu le voulais,
O toi, tout de même je deviens meilleur,
Tu le voulais,
O mon cher amour, tout de même je suis digne,
Et si je cède à l'heure des ombres,
C'est que je suis en enfant attardé
Qui n'a pas joué quand il était tout jeune
Et que l'orgueil de l'intelligence avait fané :

Tu es venue et tout a fondu dans les larmes,
Et me voici devant la vie, au fond des villes,
Sans autres armes qu'une tendresse inutile,
Seul, aie pitié, sans conseil ni asile,
Sans autre amour que ton visage du passé...

Octobre, j'ai dit le chant triste : c'est assez.

*   *

*   *
In May 1899, George Bernard Shaw published *La Revue Indépendante* (to which he was then redacteur-en-chef) a little dramatic fragment entitled "Préface d'un livre indiscret."

In 1923 Harriett Hill revealed in her book *Le Plateau et la Cenusa* that this "Préface" was in fact a tongue-in-cheek description of one of the secret Thursday sessions which the contributors of *La Revue Indépendante* used to spend in the back room of the Librairie Savine in the rue des Fournaises, although Hill does recall that at the time Bernardin de Saint-Pierre declared his "Préface" to be fictitious, he pointed out that he was only joking of the journalistage, and indeed there can be little proof that the whole incident is based on fact.

As far as Maupin is concerned, there can be no better description of the milieu of his early youth than these pages in the *La Revue Indépendante*. In Saint-Pierre parts is too relentlessly retrospective and too serious in tone to capture the superb juxtapositions of attitudes, opinions and scenes. Even if these are deliberately exaggerated by Maupin, the high-flown speeches by Maupin ("le jocker hones instant") ring very true; the atmosphere and style are so close to his articles written at this time.

Furthermore, an "instantâne" like this allows us to see the kind of fancies, violent but ultimately rather static arguments against which Maupin was to react after 1860. It is perhaps not too much to say that, reproduced here in its entirety, Maupin's "Préface" can ring to life, for a moment at least, each of what was

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1. "At May 1899, p.283-385. The footnotes on p.385 indicate that the "littre indiscret" and Bernardin's *Deux Frères* were published by Savine in 1890.


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In May 1892, George Bonnamour published in *La Revue indépendante* (of which he was then redacteur-en-chef) a little dramatic fragment entitled "Préface d'un livre inédit".  

In 1923 René Ghil revealed in his book *Les Dates et les oeuvres* that this "Préface" was in fact a tongue-in-cheek description of one of the hectic Thursday sessions which the contributors of *La Revue indépendante* used to spend in the back shop of the Librairie Savine in the rue des Pyramides. Although Ghil does recall that at the time Bonnamour declared his "Préface" to be fictitious, he goes on to explain the identities of the participants, and indeed there can be little doubt that the whole incident is based on fact.

As far as Mauclair is concerned, there can be no better description of the milieu of his early youth than these pages in the *La Revue indépendante*. *Le Soleil des morts* is too consciously retrospective and too serious in tone to capture so vividly the superb juxtapositions of attitudes, opinions and poses. Even if they are deliberately exaggerated by Bonnamour, the high-flown speeches by Mauclair ("Le jeune homme blond") ring very true; the phraseology and style are so close to his articles written at this time.

Furthermore, an 'instantané' like this allows us to see the kind of fevered, violent, but ultimately rather sterile arguments against which Mauclair was to react after 1898. It is perhaps not too much to say that, reproduced here in its entirety, Bonnamour's "Préface" can bring to life, for a moment or two, much of what has

1. *RI* May 1892, pp.289-299. The footnote on p.289 informs us that the 'livre inédit' was Bonnamour's *Trois femmes* [published by Savine in 1893].
been set out more painstakingly in the first five chapters of this study.

PRÉFACE
D'UN
LIVRE INÉDIT

Observateur inquiet, de fidèle mémoire, un soir, j'entendis ces propos significatifs et je les transcris.

