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PLOTINIAN PRESENCE AND THE WORK OF
W. B. YEATS AND YVES BONNEFOY

by

Eric Hamel

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The
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Abstract

Plotinian Presence and the Work of
W. B. Yeats and Yves Bonnefoy

By

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Advisor: Burton Pike

The main concern of this dissertation is with the problem of interpreting presence in relation to specific poems. How can poems convey a sense of presence, given that poetry is a medium of representation? Can a poem convey a sense of presence only by denying its very possibility?

In Chapter 1, I define presence as any indeterminacy in a poetic text. I further argue that these sorts of indeterminacies as it were address the reader, or actively call upon the reader to be resolved but refuse an ultimate determination. A particularly fruitful technique for creating such indeterminacies the manipulation of the oral and written modes of language.

Chapters 2 and 3 define what "Plotinian presence" is in relation to the work of Yeats and Bonnefoy. With respect to Yeats, I find it in his "fifth element" and with respect to Bonnefoy in his "tache." These are seen to be aural/vocal elements speaking of presence, plenitude, and intensity.

In Chapter 4, I posit two ways in which presence can make itself felt in the act of reading: 1). when the reader engages in self-conscious, self-reflexive relation to the text and 2). when the reader senses a plenitude that arises in relation to the text.

In Chapter 5, I posit a kind of indeterminacy which is inexhaustible. I found this to be similar to Plotinus One. It is a kind of "sounding of silence," a sound in which silence could also be heard. I identify this with Yeats' "fifth element" and Bonnefoy's "tache."

Chapter 6 consists of examples of the second way in which presence can make itself felt, how certain examples present areas of indeterminacy that refuse absolute resolution but which also convey an unmistakable sense of intensity and plenitude. In the final chapter, I extend these considerations into three specific techniques of manipulating the oral/aural modes of language in order to suggest such a (Plotinian) presence.

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"The beautiful is that in which the many
still seen as many become one."

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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Introduction

You increase yourself then by rejecting all else [everything that comes from non-being], and the All will be present to you in your rejection.... But if you went away, it was not from it -- for it is present -- and you did not even go away then, but were present and turned the opposite way.

Enneads, 6.5.12.18-25

There are many links between the three authors I have chosen to write about. I have concentrated on one, the notion of presence. My choice was motivated primarily by personal interest and affinities. The choice of presence was obvious with respect to Plotinus and Bonnefoy, less so with Yeats. The problem facing me was to discover a notion of presence that would apply to all three writers.

To accomplish this goal I have assumed two things: that Yeats and Bonnefoy are poets of presence, and that presence can be expressed in or through a work of art. A problem arises immediately. How can a medium of representation be about presence? Furthermore, given that presence is such an elastic idea, is it possible that these three writers, separated by so much time, have notions of presence similar enough to compare them fruitfully?

Yeats, as I try to show in Chapter 2, in fact has a definite notion of presence that is important to his poetry. His notion, however, depends upon a radical separation of immanence and transcendence, which we do not find in Plotinus and Bonnefoy. For Yeats the One is absolutely

transcendent, and can only be approached by contacting intermediary spirits. The same was true for Proclus, who sought to influence these spirits (called Henads) through theurgy (Proclus 211; Dodds 283; Rosàn 214).

For Bonnefoy the One is immanent. Plotinus is ambiguous; there is evidence in the Enneads for both readings of the One. Following certain modern scholars of Plotinus, I have taken it as immanent. Is it possible to see in Yeats an immanent One without violently distorting his poetry? Was it this sense of a present One that attracted Bonnefoy to Yeats? I found I could only answer these questions in terms of the act of reading poems, and not in terms of Yeats' philosophy, as found, for example, in A Vision.

My governing hypothesis, is as follows: there is a notion of presence, grounded in Plotinus' philosophy, that applies to both Yeats and Bonnefoy. This notion, however, is not to be found simply in their poetics, or the philosophical armature informing the poetic work, but it is to be found in the act of reading of the poems themselves. This presence is not something to be found in the fixed text, or in the thought of the poem, but it comes about through the experience of the poem, or the process of reading.

It seems to me metaphors are inevitable in any use of language, even or especially with respect to such a vague but far-reaching word as "presence." So instead of resisting this, I have embraced it and tried to reduce my argument to a set of governing metaphors. To show my method of reading and to set up these metaphors, I would like to proceed directly to two examples, a painting by Paul Klee and a poem by Bonnefoy. At several stations of my argument, I choose to discuss paintings by Paul Klee because they provide a more graphic example than a poem.

I. Approach

Paul Klee's 1933 "Ein Stübchen in Venedig" ("Small Room in Venice") is executed in bright pastels on a blue paper ground (Grohmann 99). Shades of blue, green, and red, in tones that vary from somber to almost fluorescent, are painted in large blocks without any broad black lines demarcating the blocks of color, like many of Klee's later paintings. There are thin lines drawn between the color-blocks, but these are so faint that, standing back, one sees only the colors, which seem to be flat and yet vaguely to hover over the blue ground.

The shapes in the painting evoke an interior space (Grohmann 98). This is reinforced by the title. Two bright pink triangles suggest curtains, a motif common in Klee (see



Figure 1. Paul Klee, "Room in Venice," ("Eine Stübchen in Venedig"), 1933.

for example "Der bayrische Don Giovanni," "Bavarian Don Giovanni"). But there are other shapes that suggest larger, exterior, architectural elements. The blue dome suggests a church (like San Marco), and the adjacent green-gray shape with a circle in the middle suggests a column supporting an arch, of the sort common in Renaissance colonnades (as for example Brunelleschi's Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence). It is as if the painting evokes both interior and exterior.

Another paradoxical pairing appears in the enigmatic signs in each of the upper corners. On the right side is a cross, perhaps symbolizing the resurrection, but it looks much more like a plus-sign. On the left is a light blue circle. It seems to be more than an architectural element, such as a lunette. If it were the opposite of the plus-sign, we might expect a minus-sign, but Klee has given us rather the true contrary of the positive, which is zero, a surd which is an irrational number that "cannot be expressed in finite terms" (Steiner 127).¹ "Surd" originally meant "voiceless."

We notice, then, that the painting contains several paradoxes; interior and exterior simultaneously evoked; the surd and the finite plus-sign; flat color-blocks floating on

¹ For the use of signs in Klee, see Rainer Crone and Joseph Leo Koerner. Paul Klee; Legends of the Sign.

a ground that suggests depth. But the most curious and disturbing features of the painting, which the viewer tries hard to put out of mind, are the two dots, one a warm pink, the other a cooler pink-purple. These dots stare out at the viewer like two eyes and the pinkish bar begins to look like a brooding mouth. Suddenly what just seemed like two curtains now comes to define the pointed hat of the face looking out at us.

Such hooded characters are common in Klee. They appear as clowns (as in "Der Clown wandert aus," "The Clown Emigrates" 1921) but also smiling demonic barbarians in "Barbaren-Opfer" ("Barbarian Sacrifice") of 1932. Neither of these parallels has the same brooding, threatening bearing of this figure, who seems more like an executioner.

What is this figure doing in the middle of this painting, which, as the title suggests, seems to be about a room in Venice? When we look more closely we see that the two eyes are drawn around with a thin red line, drawn around in such a way as to create a side-ways figure eight, the symbol of infinity.

The painting begins to come together and make more sense if we focus our attention on these two dots. When we look directly at them both, we see the eyes of the clown-executioner looking back at us. But when we try to take in the painting as a whole, without focusing exclusively on any

one point, suddenly the clown-executioner disappears. The blue ground deepens, the forms seem to float upon the blue ground's flat depth. The brighter dot appears as the sun on the horizon, in the blue air of dawn or evening -- the colors seem to me those of dawn and spring because of their vibrant energy. Light enters the room from without, illuminating the curtains, but light also shines out too, as if the viewer's eyes light the curtains (Grohmann 98; Enneades 5.3.8.21-23 and 1.6.9..31.-33; Hadot 63 and note 25). The duller dot appears as the image of the sun on the very glass of the window; the sun doubled, like two lights on the verge of meeting and blending, or a light seeing with light (cf. Enneads 4.3.31.11; 6.7.21.13; 5.8.3.6; Bonnefoy, Début 36 and Poèmes 237, 222, 213).

The more we can see the whole painting, the more the window appears as window and the more the vision of the outside and inside are held together as one. The sun appears far beyond us, but also near to us, present in the middle ground, in the glass of the window. In a sense the sun is also absent because outside and at a distance, but it is also profoundly present because the sun appears in the very window-pane. The actual glass is seen, its very vitrescence appears, despite its transparency, because the sun is imaged in it. By looking at the whole of the

painting, and not at the particular dots, we encounter the sun suddenly, as Plotinus says in his simile of dawn:

But one should not enquire whence it comes, for there is no "whence": for it does not really come or go away anywhere, but appears or does not appear. So one must not chase after it, but wait quietly till it appears, preparing oneself to contemplate it, as the eye awaits the rising of the sun; and the sun rising over the horizon ("from the ocean", the poets say [*Iliad* 7.421-2]) gives itself to the eyes to see.... But he [the One] did not come as one expected, but as one who did not come: for he was seen, not as having come, but as being there before all things, and even before Intellect came.² (Enneads 5.5.8.1-6)

What is outside and inside become visible, but only when we concentrate on seeing the whole, as well as the window itself. But if we focus on the dots again, the clown-executioner appears and the sun, as Yeats says, is hidden in eclipse (Poems 197). The window-pane becomes a reflective medium. Now it is impossible to see the sun, because it is impossible to hold these two readings of the dots together simultaneously. We inevitably shift from one reading to the other. This is the sort of thing I will call an indeterminacy in the realization of a work of art.

The clown is often a figure for the artist in Klee, and the artist 'executes' his or her designs. It seems to me that the hooded figure shows us the human desire, not so

² All quotations from Plotinus are from Armstrong's translations, Loeb Classical Library. There are many similarities with Bonnefoy in this passage, especially the sense of undiminished giving and the chance meeting with the One at the horizon.

much to kill the artist or his or her work, as to kill what art paints or poems write towards or around, that is, the experience of presence. Bonnefoy speaks of the violence of writing, and here we actually see the violence of all art against presence, inescapably reflected back to the reader (Poèmes 328; "une violence/ Mais pour la paix qui a saveur d'eau pure").³ The clown-executioner becomes a mirror image of the viewer, reflecting back to us our own face, showing to us our hidden desire to kill presence. Klee does not give us a flattering picture of ourselves but shows us the true violence of our gaze. However, it is a violence for the sake of peace, for there is also the sun, still there, only hidden now.

The violence, and the clownishness, of representation and our use of signs, the infinite regress of reference, can not be denied. It is a part of our experience. Klee's genius is to have reverse the common-sense position. This position assumes that images and language are transparent and that language refers to objects and paintings refer to and reproduce the appearances of things we all know. However, it is precisely when we believe this that the clown-executioner appears and we are lost in the hall of

³ See below, Chapter 3 for Bonnefoy's ideas about writing and presence.

mirrors seeing only ourselves and our hidden will to kill presence.

When we see whole and re-envision the mediation of the window-pane, seeing the there from a here, when we see language as an opaque medium that refers to itself and not simply to things, the sun appears. Infinity appears too, as the two dots seem to approach each other, separated and united by the symbol of infinity.

We shift from one perspective to the other, from positive to the absurd, from window as transparent medium to window as reflective medium, from the other-directed to the purely self-directed. In shifting from one to the other it is sunset or sunrise, spring or the depths of winter, a light strikes the window and is met by our light looking out, or the light is completely hidden.

The painting itself holds both of these readings, these irreconcilable readings, within one frame. The act of viewing proceeds in the present moment and consists in our oscillating from one reading to the other. Such is my conception of the act of reading.

Throughout this dissertation I will speak of how a poem suggests presence by bringing a present reader to see as it were the sun on the window-pane. I will argue that the poems of Yeats and Bonnefoy make the reader aware of his or her own subjective determinations and projections and at the

same time make felt a presence that refuses the reader's determinations.

There is a danger in my example from Klee, however. The metaphor of the window-pane is a metaphor grounded in sense perception. The sun is seen. But what I am really driving at is not limited to sight; presence is not simply something sighted. It is to be apprehended in a way in which perception, intellect, and feeling overlap.

To prevent my metaphor from being limited to sense perception, I would like to discuss a second example, Bonnefoy's short poem "La charrue":

La charrue

Cinq heures. La neige encore. J'entends des voix
À l'avant du monde.

Une charrue
Comme une lune au troisième quartier
Brille, mais la recouvre
La nuit d'un pli de la neige.

Et cet enfant
A toute la maison pour lui, désormais. Il va
D'une fenêtre à l'autre. Il presse
Ses doigts contre la vitre. Il voit
Des gouttes se former là où il cesse
D'en pousser la buée vers le ciel qui tombe.

(Début 15)

We notice the emphasis on time in this poem, not only clock- and moon-time, but also in the word "désormais" and

in the image of the plow.⁴ It seems the child has come to a realization of time, but also of eternity ("la grande neige" evoked so often in this collection). Along with this realization, the boy comes into awareness of his subjective limitations.

As he becomes aware of his subjectivity, he also becomes aware of what is other than himself. An agitating realization, for he runs from room to room touching the windows as if to test if there might not be some way out of his new found solitude. The heat of his hand makes the window steam ("la buée") as he seems to try to push that steam towards the sky, back to the clouds. But he is cut off from the outside and from the sky by the window-pane. Suddenly, just when he ceases to try to push the steam to the sky itself, just when he ceases to dream of touching the outside itself, drops form on the window-pane. The boy has ceased to see the window-pane as transparency. He has experienced the limitations of language and self.

The vision of the falling or emptying sky may be apocalyptic (Début 36; "Comme le ciel se vide à la fin du monde"). The sky also falls simply because it is snowing; the flakes are like particles of the sky's light which fall

⁴ Bonnefoy often conceives of time as working or furrowing things ("tant de chose que le temps/ A durement labourées de ses griffes," "Le tout, le rien" Début 42).

to the ground. In this case, the drops are another version of the snow, the outside inside. Perhaps most of all, however, there is the sense of the Fall.

The realization of time and selfhood are also the loss of the Garden. The paradise of the feeling of unity with the world, of unity in undifferentiation is lost.⁵ When we realize that there are others in the world, we also realize that the once-known presence is lost to us and we can now only meet the other through mediation, or the window-pane. The end of paradise comes, the poem implies, when the Other is seen as irreducibly other and no longer simply part of the same (the self, *même*). The boy senses something beyond him and tries to reach it, only to be awakened abruptly, to have the dream of reaching it torn inside himself.⁶

The boy is startled into an awareness of existence, of the necessity of relating through a medium and the limitations of his subjective determinations necessitated by consciousness.

⁵ Bonnefoy has said that presence is a relation of undifferentiation and that it reaches back to the infant's contact with the mother. See the interview with John Naughton (162). If we are able to feel intimacy it is because of this saving gift of the mother. But it also represents a potential danger.

⁶ "et se déchire/ En moi l'étoffe du songe" (Début 19); for a discussion of this see the end of Chapter 3.

The drops are similar to Klee's dots.⁷ They make the medium of the window appear suddenly. They are a fleeting trace of presence. They glisten with light, like the sun imaged in the glass.⁸ They are like the flakes of snow, an embodiment of the light, a trace or "tache" of the unity of opposites.

These two examples provide the associative network of metaphors that will govern my argument. In short, I will try to show that an engaged reading of certain kinds of poems involves coming to terms with one's own subjective determinations, while also becoming open to an indeterminate presence other than them.

The figure of presence is the appearance of the sun in the glass of the window-pane. This appearance occurs only when language and the self are experienced as limited. It brings us to the realization that there is something irreducibly other than ourselves. This can be an uncanny

⁷ It is interesting to compare this poem with Yeats' play "The Words Upon the Window-Pane." Bonnefoy would be quick to point out the drops are not words, language. The difference between the two things upon the window-pane is instructive of the difference between Yeats and Bonnefoy. While Yeats can conceive of presence as a poem or an image, Bonnefoy can not. He thinks of it as something absolutely alien to language and images. He refuses to encapsulate presence in language, to name the Other. Instead he insists upon exposing his own determinations, his own narcissistic projects on to the Other.

⁸ Yeats' poem "Long-legged Fly" is another example of this, for the surface tension of the water is similar to the glass of the window-pane.

experience, as the appearance of the clown-executioner is uncanny. But this uncanny sensation can awaken us or prepare the way for another or other readings, and for other experiences; in short, it creates a sense of plenitude and possibility.

In reading poems it is equally useless to believe that language is transparent as it is to believe that language is an endless regress of referentiality. Klee's painting makes us aware of both, and so distances us from them, opening the possibility that if in a moment we are there, truly present, then suddenly the light flashes in the glass. This, to my mind, is the testament of poetry.

II. Phenomenological and Reader-Response Criticism

In the pages that follow I try to show how the reader takes an active role in response to elements in a text that, as it were, speak to the readers and demand their participation. The approach I am describing has some similarities with the ideas of George Poulet. Poulet asserts that a text has being only when a reader begins to read (Criticism 41). This is an act of awakening the potential consciousness locked in the dormant language of the text. However, I am interested in the potentiality in the act of reading, not the consciousness per se. The work

of Roman Ingarden and Wolfgang Iser is more germane to my approach.

Roman Ingarden describes elements that call upon the reader's participation "indeterminacies." These can result from ambiguities of syntax, diction, or even meter, or from information that is simply left out of the text. We will see a striking example of this last in respect to Bonnefoy's poem "La seule rose." Perhaps these indeterminacies arise most frequently from the reader's experience of the various aspects of temporality of reading.

The activity of trying to determine these textual elements is termed 'concretization' or 'realization' by Ingarden (50-58). Something in the "objective stratum" of the text is incomplete and remains virtual until a reader realizes it. As Wolfgang Iser notes, if this is true, then there is a polarity in the literary work of art, the artistic and the esthetic:

The artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the esthetic to the realization accomplished by the reader. From this polarity it follows that the literary work cannot be completely identical with the text, or with the realization of the text, but in fact must lie halfway between the two. The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader -- though this in turn is acted upon by the different patterns of the text.

The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the

reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader. (Reading Process 50)

Iser argues that the reader "participates" in the literary work when he or she tries to impose a coherence or ordered set of associations on the text (Reading Process 55; Interaction 108-109). The indeterminacies in a poem are potentials waiting to be realized, according to Iser (Reading Process 51). The individual way in which they are realized will say a great deal more about the individual reader than it will reveal the nature of the text. Any interpretation reveals the reader's interests, desires, and prejudices, conscious and unconscious, and no one realization will ever exhaust an indeterminacy. In fact, it will only serve to hide its very indeterminacy.

I have extended the ideas of Ingarden and Iser in several ways. I have imagined that the indeterminate elements in the text address the reader, or actively call upon the reader to participate by either completing or connecting something left incomplete or unconnected, or by holding two or more textual elements together and letting them play off each other. I call this participation the imaginative stretch of the reader, because the mind of the reader is extended between points of indeterminacy in the text in the act of reading. For example, this can happen

when a poet uses the same word two or more times with slight variation in the meaning, as in Yeats' line:

The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs.
(Poems 78)

I argue also that the manipulation of the oral and written modes of language is one of the most fruitful means at the poet's disposal for creating these indeterminate elements in a poem. Lastly, I have cast the whole issue of the reader's participation in terms of presence. I have done this because I feel that the kind of participation demanded by certain poems is radical, even unconditional. I think that certain poems demand the reader's fullest presence to respond to the call to participate. This requires the reader to take a certain risk, to give himself to the poem. This leaves the reader vulnerable, but I consider this vulnerability to be the essence of a response in presence.

In general, I posit two ways in which presence can make itself felt in the act of reading. The first occurs when the reader's determinations are revealed and reflected back to the reader. This often happens when the artifice of a poem is exposed as such. We noted this happening in Klee's painting, Small Room in Venice. Further examples of this will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The second occurs when the reader confronts certain indeterminacies in a poem and suspends, momentarily, the need to determine them; at these moments a sense of plenitude and intensity can arise for the reader.⁹ I will not attempt to define further this intensity and plenitude. This is because my aim is to reflect upon the problem of interpreting the notion of presence in relation to the experience of a work of art, not in philosophical definitions of presence.

I have chosen to make use of the philosophy of Plotinus primarily because he is the great philosopher of the incommensurable, indeterminate, formless but omnipresent One. I find his One to be the archetype of the sort of indeterminacy found in certain poems. As Plotinus says repeatedly, any attempt to express the One in language or any attempt to conceive of it with rational thought will miss the mark, and worse, serve only to hide the One from

⁹ "Le lecteur de la poésie n'analyse pas, il fait le serment à l'auteur, son proche, de demeurer dans l'intense. Et aussi bien, il ferme vite le livre, impatient d'aller vivre cette promesse." (Bonney, Entretiens 188)

us. We can not speak the One, at best we can only speak about it:

How then do we ourselves speak about it? We do indeed say something about it, but we certainly do not speak it, and we have neither knowledge or thought of it. But if we do not have it in knowledge, do we not have it at all? But we have it in such a way that we speak about it, but do not speak it. For we say what it is not, but we do not say what it is: so that we speak about it from what comes after it.

(Enneads 5.3.11.1-8)

The Enneads describe, with a personal candor worthy of a poet, experiences of this plenitude and intensity which I find in certain poems of Yeats and Bonnefoy. In many passages, Plotinus speaks of the need to go beyond personal obsessions and anxieties, and even to go beyond thought and language, to come to rest before the indeterminate One. So I find it is with indeterminacies in a poem; if the reader is willing to sustain a certain risk and suspend the will to determine the indeterminate, that intensity may be felt.

Chapter 1

I. Presence and the Reader

I would like to offer working definitions of presence and absence. The word "presence" has been defined in countless ways. This makes things difficult. To avoid confusion, I must be clear about my particular understanding of presence. I use the word "presence" to designate any indeterminate element in a poem. I limit my definition to texts because I will not be concerned with the nature of presence in itself, but only as it arises in the act of reading.

The relation of presence is the relation that the reader engages when he or she is realizing a poem and trying to resolve these indeterminacies. There are many varieties and degrees of indeterminacy. In the more radical kind, with which I will mostly be concerned, any attempt to resolve these simultaneously hides their true nature as indeterminate and reveals the reader's subjective determinations. There is something radical in such a indeterminacy that always remains beyond the reader's capacities to determine them.

I define absence as that which always remains indeterminate in any given indeterminacy in a poem. As such it remains unavailable to me, perhaps even turning away from me (ab-esse). However, insofar as it is a virtuality

demanding my response, it is present to me, available, and turning toward me (prae-esse). The nature of an indeterminate element, or presence, in a poem is to call upon or demand an attempt to determinate it but to refuse this ultimately.

A tension exists between these contrary notions, as Iser notes, rendering the work of art dynamic (Reading Process 50-51). The reader who experiences this tension is not so much a stabilizing third term as that element in the equation that activates and experiences this tension. A text is only perfectly realized when a reader sets eyes upon it and turns its sight into sound, whether vocally or subvocally. Writing and speech, as two complementary modes of language, are set in a dynamic tension in the reader who is necessarily present and involved in this tension (Krieger 149).

I would say that when reading poems, a presence can be felt in my relation to something in the poem that as it were demands my creative involvement and my participation. It is no longer simply a relation of subject and object but one between subjects, as Poulet argues (Poulet, Phenomenology 54).¹⁰ It is a relation that involves a dialectical

¹⁰ Maritain would say it is an experience of the subject and the world simultaneously (Maritain, Situation 85; cf. Existence 67).

approach and withdrawal. It is like Martin Buber's relation of "I" and "Thou"; saying "Thou" to another person is recognizing her or his Otherness from myself (Buber, I and Thou 84; Between 23). Buber himself makes an interesting remark concerning poems. He says that poems seem, but never really are, about phenomenological solipsism (Buber, Between 180):

But it [poetry] is rather the tremendous refusal of the soul to be satisfied with self-commerce. Poetry is the soul's announcement that even when it is alone with itself on the narrowest ridge it is thinking not of itself but of the Being which is not itself, and that this Being which is not itself is visiting it there, perplexing and blessing it.

Whatever Buber may mean by "the Being which is not itself," I take it simply to be that aspect of a textual element the remains indeterminate (or other than the reader's determinations). An example of such a dynamic indeterminacy can be found in Wallace Stevens' poem "The Snowman."

In this poem, the poet speaks of a listener who "beholds/ Nothing that is not there/ And the nothing that is." This is not only a description but also an enactment. The grammatical ellipsis in the second clause of this line keeps urging me to supply a second 'there': 'nothing that is not there and the nothing that is [there].' But I must withdraw it too, because I do not want to restrict the

meaning of the sentence. To do this would be to hide the poem in a covering of my own projections.