Après un spectacle, lourd d'ennui, honteux d'avoir coudoyé dans le va-et-vient des couloirs des financiers et des critiques, s'étant réfugiés dans l'arrière-salle d'un café tranquille, exaltés par l'alcool, le tabac, et peut-être, aussi, le souvenir des maîtresses qui les attendaient, ces jeunes gens ainsi parlèrent sur eux-mêmes - et les autres :

LE POÈTE(1) - Voulez-vous une cigarette?

D'une main forte aux doigts carrés d'homme volontaire, il promenait à la ronde un paquet de Richmond. Sur la matité de sa chair serrée et polie au grain de marbre, de fines moustaches noires tranchaient, le front casqué d'épais cheveux en brosse, et, derrière le lorgnon, des yeux fiers. Une voix jeune, au timbre clair, argentin, répétant :

- Voulez-vous une cigarette?

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND(2) - ... Croire à la Science qui n'explique rien!... Ah! ce symbole du petit enfant dans les bras de l'Aveugle!...

L'Ignorance, ironie suprême guidant ceux qui ont perdu la Foi...

LE PREMIER SIAMOIS(3) - ... Le gosse les guide parce qu'il y voit clair, tout simplement. Et pourquoi celui-là qui possède un sens de plus qu'eux tous symboliserait-il l'Ignorance?... Et puis, votre mépris de la Science est-ce assez bête? Sous prétexte "qu'elle n'explique pas tout"... Soit! mais il n'y a qu'elle qui explique quelque chose...

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND - Et après! Ça m'est bien égal. Moi, je ne crois qu'à l'Idée, vous le savez bien, nous sommes loin, si loin! l'un de l'autre!...

1. Trois femmes (sous presse).

(1) René Ghil [Ghil]
(2) Camille Mauclair [Ghil]
(3) Gaston or Jules Couturat i.e. Gaston Moreilhon or George Bonnamour [Ghil]
LE SECOND SIAMOIS(1) - L'idée!... L'idée!... C'est drôle nous autres ne croyons qu'au fait, au petit fait probant, constaté, prouvé, démontré vrai. Vous en êtes encore, vous, à pratiquer la vieille distinction entre le Moi et le Non-Moi... Mademoiselle retardé... Quand vous aurez le temps je vous prouverai leur identité...

Postés d'angle, au fond, le jeune homme blond, délicat, frêle, le cou tendu, la lèvre agressive, imberbe et doux, têtu, cabré contre les rieurs de raisonnement, la froide précision des deux autres en bon petit pur sang, rageur, orgueilleux. Et les Siamois des cyniques sans pose, contempteurs de toute hypocrisie, les poings brandis en gestes de révolte, de la lumière au front haut de l'un d'eux, flegmatique; sur le visage crispé de l'autre : la pâleur d'une colère, l'insolente ironie de sa bouche moqueuse.

L'AUTEUR DRAMATIQUE(2) - ... Elle a l'air comme ça, mais mon cher, une vraie dinde! Il faut la seriner comme les autres.

Les yeux de celui-là, rieurs, derrière un lorgnon; une barbe d'apôtre filigranée, déjà, d'argent fin.

LE PREMIER SIAMOIS, rêveur - ... D'idéation inconsciente, tu causes?...

LE SECOND SIAMOIS - Cui, sans l'activité réflexe inconscient on n'expliquera jamais l'idéation consciente. L'Idée pure de ces messieurs, conçois-tu ça clairement?

LE PREMIER SIAMOIS - Bah! C'est si vieux! On ne réfute même plus...

LE MUSICIEN(3) - ... C'est une légende, je ne suis pas grincheux...

Une correction de gentleman cela distinguait ce wagnérien triste d'une mélancolie faite d'"éreintements".

L'AUTEUR DRAMATIQUE - Sarcey, je suis allé le voir: "Vous savez, votre pièce, eh! bien j'aime pas ça." Et puis, il m'a retenu à déjeuner. On nous a servi de la dinde coriace et le vieux birbe ne s'est plus occupé de moi... Il y avait des femmes...

UNE VOIX - C'est comme moi... Deux heures d'attente sur le divan rouge pour m'entendre dire: "Bé oui, je suis une vieille bête.... quand vous aurez mon âge....

LE PREMIER SIAMOIS - ... Soyez juste, il n'y a pas que Sarcey. Et les autres, le trio Bauër-Fouquier-Lemaitre, tous les malandrins du feuilleton, la clique des journaux....