I am on the verge of supplying the extra "there," only to withdraw it. The second 'there' is not really there, and yet it is there too, virtually. Furthermore, wanting both to supply and to withdraw this extra 'there,' I keep the verb 'to be' floating between a purely existential usage and a simple copulative usage, just as I keep the unplaced or absent 'there' floating between being there and not there. The unplaced 'there' has reality, but a reality that is precisely not located, not objective (object-like). Because it is unplaced and yet implied as placed, it is appearing as well disappearing. Both the 'there' and the "nothing" are at hand (prae-esse) and yet not at hand (ab-esse). In reading the poem, this indeterminacy addresses me, calls upon me to relate to something I must try to determine but which I can never fully determine; I relate to a presence in the poem.

Furthermore, my reading of the poem unfolds always in the present moment; I must be there, present with the written text, to supply and withdraw the 'there.' This activity of reading, which in this case is keeping myself suspended between two temporal points (supplying and withdrawing the 'there'), constitutes the present moment. In negotiating these two readings, I am present with the

text. I believe that this is what Ingarden and Iser mean by the 'gaps' and 'indeterminacies' that the reader tries to resolve in the act of reading. This is also a way of feeling presence in the act of reading. It creates a moment when the preservation inherent in écriture is broken or torn.

II. The Address of the Poem

In the reading of Stevens' poem a presence makes itself felt. What can it mean to say that a 'presence makes itself felt'? It is an awkward phrase in English, this middle or reflexive voice that is an experiencing of one's own subjectivity and the world at the same time.¹¹ The impression of this experience arises because the text has an active role in relation to the reader. This is paradoxical because the activity of a poem depends wholly upon the

¹¹ As Maritain puts it:

That is the poetic experience or poetic knowledge, in which the subjectivity is not grasped as object by an explicit reflection, but as source and in actu exercito, in the very process of grasping things by virtue of their resonance in the subject. It is a knowledge which is in its principle unconscious, a knowledge which is at minimum of knowledge but at the maximum of germinal virtuality, a knowledge which is objectified completely in the work, in an object made. It is an experience at the same time of the world and of the subjectivity, in which, to speak the scholastic jargon, the content most immediately grasped is the world, the content most principally (and most secretly) grasped is the subjectivity. (Situation 85)

reader. And yet I cannot help feeling that in the act of reading something comes to me in the form of a demand to participate in the poem. It is this demand or 'address' that I would like to discuss now.

Ingarden and Iser conceive of reading as a mutual activity, even if, paradoxically, it is initiated and sustained by only one consciousness. The figure of the window-pane is helpful to understand this paradox. It describes a medium that is by turns self-reflexive and transparent (other-directed). The glass of the window mediates what is here within and what is there without, dialectically. This fact is parallel to the fact that certain textual indeterminacies demand to be resolved but refuse an ultimate determination. I call this demand the address of the poem. It ought to be noted that only certain kinds of indeterminacies are truly irresolvable. These will be the subject of my arguments.

The act of reading is a dialectic of approach and withdrawal. I approach the text with the aim of determining some element, but I withdraw my determinations when they seem inappropriate to the meaning of the words on the page. In this process, I become aware of the limitations of my subjective determinations. I can become aware of what refuses an ultimate determination, that is to say, I can become aware of presence in the act of reading.

The oral and written modes of language can be exploited in this regard. The written mode of language can be made to seem a form of withdrawal into an infinite regress of signification, the clown-executioner, the voiceless surd. The oral mode of language can be made to seem a form of approach to a seemingly living voice. Writing, however, is the precondition of this dialectical process.¹² Just when language and consciousness seem consumed by an infinite regress of absence and alterity, a presence seems to speak, announcing its proximity.

Neither of these modes is absolute, but they mark a tendency in language. I argue that these two modes, when poetically played off one another, can create indeterminacies that resist ultimate determination, or that resist an absolute enclosure.

In reading I am actively negotiating the poem's aural-oral and written modes, in a state of creative readiness, until something suddenly emerges for me. What this is is difficult to say -- it may even be ineffable, but it is so strongly felt, so disarmingly present, that my immediate

¹² See Bonnefoy, Shadows 162-163; Derrida of course questions all this (see for example "Signature event in context" 185-186; 192). I agree with Derrida's arguments concerning the textual nature of spoken language. There is a difference in quality, not of kind, between orality and writing. But such points do not really affect my arguments here.

response is to respond to it with all my being. It is as if it had addressed me, saying, silently, with a glance so to speak, "Where are you?" My response is, when this presence is truly felt, "Here I am."

I have borrowed this bit of dialogue from Martin Buber (who borrows it from the Hebrew hinei; Buber, Between 166). I choose it because it seems to me to express the relation one can have to certain kinds of poetic indeterminacies. Active engagement with the poem happens only when I position myself in relation to the poem, and this positioning is in response to what I call the demand of the poem to be present.

I find that each poem is a challenge to become open to something irreducibly other than myself and open to becoming different from what I was just a moment ago. The act of reading is not simply sounding the words on the page, it is letting the words sound me as I read. Through this process I am prepared to meet what refuses ultimate determination, to meet the Other as truly other and no longer an image of myself. This, it seems to me, is the creative aspect of reading, because this experience imparts a sense of possibility.

The address of the poem is really a call as it were to face such a presence. As I have indicated, this involves two steps; becoming aware of one's subjective

determinations; and opening oneself to feel the presence of what refuses ultimate determination. This presence is also absent, because it retains its difference from me. It can be a threatening absence or an enabling one, depending on whether or not I am prepared to change my relation to it by suspending my determinations.

Chapter 2

I. Plotinus, Yeats, and Bonnefoy

As I remarked at the beginning of the introduction, there are several connections between Plotinus, Yeats, and Bonnefoy. For example, both Yeats and Bonnefoy read Plotinus at crucial stages of their careers. I will discuss these historical connections briefly in this and the following chapter.

There are also several affinities of thought between these three writers. One of these is their use of opposition. In Yeats' case there is the dialogue of self and soul, and in Bonnefoy many poems enact a complex interplay between such ideas as exile and return, scattering and collecting, birth and death, and so on. In his essay "L'acte et le lieu de la poésie," Bonnefoy says: "Je voudrais que la poésie soit d'abord une incessante bataille, un théâtre où l'être et l'essence, la forme et le non-formel se combattent durement." (L'Improbable, 127)

A similar interplay of opposites can be found in Plotinus. At Enneads 4.4.3.11-12, he says that the soul "is a thing belonging to the frontier between the worlds, and occupies a corresponding position, it moves in both directions." The individual soul has a life in the phenomenal world and a life 'on high' in the Realm of

Intellect (Nous). The self is constituted as the tension of these part of the individual. (O'Daly 22)

This point of contact is nowhere more apparent than in the interplay between art and life. For Plotinus consciousness is where the Realm of Intellect (Nous) is mirrored by the embodied soul. The artist is one who has a special ability to perceive the Forms and to create in matter another image of this image of Nous. The work of art has greater reality than other objects because is has greater form, unity, and beauty. In direct contrast to Plato, Plotinus states that the work of art is not a copy of a copy but a version of the original ontologically more real than the phenomena (Enneads 5.8.1.33-41).¹³ The soul recognizes in the work of art something akin to its higher self and so begins to ascend to the One (Enneads 1.6.2.8-11).¹⁴

¹³ This scheme is more or less maintained in A Vision and is consistent with Plotinus' view of art and creation. In Enneads 5.8 and 1.6, Plotinus states that the artist looks up to the world of the Forms and Ideal Beauty in Nous and conveys form into matter to create the work of art. The artist "mirrors forth" the Forms into a more divided, more multiple existence (Enneads 5.8.1.30-40). This human creative act is an exact parallel to the creation of the phenomena by the Hypostasis Soul. In fact, the work of art has the same ontological status as the rest of the physical world. Art may even be more real, since it has more form, is less divided, than the rest of the phenomena. This is an idea common to both Yeats and Bonnefoy.

¹⁴ When the viewer or hearer apprehends the images in the work of art, she or he will re-experience the artist's contact with a higher realm. The audience receives a shock,

Both poets believe that the work of art can startle us into a higher spiritual awareness. They also assert that the image or work of art can spur on human passion.

Despite all that Bonnefoy has written against the image, his poem "Sur une pietà de Tintoret" (Poèmes 247) speaks positively of the image. Its subject is the relation between life and art, passion and image. The second stanza asks a question that recalls the question posed in "Among School Children"; "Ô qui est plus réel/ Du chagrin désirant ou de l'image peinte?" The poem only appears to answer the question: neither is more real, but both are real. The poem implies that life's urgency tears art, but art gives life its urgency.

This is exactly what Yeats implies in "Among School Children" when he says of images or artifacts that "they too break hearts," or in such poems as "Under Ben Bulbin," "Long-legged Fly," or "The Statues" where images fuel passion which in turns creates images. In Yeats' poetry, art stirs people to extreme states of mind and emotion, and in turn these living states create an art that seems remote and cold, as if from beyond the grave.

the shock of seeing something kindred (Enneads 5.8.3.20; 1.6.7.17; cf. Symposium 218e5; the language of shock must have pleased Yeats' sensibility). The shock stimulates the viewer to turn to introspection and contemplation (Enneads 1.6.2.8-11). This is the beginning of the ascent to the One (See Koutras 152).

Both poets are interested in how these two opposed forces "turn upon the instant" and cut across each other. However, the end result for the two poets is different, as we might imagine. Yeats creates that sudden flick of the light switch ('sudden' being one of his favorite words), a clash of opposed forces (Autobiographies 218). In the case of Bonnefoy, we often get a blending of light and shadow instead of vacillation. If it is true that for Bonnefoy presence emerges in that moment of tearing ('déchirer'), it is never dramatic (Gasarian 25). 'Presque' could be said to be his favorite word, just as 'suddenly' and 'brimming' could be said to be Yeats' favorites words.

As Patrick Keane (116-117) and Denis Donoghue (52) have shown, Yeats received the idea of the self as conflict from Nietzsche and not from Plotinus. The same is probably true for Bonnefoy, though instead of Nietzsche he may have been influenced by a dialectical thinker like Kierkegaard. There is a further problem. The points of contact that I have enumerated so far do not relate to or engage the notion of presence.

Is there a point of comparison between the three which has bearing on presence? It seems to me that there is, and that it relates to their poetic techniques rather than the ideas that inform their poetics. In this and the following chapter, I will argue that the answer is in Yeats' "fifth

element" and Bonnefoy's vocal "tache." Both are artistic techniques used to rupture language and make presence felt in the act of reading. They are irreducible indeterminacies which speak to the reader of plenitude and intensity. In this chapter, I will briefly outline Yeats' historical connection with Plotinus, Yeats' notion of presence, and how this notion relates to the act of reading. In the next chapter, I will do the same with Bonnefoy.

My governing hypothesis, again, is that Yeats and Bonnefoy are poets concerned with presence and that the Plotinian notion of immanent One as presence can be expressed through poems as a vocal element, which is sometimes seeing the uncanny the clown-executioner reflecting back to us our own determinations, and sometimes we see the sun imaged in the window-pane.

I. Historical Connections between Yeats and Plotinus¹⁵

Yeats encountered Plotinus at two important stages of his career. This happened either through a direct reading of Taylor's or MacKenna's translations of Plotinus, or indirectly through writers like Blake, Berkeley, Shelley,

¹⁵ For a bibliography on Plotinus and Yeats relating to specific poems, see Notes (16-17, note 21), in addition to the titles cited below.

and Coleridge who read Plotinus either in one form or another.¹⁶

Yeats' activities in the Theosophical movement and his participation in the Golden Dawn brought him his first contact with Plotinus. This was in the late 1880's to mid-1890's (Harper 81, 84; Flannery 25; Jeffares 124; Liebrechts 30ff; Easterly 50).¹⁷ In 1895 G. R. S. Mead and the Theosophical Society reissued Taylor's selection of Plotinus (Raine, Taylor 9; Liebrechts 30). At this time Yeats also encountered Plotinus indirectly, through his work on Blake with Edwin Ellis. It is typical of Yeats that his interest in Blake at this time was to find out his symbolic lexicon and discover what he considered to be Blake's interest in magic (Autobiographies 108-109; Rudd 134-36).

The second encounter with Plotinus began at the time of his marriage (1917) and lasted through the completion of the second edition of A Vision (1937) and the last years of his life (see "Introduction to 'The Words Upon the Window'Pane'")

¹⁶ Coleridge, Goethe, and Shelley all read Plotinus in the original Greek. For Taylor and the English Romantics, particularly Blake, see Raine, "Thomas Taylor and the English Romantic Movement"; for Coleridge and Plotinus, see Easterly; for Berkeley and Plotinus, see Baladi.

¹⁷ MacGregor Mathers married Bergson's sister. Bergson himself was at the time professor of ancient philosophy at the Collège de France and teaching Plotinus. For Bergson and Plotinus, see Mossé-Bastide and Raissa Maritain Les grandes amitiés (91).

1934, Explorations 368-369). After the automatic writing sessions had stopped, Yeats says he began to read philosophy, starting with all the books his wife had read (including Taylor's Plotinus) and then moving on to MacKenna's Plotinus and other writers (A Vision 18-20). In his tower in 1926, Yeats was reading Plotinus and Baudelaire (Jeffares 283).¹⁶

Although it is tempting to conclude that Plotinus himself was the impetus behind A Vision, it is closer to the truth to say that once a version of the book was complete and Yeats began to read philosophy, he discovered that he could arm his ideas with the philosophy of Plotinus, hence the second edition with its significant revisions.

In the second edition of A Vision, Yeats notes similarities between his scheme and the hypostases of Plotinus:

When I try to imagine the Four Principles in the sphere, with some hesitation I identify the Celestial Body with the First Authentic Existant [hypostasis] of Plotinus, Spirit with his Second Authentic Existant, which holds the First in its moveless circle; the disincarnate Daimons, or Ghostly Selves, with his Third Authentic Existant or soul of the world (the Holy Ghost of Christianity), which holds the Second in its moving circle. Plotinus has a fourth condition which is the Third Authentic Existant reflected first as sensation

¹⁶ This was the year that MacKenna's fourth volume appeared (MacKenna xxii). It has been argued that Yeats in fact read the first volume of MacKenna's translation in 1917. Yeats seems to contradict himself in this (Motes 6-7; Raine, Yeats 50).

and its object (our Husk and Passionate Body), then as discursive reason (almost our Faculties) (194).

Many scholars have tried to trace the technical similarities between Yeats and Plotinus in the esoteric pages of A Vision.¹⁹ Their conclusions can be summarized by the words of Rosemary Puglia Ritvo:

How are we to understand the relationship between Yeats' First and Second Authentic Existents and Plotinus' metaphysics? Since Plotinus' First Hypostasis is excluded from Yeats' discussion, Yeats' First and Second Authentic Existents clearly are not to be identified with Plotinus' First and second Hypostases. I propose that Yeats' first two Authentic Existents correlate to the two aspects of Plotinus' Second Hypostasis: the First Authentic Existent, Celestial Body, is Plotinus' Second Hypostasis considered as Being; the Second Authentic Existent, Spirit is the Second Hypostasis considered as act, or using MacKenna's term, the Intellectual-Principle (Ritvo 38; cf. Motes 15).²⁰

Yeats excludes the One from his scheme. He does not go beyond hypostasis Nous. Yeats considers that the One is beyond knowledge, form, Being, and language, and so he does not even attempt to describe it. He says his instructors kept as close as possible to the phenomenal world and so spent little time on the "phaseless sphere" which is the ultimate reality.

¹⁹ See especially Motes, Ritvo, Liebrechts, and Arkins.

²⁰ Ritvo makes a fine point, because Plotinus himself often speaks of Nous as twofold, that which is in contact with the One and that which is in contact with the Soul (Blumenthal 102-108).

Yeats' interests remained predominantly theurgical or gnostic (Arkins 27-28). That is to say Yeats remained primarily a dualistic thinker and remained attached to the spiritualistic tradition of Neoplatonism because he sought symbols as vehicles for spiritual enlightenment. He was more interested in theurgy than putative perception, felt the spirit world to be cut off from human life rather than feeling it as an ever-present, immanent reality here and now (Liebregts 97, 102). As Paul de Man notes, there is no analogy between the divine and the human in Yeats (Romanticism 227).

For Yeats to have held too strictly to a monistic view would have compromised the primacy of conflict, which Donoghue so rightly insists is at the heart of Yeats' poetry (44). This is important for an understanding of Yeats' relation to Plotinus, for it seems to me that given Yeats' own interest in spiritualism and theurgy he would be more sympathetic to the later Platonists than to Plotinus himself. Despite the much improved translation of MacKenna, despite a few monistic insights (see below), and despite the significant revisions of A Vision, Yeats still tended to see Plotinus through a Platonic lens, as Taylor did (Raine, Yeats 49). Or to express it more accurately, Yeats took the ambivalences in the Enneads and exploited them for his own artistic purposes to express passion, conflict, and drama.

In reading MacKenna's Plotinus, however, Yeats did discover the mistake in his own (or the tradition's) tendency to see Plotinus as "all transcendence." Through MacKenna he discovered that in fact Plotinus was most of all a monist and not a dualist as is commonly thought, and as the later tradition tended to see him, though he himself could never sustain this monistic view in his writings on philosophy and art.

Evidence of this is given in the note to his poem "The Tower." In that poem the poet 'mocks Plotinus' for being solely concerned with transcendence. In the note Yeats retracts his view:

When I wrote the lines about Plato and Plotinus I forgot that it is something in our own eyes that makes us see them as all transcendence. [my emphasis] Has not Plotinus written: 'Let every soul recall, then, at the outset the truth that soul is the author of all living things, that it has breathed the life into them all, whatever is nourished by earth and sea, all the creatures of the air, the divine stars in the sky; it is the maker of the sun; itself formed and ordered this vast heaven and conducts all that rhythmic motion -- and it is a principle distinct from all these to which it gives law and movement and life, and it must of necessity be more honourable than they, for they gather or dissolve as soul brings them life or abandons them, but soul, since it never can abandon itself, is of eternal being'? -- 1928 (Poems 598; cf.; MacKenna 370; Enneads 5.1.2.1-10).²¹

²¹ Yeats is notoriously devious in his notes, and in this particular one he effectively plays with his and the tradition's ambivalence toward Plotinus.

Despite such a discovery, Yeats still never concerned himself with Plotinus' monism, with his principle of the One.²² Even in this passage it is only the soul and the material world that is spoken of, not the omnipresent One. Moreover, we notice how Yeats still couples Plato and Plotinus.

Yeats' interest in Plotinus remained at the lower levels of the soul and the material world. This is because he saw the One as wholly transcendent and not immanent. Despite the intuition expressed in his note to "The Tower" Yeats never shed the traditional view of Plotinus. The evidence of the One as immanent was only dimly glimpsed by Yeats, even in his late poetry. When it is glimpsed, it brings up only rage for Yeats, as Bonnefoy has said

(L'Improbable 258):

Que la conscience de l'Un y soit vivante, d'abord, c'est ce que l'oeuvre de Blake prouve, avec une violence et une clarté d'intention qui n'ont pas d'égaux dans notre langue. Et c'est tout aussi bien Coleridge qui a donné du Beau la définition la plus poétique, disant que la Beauté est ce par quoi le multiple devient l'Un, bien que toujours saisi en tant que multiple. De Marvell à Wordsworth, à Hopkins, cette prescience est constante. Yeats ne s'y oppose qu'avec fureur, accablé en fait de son évidence.

²² The symbol of the One, the shere, does appear in some poems, such as "Chosen" and "There," but these are exceptions. As Motes rightly observes, "Yeats makes sparing use of the shere as a symbol in his poetry, because as he makes clear in A Vision, he is not overtly concerned with the transcendent" (A Vision 193; Motes 150; Ritvo 43; de Man, Romanticism 226-227).

According to Yeats, the ultimate reality is unintelligible to human experience because we are "bound to antinomies" in this life. This is basically the state of language. In the state in which some awareness of this ultimate principle is attained (which Yeats calls the thirteenth cone), "all things are present to our Daimon" as "images of all past events," eternally. These images are the 'pictures in the astral light' of mystic traditions and Blake's "bright sculptures of Los's Halls" (A Vision 193; cf. Explorations 331) This reality can not be known, only symbolized, and the instructors have given indication to the poet that they have these symbols and could in turn give them to the poet.

Might not these symbols, these "bright sculptures" in the "astral light," be the images in the window-pane, the sun flashing in the glass, which mark the advent of something Other than the absolute self in Nous, bending or disruption of the image of our individuality?

II. Presence in the Work of W. B. Yeats

The task of discovering what is involved in Yeats' notion of presence is difficult, for unlike Bonnefoy, Yeats never directly addressed it in his essays. However, it turns out that he has a definite notion of presence that is crucial to his poems and poetics.

In his earlier work, Yeats seems to have thought of presence in Wordsworthian terms.²³ For example, the poem "A Summer Evening" speaks of a moment in time when time does not apply. Autumn, death, and apocalypse are momentarily suspended. Suddenly a presence is felt; "For God is walking in the dew,/ An evening presence fills the place." The poem echoes Blake's "Ah Sunflower" and evokes that Blakean moment when "he who kisses the joy as it flies/ Lives in eternity's sunrise." This usage of the word 'presence' is by far the most abstract in all of Yeats. The presence it denotes is not embodied in a person but is diffused in nature.

In his later work, Yeats strove to eliminate this Wordsworthian and Keatsian tendency in his poetry. He came to conceive of presence as embodied in a particular, historical person who is also in touch with the timeless, impersonal, supernatural aspects of his or her personality. Despite his interest in spiritualism, Yeats' real concern is the earthly world where spirits and people meet, in a battle, living each other's death and dying each others' life. Yeats came to conceive of presence as an image, a balance of spirit and matter. The statue or phantom with a beating heart, the singing and dancing woman, the golden bird, are all examples of presences, according to Yeats.

²³ See Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey": "And I have felt/ A presence that disturbs me with joy/ Of elevated thoughts."

An achieved balance of these opposites is also the Unity of Being, which is easier to achieve at certain moments in history. Yeats defines Unity of Being, quoting Dante, as a "perfectly proportioned human body" (A Vision 291). This is presence for Yeats, as is clear in the following famous passage from A Vision:

I think I could find in some little wine-shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions, the spiritual descending nearer to him than to Plotinus even, for the pride of his delicate skill would make what was an instrument of power to princes and clerics, a murderous madness in the mob, show as a lovely flexible presence like that of a perfect human body (279).

The emphasis on the physical body in this passage is notable. The presence is "flexible." It suggests dancing. In fact, often Yeats' presences are singing and or dancing, as for example in "Among School Children," the madgirl singing "O sea-starved hungry sea," or the girl singing by the sea in A Vision (220). A presence introduces a heightened power into an individual human life, usually expressed as passion, or impersonal emotion, which fills, or rather nearly bursts, the individual with its intensity. For Yeats images, which are composed of spirit and matter, are presences; a statue with a beating heart, a living person from among the dead ("Death-in-life and life-in-death"). This is precisely why the poet in "Among School

Children" cries out "O Presences" just at the moment when life and art are seen to be one.

As with presence, Yeats' understanding of absence is grounded in human life. Absence for Yeats is the disappearance of such presences from our lives (cf. "The Tower" Poems 199). It involves emotional states of remorse or regret. Absence is also often associated with aging and memory, and as such is often a poetic device (Engleberg 51). It does not have the same metaphysical quality that it does for Plotinus and Bonnefoy.

Yeats' notions of presence and absence depend upon a radical separation of spirit and matter. As he put it explicitly in the following poem, spirits themselves are never present to "bodily eyes" or "bodily ears." Rather, some intermediary entity is present:

Let images of basalt, black, immovable,
Chiseled in Egypt, or ovoids of bright steel
Hammered and polished by Brancusi's hand,
Represent spirits. If spirits seem to stand
Before the bodily eyes, speak into the bodily ears
They are not present but their messengers.
Of double nature these, one nature is
Compounded of accidental phantasies.

We question; it but answers what we would
Or as phantasy directs -- because they have drunk the
blood.²⁴ (Explorations 367)

²⁴ Yeats is no doubt thinking of phantasy in Coleridge's sense, which is, via Schelling, a translation of the Greek phantasia which Aristotle and Plotinus conceive of as the image-making faculty of the mind, but we can also see that the more modern, Freudian, 'fantasy' is applicable too. See Blumenthal (92-93) and John Dillon, "Plotinus and the Transcendental Imagination" (55, 56).

This multiplication of entities mediating between the transcendent One and the earthly is typical of Proclus' philosophy, not Plotinus' (Dodds, Irrational 283; Rosàn 214). Since the One is utterly cut off from the embodied soul, the philosopher/magician can only influence these intermediary entities, or Henads as Proclus calls them, through theurgy. Contact with the One is left as a matter of blind faith (Rist, Road 192).