1. Gaston or Jules Couturat i.e. Gaston Moreilhon or George Bonn-amour. [Ghil]
2. Georges Lecomte [Ghil]
3. Georges Servières [Ghil]
LE SECOND SIAMOIS - ... J'en ai vu de près, c'est bas de plafond leurs âmes et il y fait noir... Il n'y a qu'à se documenter et puis on cingle.

LE PREMIER SIAMOIS - Mais oui! ils ne peuvent pas s'empêcher de beugler... Vous avez bien vu Nestor dans l'Echo de Paris et pourtant, ce que nous avions dit, tout Paris le savait...

LE MONOCLE(1) - ... Vous vous faites des ennemis... de la force dépesnée pour rien... Parlez-moi de l'ironie, j'en suis. La Pravatz d'Anatole France, la petite aiguille qui n'a l'air de rien et qui tue c'est moins dangereux que vos coups de massue.

Très chic et l'air rosse, celui-là.

LES SIAMOIS - C'est moins crâne... France! voilà l'homme à ne pas ménager, un monsieur qui ne loue que des médiocres et qui claquera des dents sur le paillasson de l'Institut jusqu'à ce qu'on lui crie : Entrez!... comme à un larbin!

LE JEUNE HOMME GLABRE - Vous avez tort, ce France est exquis. Il nous lit. Il est renseigné... A mon premier livre j'ai eu un article...


LE PHILOSOPHE(2) Pas d'ingratitude?... Alors vous n'arriverez pas... Non, mon cher, la reconnaissance ne compte pas parmi les Idées-Forces...

Trapu, têtu, sanguin. Le verbe pâteux d'un penseur. Solennel et passionné. L'encolure forte et dans le regard une fierté tranquille.

LE PREMIER SIAMOIS - Vous, y croyez-vous aux Idées-Forces? Mais ça n'est pas prouvé!... de la métaphysique pure... tout comme "l'amour procréateur du mieux" de notre ami, s'il croit que c'est tangible!...

LE PHILOSOPHE - Est-ce qu'il y a quelque chose de tangible? qui nous dit que nous ne sommes pas trahis par nos sens. N'est-ce pas, Poète?

LE POETE - ... Voulez-vous une cigarette?

LE PHILOSOPHE - Et puis non, la métaphysique c'est purement imbécile. Je fais deux parts du monde: l'élément Force, l'élément Bonté, une théorie scientifique. Je peux prouver... Tenez, suivez mon processus: Taine, Bourget, Rod, Barrès, autant de jalons, j'arrive...

1. F. Vandérem [Ghil]
2. Abel Pelletier [Ghil]
LES SIAMOIS, froidonnant, moqueurs :

Je m'appelle Bouteille-à-l'Encre
Je suis métaphysicien!

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND, avec extase, à l'autre bout - Celui-là est un pur, un noble esprit... Ah! je le sens si préoccupé de son Art et de cela seulement... Son Apparition un des plus beaux romans qu'on ait écrit depuis quinze ans... Mais d'ailleurs à la Revue impartiale.

LE SECOND SIAMOIS - Pas du tout! Il m'appartient ce livre! Je veux montrer la puérilité de ce mysticisme : de l'ambiance délayée et ce que c'est, au fond, nous le savons : de la sensualité de lym-phantique... Vous avez beau faire, vous ne sortez pas de la Réalité, vous faites flou, vague et bleuâtre et puis c'est encore de la réalité affadie.

LE CRITIQUE D'ART - ... Et avez-vous remarqué dans les arts plastiques l'impuissance des mystiques et des symbolistes à exprimer l'Idée, le Sentiment... Tout ce qu'ils ont trouvé : copier les Primitifs... Vraiment, après cinq siècles de découvertes, d'études et de procédés nouveaux, honnêtement c'est un droit qu'on n'a pas!

Fine tête souriante à barbe fourchue. Des gestes de grâce et le timbre caressant d'une voix chaude. Frêle organisme rare d'être d'élite gardant pour les batailles du journal et du livre l'ardeur intacte de sa Foi. Sa main nerveuse assouplie au manier de précieux objets d'art gesticulant une mimique expressive devant ses yeux brillants de claire intelligence.