Abstract, or non-representational art does not enact a mimesis of a spirit, but gestures to spirits through the absence of any mimetic referentiality. If something appears to our eyes, or sounds in our ears, it can not be pure spirit, which is essentially other than what is earthly or "bodily." Nevertheless, something is present. According to Yeats, it can only be something "compounded" of two elements, spirit and matter ("blood"), self and anti-self, individual and Daimon.

Yeats remarks with approval that Plotinus was the first philosopher to meet his Daimon face to face, and the first "to establish as sole source the timeless individuality or Daimon instead of the Platonic Idea, to prefer Socrates to his thought." (Explorations 368) It is the person and the person's inner struggles with his or her Daimon that interest Yeats.

As I mentioned earlier, Plotinus considers the soul to be two-fold; that which deals with sense-data and that which is in constant contact with the spiritual world (Blumenthal 109-111; O'Daly, Self 22-23). Consciousness is the tension of these two parts of the soul. The soul is like the two Heracles, one in Hades, the other on Olympus. Plotinus bids us to pursue the life of Heracles on high to meet our 'higher' or true self. (Enneads 4.3.27.9ff)

Yeats directly echoes this allusion to Heracles (Explorations 330; Raine, Yeats 54). He too evokes Heracles in his call to attain the highest achievement, the union with one's other self, one's "timeless individuality." For Yeats, life consists in the battle between the self and anti-self or Daimon. Poetry is the most dramatic expression of this conflict. It is the struggle to attain a higher existence, to overcome oneself.²⁵ Again, perhaps Nietzsche is a greater influence on these particular ideas, but Plotinus is present as well, as the allusion to Heracles attests.

The highest earthly achievement according to Yeats is this self-filled, self-involved state, like the dancing and singing girl of A Vision or the mad girl singing "o sea-

²⁵ Similarly Bonnefoy sees life and especially poetry as a battle, a struggle to free oneself from what fragments our sense of being.

starved hungry sea" (Poems 303). One might argue that for Yeats this radically solipsistic state is the union with the One (Easterly 88). There is evidence in the Enneads that Plotinus conceives of the union with the One as the self becoming the All (O'Daly, Presence 159-160; cf. Armstrong 31-40).

The ecstatic singer experiences a unified self, it is true, but experiences it only as solipsism. What if this unified self were to "enter the labyrinth of another's being" (Poems 197)? It seems to me that Yeats' ecstatic songs are but an arrival to where a meeting with an true Other might begin. In his journal Yeats remarks:

The feeling is always the same: a consciousness of energy, of certainty, and of transforming power stopped by a wall, by something one must either submit to or rage against helplessly.... Is not one's art made out of the struggle in one's soul? Is not beauty a victory over oneself? (Memoirs 157)

What is this wall but self-imposed obstacles? Yeats is constantly creating images and illusions, only to reject them in the end. "Circus Animals Desertion" is the classic example of this. The ideal of solipsism, the self-filled, self-enwrapped self, is a case in point. Yeats sets it up as an intellectual ideal, but his poems continually cry out against such ideals, cry out for contact with others and an end to that solipsism. In a sense, Yeats arrives where

Bonnefoy arrives -- at the tearing of the dream, the anticipated emergence of presence 'over there.'

III. Plotinian Presence and the Work of Yeats

From the above outline, it is clear that Yeats conceives of presence as an image compounded of spirit and matter. We saw how this understanding of presence leads to or depends upon a radical dualism, which is contrary to Plotinus' basic tenet regarding the One. If the One is radically cut off from us, then it seems there is nothing more than the self-involved state of tragic ecstasy -- but I would like to ask whether Yeats' poems live for the reader simply in this idea? Given that Yeats certainly believed that presence is an image and the highest achievement for the self is radical solipsism, do we enjoy and admire his poems because we feel these ideas to be true, or because we are stricken by the passionate utterance of the poems?

I would like to suggest that it is the passion of these poems, not their ideas merely which attract readers. In this last section I would like to argue for an experience of presence in Yeats' poetry that is different from his doctrine of presence, but related to it. I will try to show that while the poems present a tragic cry -- tragic because there seems to be no way out -- they also present to the reader alternative possibilities; this is the Plotinian

presence in these poems, the experience of the One as all possibilities simultaneously present, uncontainable intensity. To do this I would like to do a reading of Yeats' poem "Presences" (Poems 154-155) and relate it to a passage from Per Amica Silentia Lunae.

Presences

This night has been so strange that it seemed
 As if the hair stood up on my head.
 From going-down of the sun I have dreamed
 That women laughing, or timid or wild,
 In rustle of lace or silken stuff,
 Climbed up my creaking stair. They had read
 All I had rhymed of that monstrous thing
 Returned and yet unrequited love.
 They stood in the door and stood between
 My great wood lectern and the fire
 Till I could hear their hearts beating:
 One is a harlot, and one a child
 That never looked upon man with desire,
 And one, it may be, a queen.

The poet recounts his dream-visions. He himself is the medium, whom the three "presences," harlot, child, and queen, haunt. They appear to him because they have drunk his blood. His phantasy/fantasy, his individual life-blood, determines or conditions their appearance. The images reflect back to the poet his un- or subconscious desires (they answer "what we would [what we want or desire]/ Or as phantasy directs"). These images look back at the poet in just the same way as the clown-executioner looks back at the viewer in Klee's painting. In fact, they show the poet more

about himself than about the spirit world or some external reality.

The three presences have read all that Yeats has written about love, a true nightmare. Although they say and do nothing, they nonetheless seem a challenge to all that writing -- as if asking whether it was Maud Gonne herself, or an image made up of the poet's projections, that inspired all those love poems ("Players and painted stage took all my love/ And not those things that they were emblems of," Poems 347).

These presences are a combination, a new reality compounded of the Spiritus Mundi (the Condition of Fire) and the historical Yeats' subconscious which informs the images. Their status as creatures 'between' two realities is reflected in the poem. The presences stand "in the door" (the threshold) and "between/ My great wood lectern and the fire." Presumably the lectern is in the bedroom and the fire in another room. Although they are spirits from the realm of Fire, they stand "between" and have beating hearts because Yeats' animal spirits (his very blood which they have drunk) lend them this physical reality (Mythologies 349-50; cf. Explorations 366); they appear, they become phenomena like the ghosts in the Odyssey, only after drinking the blood.

Like all Daimons, these images come to challenge the poet. The challenge is about love. The harlot can offer satisfying physical love, the child satisfying emotional love, but the queen offers the possibility of a synthesis of both, returned and requited love.

It is interesting to see how the poem makes presence come to life. First of all, the last three lines shift to the present tense. Second, the syntax of the last sentence (the last three lines) slowly drops into ellipsis, so that the nouns stand in apposition, without the copula, like a catalogue common in oral poetry. The second-to-last line creates a delay, as does the phrase "it may be" -- this is a favorite technique of Yeats' -- until the final and most important word of the poem, "queen," is given. This word shines like an encased gem, with its deepening facets of the diphthong between consonants. The resonance of these vowels seems to gather the whole poem into that "fifth element," which Yeats mentions as the highest poetic achievement (Mythologies 346).

In "Per Amica Silentia Lunae" Yeats sets up a fourfold Blakean scheme which accounts for the interaction between spirit and matter; the earthly and heterogeneous, which is one's life; the image mirrored in water; the image itself as air; and finally beyond all, fire (that Condition of Fire which the Daimons inhabit). Yeats then imagines a fifth "element":

From tradition and perception, one thought of one's own life as symbolized by earth, the place of heterogeneous things, the images as mirrored in water, and the images themselves one could divine but as air; and beyond it all there were, I felt confident, certain aims and governing loves, the fire that makes all simple. Yet images themselves were fourfold, and one judged their meaning in part from the predominance of one out of the four elements, or that of the fifth element, the veil hiding another four, a bird born out of the fire
(Mythologies 346).

A spirit is not itself present to an embodied person, but a compounded image or a presence. The first level or "element" that Yeats mentions is the poet's historical self ("one's own life as symbolized by earth"). In exceptional states of mind, such as dreams or trance, the poet contacts his Daimon -- or approaches his Daimon, for the Daimon is never known directly in this life. What is contacted, however, is a 'presence,' an image, an intermediary. These are "the image as mirrored in water."

Insofar as this is an act of mirroring, one sees oneself not another. It is slightly uncanny, like the image

of the clown-executioner in Klee's painting. Something about ourselves which was formerly hidden is now revealed.

In dream or trance the poet is a medium, like a spiritual medium who summons the spirits of the dead. An image in turn results from this contact; we become creative through our contact with the Spirit World (cf. Enneads 5.3.15 and 17).

The Daimon remains impassive, but its image is projected forth on to the medium's reflective faculty. In the approach of medium and source of image, an image is produced, a work of art, like a spark from clashing bodies. The image is a composite entity, "compounded of accidental phantasies" of the poet's historical self and spiritual reality; this image is a presence.

If we return to the poem "Presences," we see the fourfold scheme reproduced in the images of the poem. There are the living poet and his image-shaping "blood and mire" (the first element, earth), the images in the poem (the second, images on water), the presences themselves (third), and the source of these presences beyond in the Condition of Fire (fourth). The word "queen" is all four at once, the phoenix rising from the flames. The poem effects a presence in that word "queen" which disturbs the reader, as it disturbs the poet, as Wordsworth says, "into joy."

It seems to me that the final word of the poem, "queen," is this "fifth element." In Yeats' terms the one can not be a presence, for the three women are presences, strictly speaking. And yet that final vocal element does subsume the four elements into one, and as such constitutes Yeats' "fifth element." It erupts in the reader as pure sound, not concept. As we shall see, it is similar to Bonnefoy's "tache" which "n'a pas de forme, pas de sens." As the reader sounds this vocal element, it creates a sensation of pure intensity. It may be an anticipation of the "bright sculptures of Los's halls," the light flashing in the glass.

The word "queen," like the words "o sea-starved hungry sea" which the crazed girl sings, becomes pure vocable. Yeats' "fifth element" is vocal element that resists being reduced to conventional signification, as such it creates an indeterminacy that refuses ultimate determination.

Chapter 3

I. Historical Connections Between Bonnefoy and Plotinus

There is a concrete and historically important contact between Bonnefoy and Plotinus. In the years following the Second World War, when he was in his mid twenties, Bonnefoy was reading deeply in Chestov, Kierkegaard, Hegel, and Baudelaire (Entretiens 82).²⁶ It was at this time that he first read Plotinus in the bilingual Budé translation by Émile Bréhier.²⁷ In addition he read several scholarly works on Plotinus.²⁸ In a recent interview, Bonnefoy remarks that a "very cultivated man who had a marvelous library -- philosophy, ethnology, the Sophists, the great Indian and Chinese thinkers" gave him access to these books (Paris Review 110). There he "discovered the Greeks" and

²⁶ Bonnefoy would also have met with Plotinus indirectly through Chestov's "In Job's Balances."

²⁷ This was communicated to the author in a conversation in March 1995. Bréhier's translation was completed in 1938. It was a landmark in modern Plotinus scholarship, but it is now being replaced by the translations of Pierre Hadot and others which are based on a much more sound Greek text. Bréhier was a student in Bergson's courses on Plotinus in 1898-1901 at the Collège de France. For Bergson and Plotinus, see Mossé-Bastide and Raissa Maritain Les grandes amitiés (91).

²⁸ Of the French titles available to Bonnefoy in 1945-48 there are the notable works by Arnou (1921), Bidez (1913), Bréhier (his translations contain excellent introductory notes; also his "La philosophie de Plotin" was published in 1928), Guitton (1933), Henry (1934). During the 1950-60's there were many important works published by French Neo-Platonic scholars, such as Trouillard, Festugière, Pépin, and Hadot. Bonnefoy has known many of these scholars.

read Jean Wahl's book on Kierkegaard.²⁹ Perhaps it was in this library that Bonnefoy found Bréhier's Enneads.

It is certain, however, that it was at this formative time that Bonnefoy first encountered Plotinus. It was also the time when Bonnefoy decided no longer to associate himself with the Surrealists. I would suggest that Plotinus, more than any other philosopher, was central to this decision.

In the interview with John Jackson, and in the subsequent "Lettre à John E. Jackson," Bonnefoy says that one of his major reasons for breaking with Surrealism was that it had a "gnostic" tendency which he found troubling:

Le religieux "de travers," c'est ce que j'ai appelé ici ou là, dans L'Arrière-pays surtout, le gnosticisme, une pensée de la transcendance, oui, mais qui, s'attachant indûment à tel objet ou aspect de notre univers qu'on a choisis d'abord pour rendre compte de celle-ci de façon indirecte, par analogie par exemple, en déduit qu'une part de notre réalité, cet objet, porte donc dans son être les traces, à tout le moins, d'une réalité supérieure: ce qui dévalorise les autres choses du monde, par contrecoup, et donne le sentiment que la terre est une prison, puisque ces choses basses y prédominent, et la divinité une absence, qui n'apparaît qu'à des instants et voilées, et notre existence un exil, et notre lucidité un éclair qui ne nous vaut que des instants de liberté déchirée.³⁰ (Entretiens 80)

²⁹ Études kierkegaardiennes, 1938; Bonnefoy was later to write a thesis with Wahl on Baudelaire and Kierkegaard. One wonders exactly what Bonnefoy means by the "Sophists."

³⁰ In this same interview (Entretiens 75-76) Bonnefoy says the following:

Et pour ma part il y avait bien eu assez dans mon enfance de maisons vides...pour que ce regard me soit facile, aussitôt que proposé par les poètes surréalistes, et que je m'émeuve de ces icônes de la noirceur, et qu'elles me

'Gnosticism,' or 'theurgy,' treats an object as a mere vehicle for one's ascent to a greater but ultimately alien and unattainable spiritual power (Rist, Road 192; Dodds 285). This way of thinking involves a radical separation of spirit and matter, an unresolvable dualism that results in the belief that this world is our place of exile. It is a relation to this world and to the One that characterizes Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus. As he states in the interview, Bonnefoy left the Surrealists because their approach to experience tended to reinforce our feeling of exile by treating the object as a means to, not as a manifestation of, the One (Entretiens 71). This move corresponds to the movement of modern Plotinus scholarship away from reading the Enneads in the light of the later Neo-Platonists and towards what is perhaps a more historically accurate reading. In this respect, Bonnefoy is in step with modern scholarship on Plotinus. This is in direct contrast to Yeats, who was in step with the old Platonic tradition exemplified by Taylor.

découvrent à moi-même, avec un vrai trouble, brusquement." He speaks of "cette lumière à rebours" which creates what he calls "la mauvaise présence, celle par quoi ce qui est s'absente au moment même où il paraît à nos yeux, se clôt à notre lecture...."

Bonnefoy states that it was a monistic philosophy that attracted him instead of Surrealism's dualism (Entretiens 82). He associates this philosophy specifically with Plotinus. When he says the following, Bonnefoy is thinking of Plotinus as the philosopher of the immanent One, the principle that gives rise to all things, present to each thing everywhere and all at once:

C'est cette unité à mes yeux -- et ainsi en tout cas
 lisais-je Plotin -- le fondement de l'être, la raison
 pour laquelle quoi que ce soit peut participer d'un
 lieu qui a l'être, au lieu de retomber par
 fragmentation et opacité intérieure dans son néant, et
 le nôtre. (Entretiens 82)

For Bonnefoy and Plotinus presence is a sudden vision, and a contact with the One here and now ("le contact avec l'Un, ce que j'appelle présence," Entretiens 99). It involves another way of seeing, an inner transformation of perception. When we are granted such a vision and contact, we cease to feel ourselves exiles in this world (Enneads 1.6.8.18; cf. 5.8.4.15 and 5.9.1.20).

Bonnefoy was attracted to Plotinus' conception of the One at a crucial stage of his career. This feeling for the One as present in this world here and now, which Plotinus brought into or rather brought back into Bonnefoy's life, has remained the poet's foremost preoccupation throughout every stage of his career.³¹

³¹ L'Arriere-pays (1972) and Giacometti (1991) bear epigraphs from Plotinus or Porphyry's Life of Plotinus.

I would like to argue that the real link between the two is in the notion of presence. Presence is contact with the One, and the One is the principle of all things including Being itself. As both Plotinus and Bonnefoy would readily agree, this principle is formless (Enneads 6.7.32.9-25; 33.10-25), a formlessness that defeats all our attempts to limit or enclose it in form, language, or discursive thought. Presence can be defined for both writers as a presence-and-absence, something that makes itself felt here and now while it remains "over there" (la-bas, or in Plotinus ekei).

It is uncertain how and just when Bonnefoy first read and began to translate Yeats. The connection between Ireland and Paris was already a century old by the time

Porphyry appears in one of the short poems entitled "une pierre" from Pierre écrite (1965; Poèmes 215). Finally a reference to Plotinus concludes the 1987 essay "L'Italie et la Grèce" (Entretiens 351; the quotation echoes Enneads 5.8.4.15).

In addition to these casual citations, there are several echoes of Plotinian imagery in Bonnefoy's poems, particularly images of light, mirrors, dreaming, and waking. Of course these are stock metaphors in the so-called mystical tradition in the West, and Plotinus is just one link back to Plato, Orphic religion, and the Eleusinian Mysteries, and forward to later Christian mystical writers. However, the images of Plotinus often have the intensity of actual experience or individual imagination, as much as does the ardent speech of the modern French poet. I would not suggest that these are conscious quotations, or that Bonnefoy has done scholarly work on Plotinus, but it seems to me that Bonnefoy either knows Plotinus' text well or his past readings made a very lasting impression.

Bonnefoy would have read Yeats. It is clear that Bonnefoy has a deep admiration for Yeats' work and felt drawn to it to such an extent that he translated forty five poems and the play "The Resurrection" (Quarante-cinq poèmes 7). It is open to conjecture what exactly in Yeats most attracted Bonnefoy. I would suggest that it was the sense of presence that attracted him, even though by all appearances Yeats has a very different notion of presence.

II. Presence in the Work of Yves Bonnefoy

Throughout his career, Bonnefoy has spoken of presence.³² He has written essays that engage the notion of presence directly (for example, the 1981 essay "La présence et l'image," Entretiens 179-202), and he uses the word in many of his poems. Because Bonnefoy directly discusses presence, it is possible to outline what is involved in his understanding of the notion of presence.

Bonnefoy conceives of presence as a contact with the One, an experience of unity in this life. Bonnefoy insists with the conviction of experience that we can live here. We are afforded momentary experiences of fulfillment here in this world. Bonnefoy often speaks of finitude and of the present moment that passes. If we are to know the One, it

³² For discussions of presence in Bonnefoy's poetry and poetics, see especially Naughton, Stamelman, and Gasarian.

will not be in some other world, as gnostics believe, but only in this world in which death and time rule (cf. Enneads 2.9, "Against the Gnostics").

At such moments of contact we experience something inexpressible in language. In fact, as Bonnefoy insists, the feeling of presence, or the contact with the One, is prior to language (Naughton 43; Stamelman 421). It is a feeling of unity in undifferentiation with the whole of existence (Shadows 162). This feeling is associated with the contact between the mother and infant (in-fans). As such it is easily repressed and subjected to and fragmented by our subsequent use of language. Many of Bonnefoy's art historical studies investigate the artist from this angle, the artist's struggle to overcome the mechanism of the repression of his or her experience of the One.

In his recent book on Giacometti, Bonnefoy speaks of a way of seeing the whole of an object, in all its relations, in its unity with other things, and specifically associates this with Plotinus (Giacometti 85; cf. Enneads 5.8.4.25). This is a way of seeing otherwise (Enneads 6.9.11.23), which can grant the intuition of unity.

Such visions of unity, or experiences of presence, are a kind of recognition, because we meet with something already known (Naughton 45). But somehow too if we experience the One, in presence, we know the infinite which

transcends time and transforms death, though it does not make these disappear.

We know presence only when we have managed to break the stranglehold of language. To experience presence, we must fight continually against language and images, tear them in order that for a moment language no longer confines or fragments our vision (Gasarian 35; Naughton 47-48; Stamelman 421). But language inevitably takes over again, and we find ourselves in exile once more. Our sense of being is again fragmented, the One hidden from us. Because our consciousness is structured by language, presence can only disappear like the shades that Odysseus and Aeneas try to embrace. The poem exists as a trace of this disappearance, which its very language causes and forestalls. Such a double movement is central to Bonnefoy's poetry and his understanding of presence (Gasarian 25).

Absence in Bonnefoy is our exile from presence. It is the realm of language too, but a state of dispersal and loss with regard to past experiences of presence and an anguished hope with respect to the possibility of refinding presence. Absence is a state of excarnation, when words and concepts bind us and divide us so that our ability to relate to others in presence is gone and our experience of unity is scattered (Stamelman 421). We feel mental dissociation,

gaps, lacks, dispersal among unrelated words that desperately seek each other but never arrive anywhere.

Absence has an apocalyptic feel, and yet because absence is an integral part of presence and come second in time it always implies the potential of refinding presence. It speaks of hope. The One has not left us, but we it. Death, which we have the power to transform, precisely within our condition of finitude, through our experience of presence, is the necessary condition for the emergence of presence.

There is continually a double movement in Bonnefoy. It seems to me that the heart of Bonnefoy's poetry is a proliferation of words along the axes of paradox. This is most evident in the use of temporality in the poetry. On the one hand, there is the past, the origin which is lost to the poet; on the other hand, there is the future, which is equally ideal and unattainable. It is clear that Bonnefoy is interested in the transcendent possibilities of the present moment, but he sees the present as structured by one's past and one's ideas of possible futures. For this reason Bonnefoy often makes the present emerge between, or as the tension between, the past and the future.

The past is idealized. It is childhood, a relation to the origin, or a memory of an experience of presence when the poet felt at home in the world. It is an experience

prior to language. When the experience is expressed in language it is always in the past tense, has always passed by. The poet feels a constant temptation to try to return to the past and live in a certitude that really can no longer be realized. Despite his longing for the past the poet must tear himself away from haunting memories and go into an uncertain future. The future holds out a promise, which keeps us going. It is the red cloud ("nuage rouge") that appears just above the horizon, over there ('là-bas').

Between the polarities of past and future is the anguished way ('chemin'; 'j'avance') of the present. Presence emerges when these polarities clash and fall apart, extinguishing antinomies and allowing unity to arise in their aftermath, like Yeats' phoenix rising from the fire. This battle of contraries which is our life in language is one of the greatest similarities with Yeats. For both poets the battle of opposites is central ("Je voudrais que la poésie soit d'abord une incessante bataille, un théâtre où l'être et l'essence, la forme et le non-formel se combattront durement.") (L'Improbable 127)

The Other for Bonnefoy is not hell, but an opportunity to discover the One in the act of meeting. As John Naughton has noted, there are in this aspect of Bonnefoy some similarities with Martin Buber (Naughton 51).

Buber argues that it is precisely through the Other's difference that we realize presence. However, in contradiction to Buber, Bonnefoy has spoken of presence as an experience of unity in undifferentiation, like that of mother and infant (Shadow's 162; cf. Buber, Between 43). This is also true of Plotinus who speaks of the union with the One as a union with no otherness or difference (Enneads, 6.9.11.9; 5.1.6.49-54; Rist, Road 223-225; Kristeva 120). Does Bonnefoy, like Yeats, conceive of presence as solipsism, the unified self alone by itself (Enneads 5.1.6.12)?

The answer is in Bonnefoy's writing against writing, or unwriting. He refuses to speak the Other, to let his determinations erase or enclose the total being of the Other. He refuses to let the Other be colonized or effaced. At most, the Other is there as a silence that is by turns threatening and enabling. The Other is purposefully maintained as a present absence.

It seems to me that the feeling for the immanent One allows Bonnefoy to appreciate the uniqueness and otherness of the Other. What is shared, what is common, is the possibility of each to have the experience of their own fullness, integrity, and unity. The source of this unity is the One, which we each possess, impersonally. Bonnefoy, like Yeats, sees the personal arising from the impersonal.

The union with the One simply means that it is possible to be both with oneself and with others. This notion is evoked in his book on Giacometti (503). In his poems, the idea of 'being with' is often evoked in the Judeo-Christian imagery of the table, the bread, and the wine.³³ The Christian elements are strong in Bonnefoy, and he exploits the association of communion and presence. Bonnefoy is manipulating this tradition to suggest the sacrament and communion of presence as he understands it, which is like and yet radically different from the tenets of Christianity.³⁴ In this way Bonnefoy expresses his understanding of presence as 'being with' an Other or Others.

"Being with" or syneinai can be a gathering of people who share a common experience and a common purpose. Each in him or herself strives to experience the One, and after that, in gathering with others, the experience is shared in discussion (Hadot 65). This is very much the situation in Plotinus' school (if such it was), which was called a

³³ In pre-modern Europe the idea of presence was immediately associated with the Eucharist and the Christian sacrament, as the Oxford English Dictionary's citation of "presence" makes clear.