LE JEUNE HOMME GLABRE - Nous nous moquons de la Science, nous nous fichons du procédé, nous sommes les Poètes! nous cherchons le frisson!

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND - Le frisson, l'Idée pure, le sentiment dans ce qu'il a d'éternel... Assez de contingent comme ça... L'Idéalisme règnera et avec lui le Magnificisme.

LE POÈTE, LE CRITIQUE D'ART, LE PHILOSOPHE, LE MONOCLE ET LES SIAMOIS - Expliquez!

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND - Il me faudrait trois heures... Un livre... Chez moi, je prépare une Oeuvre,(1) vous verrez. Le Magnificisme aboutira, oui, dans cent cinquante ans!... Non! Non! ne discutez pas, c'est inutile... Je suis Plotinien.

LES SIAMOIS - Plotin, un aliéné très distingué.

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND - Je vous méprise!

LE JEUNE HOMME GLABRE - Ce qui nous sépare?... Je crois à l'âme, je suis bien sûr que je ne mourrai pas tout entier...

(1) Eleusis ?
LE SECOND SIAMOIS - Une âme immortelle à vous, l'auteur des Souliers Vernis? Dieu est trop bon!

LE JEUNE HOMME GLABRE - Je vous méprise!

LE MAGE(1) - Le Roman? De l'Art à la portée des bourgeois, de l'Art inférieur... Mais soix, je respecte la supériorité dans toutes les branches... Un beau lutteur est pour moi supérieur à un homme comme Coppée par exemple...

LE SECOND SIAMOIS - Permettez!... Il a eu son heure Coppée. Je veux bien qu'il ait gâché son temps et par trop flâné en littéra-ture, mais, tout de même, il avait en lui l'âme d'un poète moderne... Ne riez pas, je sais de lui des vers que Mallarmé signerait....

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND - Laissez Mallarmé!....

LE SECOND SIAMOIS - Mallarmé! voilà leur bon Dieu. Ah! ce pur artiste, mais c'est plein de sottises sa philosophie, puisque vous appelez ça de la philosophie, vous, des causeries d'artiste... Et son art? Des vers de charades! Lisez son Savetier, dans la dernière Revue Incolore... Bientôt il rimerà des annonces... Et ce salon, son salon, d'où les jeunes gens reviennent déments et pourris d'orgueil; est-ce qu'on ne va pas bientôt le fermer par mesure de salubrité intellectuelle?

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND - Mallarmé, je ne suis plus d'accord avec lui sur aucune question... Mais vous insultez la génération, vous?

LE SECOND SIAMOIS - Et après? Ah! elle est jolie la génération! Mais, regardez-vous, des gringalets trop frêles, aux crânes déprimés; pas de sang, pas de muscles, rien que des nerfs, de pauvres nerfs malades, la fin, l'écœurement, l'agonie d'une race. Et vous voudriez que je respecte ça, moi?... Si vous saviez ce qu'ils pensent de vous les grands cerveaux de ce temps, vous réfléchiriez... Allons, remuez-vous, sortez de vos coquilles, et ici, et à l'étranger, allez écouter l'opinion que le monde savant formule tous les jours sur vous. Quelle pitié!... Rosny a raison, vous êtes la Génération de la CONQUETE.... Tout ce qui est viril vous fait peur! et peut-être bien qu'au fond votre anti-patriotisme n'est pas si philosophique qu'on croit, parce que, pour moi, votre conception à tous ça/été l'hystérie d'une nuit de frousse!.... [sic]

LE MAGE - Je voudrais pouvoir quelque part écrire qu'un peuple qui a cru au génie des Goncourt, des Zola et des Daudet est au dernier degré de la bassesse intellectuelle... Flaubert, une âme de bourgeois!... Huysmans une vision de rond de cuir...

Sous de longs cheveux bruns un nerveux profil à ligne busquée. La barbe fourchue. Un doux sourire et le geste vêtement d'un révolté.

LES SIAMOIS - Et les Symbolistes? Les Magnifiques?

LE MAGE - Ils n'ont pas de talent, mais ils ont raison....