³⁴ Bonnefoy, like Plotinus in his treatise against the Gnostics (2.9), rejects the otherworldliness and asceticism common in sects of Gnostics and early Christians. See Armstrong 50-51.

synousia (Vita 1.1). It is the grounds of a community, which Bonnefoy as much as Yeats is concerned to establish through poetry (Starobinski 393).

As he states in his interview with John E. Jackson, Bonnefoy agrees with Plotinus that unity is the foundation of Being, that conceptual language, deductive logic, and objective science hinder us from knowing the One (Shadows 162; Entretiens 73; cf. Enneads 5.3). In poetry the musical dimension of the sounds and rhythms of words actually have the capacity to break concepts and open language, to resist absolute closure:

Why poetry? Because by paying attention as it does to the sonorous parts of words, to their capacity for rhythm, for music, poetry allows a relation to be established between words that is no longer simply the play of those abstract concepts that normally constitute our language. For a moment, the usual reading of the world, that network of figures which keeps Presence hidden, is neutralized, torn open; we stand before each thing as though before the entire universe, in an absolute that seems to welcome us. (Shadow's 162-163; cf. Verité 98-99)

In breaking concepts, poetry can speak towards those certain moments when we are granted a sudden, intimate perception of the unity of things. Such perceptions are the source of poetry but they themselves lie outside language. Since poems are linguistic and are only preserved utterances, they can only be retrospective, a preservation of an experience of presence, as well as a preparation for a future experience of presence.

Bonnefoy sees writing as a negative, gnostic activity, whose inherent tendencies he must continually fight against in order to make use of some of its positive values. He sees writing as a violence, but one he can use against itself in order to prevent presence from being violated (Poèmes 328). A major part of his poetics is directed against images, language, and writing, which divide the primal unity of things and close us off from experiencing the One. But since he is a writer, he can not empty all writing or forget the Mallarmean book (Poèmes 307). The poet must write and unwrite in order to approach and yet not execute presence.

Bonnefoy is interested in vocal sound that is not essentially related to language as such (Zumthor 126; Bachelard 162; Nancy 235).³⁵ This is expressed in the poems as a cry, the cry of lovers, the cry of the bird of prey. It is an appropriate expression of presence because like presence it came before language or is other than it. Writing and language itself are a violence against presence.

³⁵ Bachelard calls these elements "vertical" to indicate that aspect of a word that rises from the visual into spatial parole. In my own terminology, these elements are associated with the "realization" of the poem. Bonnefoy is of course following the tradition of questioning and disrupting language begun by the Surrealists and Dadaists.

Bonnefoy expresses this in the following image, where the nail is also in a sense the pen (Poèmes 316):

L'été:
 Cette chevêche que cloue
 Là, sur le seuil,
 Le fer en paix de l'étoile.

One of the aspects of Bonnefoy's writing against writing is his realization of the element of fantasy in the act of writing. He has often condemned a tendency in poetry to be complacent about its images. This is because, as a post-Freudian, Bonnefoy is aware of how the writer's desires, conscious and unconscious, structure images. Because the audience is absent to the writer, he or she is even more subject to his or her own projections (Ong, Interfaces 60). The tendency in writing is to create images that reflect more of the unconscious desires of the writer than the other present before one.

According to Bonnefoy, not only is writing a gnostic activity, but it is also narcissistic. Narcissus believes he loves a separate individual, but it is really himself reflected in the water that he loves. Similarly with the writer, who might believe that the images he creates reflect reality when in fact they really reflect the writer. To believe in and to be seduced by this sort of mirror is to see reflected back to us the clown executioner.

For Plotinus as for Bonnefoy, to love oneself truly is to discover one's experience of the One, and conversely to allow and appreciate the Other's experience of the One (Enneads 5.8.2.31-38). So instead of imposing our determinations on the Other, we must expose them and find the Other in his otherness, find his unique integrity as a whole. This is the object of Bonnefoy's unwriting. This is why Bonnefoy has spoken of his books of poems as revisions (Shadow's 162). He has felt the need, after the writing of the book has passed, to re-enter the words and images in which he cast the experience of presence and expose the dark areas and the blind spots which conditioned his previous vision, even though he was unaware of the fact:

Ici, la tâche
 Que je ne sais finir. Ici, les mots
 Que je ne dirais pas.
 Ici, la flaque
 Noire, dans la nuée.
 Ici, dans le regard
 Le point aveugle. (Poèmes 311)

With this intimate perception that goes inward as well as outward, we know the otherness of the other and experience the presence of the One which transcends our individuality. In presence, we know something more than ourselves (Naughton 51).

III. Plotinian Presence and the Work of Bonnefoy

Having outlined Bonnefoy's notion of presence and its similarities with the philosophy of Plotinus, I would like to turn to a concrete example and show how in the act of reading Plotinian presence can be felt. I would like to conclude and summarize this chapter with a reading of Bonnefoy's brief poem "Le jardin":

Le jardin

Il neige.
 Sous les flocons la porte
 Ouvre enfin au jardin
 De plus que le monde.

J'avance. Mais se prend
 Mon écharpe à du fer
 Rouillé, et se déchire
 En moi l'étoffe du songe.

(Début 19)

The first stanza evokes a vision. The poet finally ("enfin") glimpses something more than this world. The poet advances, makes his way through time, in a present. Suddenly the dream of entering this paradise is torn, by rusted iron, which is a figure of mortality. As Bonnefoy has said, dreaming in poetry is to stop dreaming (Shadow's 172).

Presence in the poem takes place between the dream and its tearing. The dream of paradise draws the poet on. It comes to him as voices from before the world, perhaps as vocal sound before language. The dream is like the cloud

over the horizon in the middle distance, the unattainable, which, however, enables presence to emerge here, though the dream always leaves us with anguish, as well as hope.

It would seem that the tearing of the dream is a dispersal, a loss of unity, but for Bonnefoy unity is the scattered and the collected, the whole and the rent. When our dreams of the future, or our memory of the past, is disturbed, torn, we are granted, not without pain again, the experience of the One. We experience the image and its blind spot, the there and the here, the pillar of fire and the pillar of smoke, together (Caws 450).

A spark is released from this tearing, a cry like Yeats' cry. As words near each other and sometimes join, like snowflakes as they fall, something leaps out, an echo (Début 32):

Nos mots ne cherchent plus les autres mots
 [mais les avoisinent,
 Passent auprès d'eux, simplement,
 Et si l'un en a frôlé un, et s'ils
 [s'unissent,
 Ce ne sera qu'encore ta lumière,
 Notre brièveté qui se dissémine,
 L'écriture qui se dissipe, sa tâche faite.

Our words no longer seek other words, for a moment we are not alone in language (Début 42). Words near each other suddenly catch fire, as Mallarmé suggested in a passage Yeats knew well enough to paraphrase without citation

(Essays 189).³⁶ And in the act of reading the reader's mind is stretched between these.

A cry leaps out when our dream of the world is exhausted, leaps out into pure voice refusing to be captured, preserved, in language.

La vie errante

Il s'efforçait depuis quelque jours d'être heureux des nuages qu'il amoncelait sur sa toile au-dessus d'un chemin de pierres. Mais qu'est-ce que la beauté quand on sait que l'on va partir? Demain le bateau va le conduire vers une autre île. (Il ne reviendra plus dans celle-ci, il ne reverra plus ce chemin.)

Il trembla d'angoisse, soudain, et laissa tomber son pinceau dont un peu de l'ocre sombre, presque du rouge, éclaboussa le bas de la toile. Ah! quelle joie!

Chateaubriand au bord du Jordain après le long voyage, que peut-il faire sinon emplir une fiole de l'eau du fleuve? Il écrit sur une étiquette: eau du Jordain.

Tache, épiphanie de ce qui n'a pas de forme, pas de sens, tu es le don imprévu que j'emporte jalousement, laissant inachevée la vaine peinture. Tu vas m'illuminer, tu me sauves.

N'es-tu pas de ce lieu et de cet instant un fragment réel, une parcelle de l'or, là où je ne prétendais qu'au reflet qui trahit, au souvenir qui déchire? J'ai arraché un lambeau à la robe qui a échappé comme un rêve aux doigts crispés de l'enfance. (Vie 26-27)

This "tache" is the unforeseen gift ("le don imprévu"). It is a resonance of pure voice which ruptures language's confines and as such it is the only fitting expression of presence for Bonnefoy (Stamelman 423; Caws 452). We might say that through this poetic technique Bonnefoy achieves his

³⁶ See the beginning of Chapter 7 for a discussion of this passage in Yeats.

poetic goal to liberate sound from language, his poetic "tâche," to point up a pun Bonnefoy himself must be fully aware of. By its nature it refuses to be coopted and to coopt the Other. It constitutes a poetic technique which is deeply indebted to Mallarmé, despite certain misgivings that Bonnefoy expresses about him.

For Plotinus, as for Bonnefoy, each thing has its being from its relation to the One. The One is present to each thing, as a whole and everywhere, which is to say incorporeally. Our contemplation of even the slightest thing can lead us to the One. Presence is an experience of the One, of seeing the many still as many become one, to echo Coleridge's definition of the beautiful which Bonnefoy is fond of quoting (L'Improbable 258). In this experience the integrity of the individual is preserved, but there is this additional experience of the One too; it is something more, something that both shatters and preserves our individuality.

Chapter 4

I would like to recall my working definition of presence. I use the word "presence" to designate an indeterminate textual element. Any attempt to resolve it simultaneously hides its true nature as indeterminate and reveals the reader's subjective determinations. Something in a radical indeterminacy always remains beyond one's capacities to determine it. The nature of an indeterminate element, or presence, in a poem is to call upon or demand an attempt to determine it but to refuse this ultimately. When the reader is actively engaged in realizing a poetic text, the reader is engaged in a relation in presence.

I would like to qualify this definition by restricting my inquiry to those indeterminacies that either 1) make the reader aware of the present act of reading or 2) give a sense of plenitude and intensity. These two kinds of indeterminacies result in two ways in which presence can make itself felt in the act of reading.

The first occurs when the reader's determinations are revealed and reflected back to the reader. The second occurs when the reader confronts certain indeterminacies in a poem and suspends, momentarily, the need to determine them; at these moments a sense of plenitude and intensity can arise for the reader.

This chapter will be concerned with the first way presence can make itself felt in the act of reading. It entails the reader's becoming aware of the present act of reading. This happens when the reader's becomes aware of the limited and limiting nature of his or her subjective determinations.

There are many kinds of examples of this, but the most common example is when the artifice of a poem is exposed as such. Through the mimetic power of its words, a poem can seduce the reader into creating an image in the mind, an image the reader believes to refer to and represent something real. However, when the work is made to refer to itself as an artifice, or when some similar technique is used, suddenly the reader is not able to maintain the image any longer, because the image has been exposed as an illusion.³⁷

The most important aspect of this is that the reader becomes aware of the process of forming and un-forming illusions. The reader becomes self-conscious of his own determinations in the act of realizing the poem. We become aware, through the dialectic movement of reading (or creating and breaking illusions), of where our own determinations, our own illusions, end.

³⁷ It seems to me that this is what Charles Bernstein calls "anti-absorptive" textual elements. (29)

The act of reading shows ourselves to ourselves, otherwise, as in a convex mirror (Bonney, Shadows 175; Enneads 6.9.11.23). We are engaged in the present act of interpreting, which is a moving in and out of the mimetic illusion (Iser, Reading Process 59).

Again, a poem can, as it were, take us in, through its mimetic or other powers, but then it can, as it were, turn us out by referring to the illusion as illusion, by referring to the work of art as an artifice. As we saw in Klee's painting Small Room in Venice, this is to see the clown-executioner who threatens to destroy presence.

I want to turn to three examples, a painting by Paul Klee (Eine Unfruchtbare) and two poems (Yeats' "Among School Children" and Bonney's "Deux barques") and a play (Yeats' "The Resurrection").

Klee's "A Barren Woman" was painted in 1939 (Paul Klee at the Guggenheim 197). Klee executed this relatively large piece (26.7cm X 42.4cm) with simple, conventional materials, watercolor, ink, and paper. The colors are plain and spare: variations of sky blue and pink-orange fleshtones. At first glance the whole is even unappealing. It looks like blotches of ink. The figure, like all the forms in the painting, is in fleshtones set against an uneven blue that might be sky or water. In places the forms stand out against the blue; in others a blending occurs between



Figure 2. Paul Klee, "Barren Woman," ("Eine Unfruchtbare"), 1939.

form and background. However, marked outlines bounding the forms prevent a complete blending. The result is that this is a painting in which the viewer must literally find the image. Once the outline of the figure is found, something uncanny appears.