(1) V.E. Michelet. [Ghil]
LES SIAMOIS - Tout ce qu'ils ont trouvé, mon Dieu, c'est bien simple, paraphraser Moreau, ou bien encore, faire parler un porcher comme un Prince...

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND - Paraphraser, c'est, épris de sa seule individualité, récréer, ordonner les autres... La Vérité?... Elle est en nous, nous faisons de notre âme un riche réceptable des visions du monde que nous créons.

LE SECOND SIAMOIS - Vous qui avez exalté Concourt vous pensez cela?... Fragilité, ton nom est Camille.

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND - Éreintez-moi, vous me ferez plaisir... Et quittons nous, parce que nous disons en mauvais français, beaucoup de bêtises inutiles...

LE MONOCLE - Barrès n'est ni un artiste, ni un penseur, un dilettante à la Benjamin Constant... Mais qui n'a pas compris Spinoza...

L'AUTEUR DRAMATIQUE - Mademoiselle Renan! cet imbécile de Lemaître en est jaloux, comme de tout ce qu'il ne comprend pas...

LE MONOCLE - Renan, un vainqueur de par l'ironie.

LE MAGE - Ce vieillard est obscène....

LE SECOND SIAMOIS - Renan, Ledain, tous les exégètes du même bois, je dresserai la liste, un jour, de toutes leurs vessies... J'étalerai le bric-à-brac de leur érudition, le galimatias de leurs théories... Un livre à faire, et je l'intitulerai : Les Anes savants.

LE PREMIER SIAMOIS - La Vie de Jésus, un roman à la Sand! Et sur les origines du langage ce birbe professe les mêmes opinions que Saint-Basile qui n'y connaissait rien... Ces dernières années tous ses reniements, sa polémique avec Concourt, ça donne le dégoût... Autour du cœur, autour du cerveau, il a de l'adipe....

LE JEUNE HOMME BLOND - Je vois l'Avenir!... Il est bien malade le Positivisme!... Le Magnificisme esthétise le rayonnement de l'idéalité... Il n'y a qu'à ouvrir les yeux et qu'à regarder pour comprendre : La Science est humaine, l'Art est divin, et c'est pour le triomphe du Divin que nous sommes... Il va falloir regarder en face l'Idée surgie et compter avec les gens qui la défendront...

LES SIAMOIS - Et nous nous disons, nous, que vous vous réjouissez d'un petit feu de paille!... Vous parlez de Positivisme. Votre érudition retarde. Nous sommes transformistes, simplement. Le positivisme postule L'Inconnaisable. C'est déjà, par l'ensemble, une doctrine caduque. Ceux qui posent, comme vous, que notre Inconnaisable s'appelle la Matière, disent une sottise, car la Matière n'a que des "Comment?" et n'a pas de "Pourquoi?"
Sommes-nous malades? Vous êtes de jolis garçons, oui-dà!... La petite danse de Saint-Guy métaphysique qui secoue une génération sur dix, vous travaillez, et vous prenez cela pour un renouveau?... Votre candeur vous excuse... Mais vous avez beau crier : En avant! vous intituler : Magnifiques, elles sonnent creux vos métaphores et vous drapez d'oripeaux fanés vos académies. Assez de pédérastie intellectuelle comme ça! Il n'y a de bien nouveau que la Science et la Vie, s'il vous faut du Mystère cherchez-en là dedans et vous en trouverez...

LE POÈTE - Voulez-vous une cigarette?

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Et leur causerie s'acheva coupée de sourires. Inquiètes faces pâles aux yeux trop aigus, nerveux jeunes hommes aux gestes fébriles, un peu las déjà d'avoir trop pensé, groupe batailleur, où les mains, la fièvre tombée au froid de la nuit, se serrent cordialement, qui grossira l'Élite de demain - Ils étaient Treize. (1)

GEORGE BONNAMOUR.

Paris 15 mai 1892

(1) Apart from those already mentioned, there were: Dévoluy, Charles Saunier, Maurice Beaubourg, Jullien.

To these must be assigned the identities of the 'Jeune homme glabre', the 'critique d'art', 'une voix', and, presumably, the recorder of the scene.