Like many of Klee's paintings, this particular piece engages visual elements of balance and weight. The barren woman sits. Her posture conveys a sense of gravity. However, the square on her lap seems to float, especially since her front leg is drawn so as to seem flat, like a table. Similarly, the rock-like forms at the right and left edges seem to float and have gravity respectively. The two drops under the woman's left arm go up and down, evoking the famous fragment of Heraclitus, "The way up and the way down are one and the same," or describe a Yin and Yang unity, whether they are tears or drops of blood. And perhaps most typical of Klee are the two rock-like forms, one circular, the other rectangular, which are static but unstable, an unbalanced balance.

All of these elements point to an essential theme of the painting, the relation and possible union of opposites. The relation of opposites is further suggested by the cross that floats in the blue background. As a symbol of Christ's

resurrection the empty cross evokes a form of life in death.³⁸

Just above this is a flesh-colored form that suggests a phallus. The woman's possession of this phallus might make her creative, but she possesses here only an impotent, even castrated phallus. The woman seems to be both male and female. Her breasts ride so high on her chest that they look like shoulder muscles, and her arms are very powerful, as if she were a blacksmith or a sculptor, and below her torso is a very masculine waist with a feminine belly. Furthermore, she is called "barren." She is unable to have children, yet she has this "shape upon her lap" as Yeats puts it in "Among School Children," a substitute for the child she can not have. She desires the child enormously, as the atom-like representation of energy in her chest reveals. But her desire can only create this inanimate object to replace the living child.

The shape is the realization, in an image, of her desire for the child. In this sense we could see her as a representation of the artist, for the shape is like a painting or a poem; a symbol invoking a beating heart, an image with coursing blood, animate-inanimate. The issue here is not the lack of a supposedly "natural" creativity

³⁸ This point has profound echoes with Yeats' play The Resurrection, which Bonnefoy has translated.

(procreation) and an attempt to compensate for this lack through art. The issue is rather the desire directed towards the work of art. In the case of the barren woman, her tragic desire is that the inanimate be a substitute for a living child, which is to substitute art for living, which is to do violence to presence. The great temptation for an artist, woman and man alike, is to believe that life, the living relation in presence, can be contained in a work of art; in the same way, the goal of the artist is to make the work live, but that goal contains the real danger of emptying life of its life, killing presence by preserving it. In language especially, one might begin to believe one's fictions are really the world. Art's potential for creating an illusion of presence also opens it to the danger of this sort of substitution.

The drama in this painting is the barren woman's reaction to this "shape upon her lap." Having looked down at the shape, she seems to grow wild, horrified, and throw her arms into the air. Even her mouth, flattened and expressionless out of confused shock, does not convey as much drama as do her arms, especially the left, with its hand bent over, limp. Her head looks like one of the rocks around her, as if she were stunned to stone.

If this drama is the main interest of the painting, how does the viewer enter it? The woman's reaction seems to

result from the intense and exclusive interaction between the shape and herself, as exclusive an interaction, though perversely evoked, as that between mother and infant. It seems to me that we can only enter this painting by imagining that we are participating in the creation of it.

As I noted earlier, the lines of the forms are not vivid or bold. The viewer must step up close and try to find out where the lines are, where they go, and finally put all this together; otherwise the painting looks like incomprehensible blotches of blue and pink. The painting demands our interaction, demands participation, because we must try to find the figures in the painting.

Metaphorically, we contribute to the creation of the figure. Concretely, we are called upon to realize the painting, just as in reading we are called upon to realize of the literary work. Suddenly, by a strange effect, we become like the barren woman and the painting before us becomes the like shape. We are so drawn into the painting that we identify with the woman.

The impression passes, however. We step back and begin to study the painting, putting the various pieces together. We experience the frame, and the gallery, or we turn the page of the book. We are not the woman after all. The painting becomes, in turn, a critique of our own reaction. That is to say, the painting indicates the viewer's

separation from the painting; we are reminded that we are not in the painting. It turns us out of the illusion. The viewer's and indeed the woman's desire to have their half- or un-conscious desires realized (reified) in an object is exposed as an idolatrous dream or fantasy.

It is as if the woman wanted to produce a thing that would come to life. If this happened, the idea then would live. The art work would be an alternative life. But rather than a sense of joy, the woman seems to experience a sense of horror, as if her desire stood before her, materialized, a living stone-child.

Even though we may come to share the woman's dream of creation as we view the painting, it is difficult to identify completely with the woman, we have also to differentiate ourselves from her. In realizing her difference, we realize her ungraspability. Klee wants to say to us, as he does in address "Über die moderne Kunst" ("On Modern Art"), "For he [the artist] places more value on the powers which do the forming than on the final forms themselves." (45) The process behind the work, not the physical work itself; "Eine Unfruchtbare" insists upon reminding us of the process, and refuses the final product as last refuge or last word.

This interpretation of the painting is reinforced by the face of the figure. One of her eyes looks down at the

shape. The other is closed, as if to deny the existence of the shape. The viewer, however, sees both the shape and the attempt at denial.³⁹

To what extent can we call that shape upon the woman's lap a presence, as Yeats calls that "shape" which a mother's "affection knows"? One might object that the shape in the painting is clearly inanimate. But Yeats' poem, which has so many parallels to this painting, says that all shapes, or images, whether animate or inanimate, are presences. The painting and Yeats' poem, as we shall see, on their own terms, are about presences, not absences.

To point this out in a visual parallel, we might consider Caravaggio's Magdalene (in the Galleria Doria-Pamphilij).⁴⁰ In this work, Mary Magdalene is not yet repentant, yet she is conscious of a lack, a loss. Caravaggio's interest is clearly in this absence, which is actually visible in her arms, as if to evoke the child she never had.

³⁹ For a visual parallel of this denial, see Bonnefoy, Giacometti (156, 159).

⁴⁰ A similar parallel might be Giacometti's "Invisible Object." See Bonnefoy, Giacometti 64, 71.



Figure 3. Caravaggio, ("Mary Magdalene").

The shape in Klee's painting is a presence, as much as Yeats' images in "Among School Children" are presences, uncanny presences. But if this shape is a presence, it is present differently to the barren woman than it is to the viewer. From these considerations, it becomes apparent why I have distinguished between a philosophical definition of presence and the problem of interpreting the notion of presence in relation to a work of art. The distinction is crucial, for it is the distinction between philosophy and art; Klee's painting does not make statements about the nature of presence, it makes us experience it, or at least the lack of it. A work of art does not make statements or argue.

I would like to keep my focus on how we experience the work, and how we interpret it. We might imagine three responses to Klee's painting; first, someone with a preconceived definition of presence saying "the shape is not a presence, but more like an absence, something empty, cold, and horrible"; second, someone naively saying that the shape is pure presence. And lastly, someone acknowledging that we do experience these two responses, but finally the painting, as it were, turns us out as if to remind us that the real matter of the painting is not in the painting itself. We feel that it is somewhere nevertheless, but neither as

simple presence nor as an empty absence, but as the process of looking, envisioning, thinking, reading, interpreting.

We are aware of the illusion and we are thereby self-consciously aware of the act of reading and interpreting. After all, Klee is a painter of "the thinking eye" (Das bildnerische Denken is the title of one volume of Klee's notebooks from his course at the Bauhaus). This painting, whatever one makes of it in the end, forces the viewer to ask certain difficult questions about artistic creation and artistic illusions. And because it forces these questions, it does not allow the viewer to remain completely subject to these illusions.

Yeats' poem "Among School Children" begins with a very common, concrete situation: the poet, a sixty year old man, is visiting a children's school. The first half of the poem (stanzas I-IV) remains bound to this concrete setting. It even expects the reader to be familiar with the place and circumstances. In stanza II, the poet drifts into a reverie ("I dream") and remembers a day of his young manhood; he also offhandedly mentions a "she."

This is a linguistic trick. It makes it seem to the reader that the reader must already know who is referred to. We have entered the reverie of a speaker who does not need to explain to himself who "she" is. In stanza III, we already know what "that fit" was which happened some time in

the past. But the poet does not tell us specifically who, what, or when; it is as if he were speaking to us and said with his eyes, "you know, her." This technique, which is fundamentally oral/performative and is related to interior monologue, increases the sense of intimacy and concreteness in the first half of the poem.

Richard Ellmann and others have spoken of the temporal layering in this poem; the present when the sixty year old man walks through the classroom; the past when this man and his beloved were young adults; and finally a remoter past when his beloved was a girl the same age as the children in the classroom (Ellmann 255; Brooks 178-191). In stanza II, the old man remembers a day when he and his beloved seemed so close they seemed to be one. In stanza III, he imagines her as a child until she "appears" before his mind's eye, as if his imagination realized her (reified). Then in stanza IV he envisions her as she is now (in the present tense of the poem), old, as he is. The three times are unified. They are all equally present.⁴¹ In addition to this, the three acts of the mind (memory, imagination, and conjuring an image of an existing reality) are associated. This entire poem, like many of Wordsworth's, reproduces the reach, and the duration of the reach, of the poet's mind.

⁴¹ The same thing happens in "Byzantium" as will be seen in chapter 7.

In the second half of the poem there is a subtle but complete shift out of this historically specific setting. The setting of the schoolroom disappears along with the "I" of the poem.

As the poet thinks more and more deeply about death and aging, cosmic space and time take the place of this world. We see the personal memory of stanza II transformed into the Platonic doctrine of "recollection" (de Man, Romanticism 202-203). The mother of stanza V is not his mother but a mother, with a shape upon her lap, its head as impersonal as Klee's inanimate shape. Suddenly we realize that human life is no longer being considered from an earthly perspective. Rather it is set against the eternal, which makes even the greatest intellectual and artistic achievements seem inconsequential (stanza VI).

Looking back from this height it becomes clear that the particular historical setting of the first half of the poem is absorbed into this grand view of eternity. The reference to Plato, which seemed a natural and fitting expression of the lovers' feeling of unity, becomes foreboding, because even the greatness of Plato is nothing in terms of eternity.

A similar double movement occurs with the phrase "present image" in stanza IV. On first reading, it seems to refer back to the beloved as a girl ("she stands before me as a living child"), which is in fact an image in the poet's

mind. But it must refer to the beloved as she is at the present time, an old woman. What makes this phrase strange is that the poet calls her present person, her present reality -- for she still exists in the present tense of the poem -- an image. He means that his image of her as she is at present floats into his mind. But the line of verse does not simply say this. Her present reality, conjured in his mind, is as much image as reality -- in fact the distinction no longer holds here. She seems to exist only in the old man's mind, or rather in "the" mind which must be the divine mind and quite possibly the reader's mind (I will return to this).

Impersonal and personal are blended here, as are the present and the past, the image and the emblem. Paul de Man's argument that Yeats' verse works in two directions, the emblematic and the naturalistic, seems to fit this poem especially well. De Man argues that Yeats seduces the reader with attractive natural images, as the Titans tricked the baby Dionysus with mirrors and rattles. The meaning of the images, however, becomes clear only when these are read emblematically, as anti-natural images. These two directions are made to "dovetail" seamlessly, but, as de Man holds, they are irreconcilable (de Man, Romanticism 194, 200). This irreconcilability creates a tension, which makes

the poem vibrant. It creates indeterminacies, as the reader goes from one way of reading to the other and back.

The specificity of the first half of the poem gives way to emblematic figures. Stanzas V and VI drive home how powerless humanity is before the forces of eternity. But then in stanza VII there is a strange shift. The thought seems to run in the following way: images, in philosophies or religions, are things that human beings worship because, unlike people, they are eternal. However, man-made images are different from the images one has of a living person; created images are cold and distant, whereas people are warm and present. But then suddenly the thought of the poem breaks, and breaks precisely at the point when art and life are no longer seen to be opposed, when images and emblems are seen to meet; "O Presences/ That passion, piety or affection knows." Emotions make images and images, all images, are more real than any present person.⁴²

We can now see why the poet used "present image" in stanza IV. But is the exclamation "O Presences" an affirmation, or an expression of bewilderment? Many have read the final stanza as expressing unity; the dancing body as a unity of soul and body (including Yves Bonnefoy, who removed the question mark and translated the last line as "ô

⁴² A similar idea is of course expressed in Bonnefoy's "Sur une pietà de Tintoret." See above, Chapter 2.

regard, aube/ C'est même feu le danseur et la dance"). Paul de Man reads the last stanza as expressing "bewilderment"; he sees the question not as rhetorical but as urgently addressed to the "presences."⁴³

It seems to me, however, that there is another reading that is something like a combination of these two. I would argue that the final question does indeed express bewilderment and is addressed to the presences, among which we now must number the emblem of the dancing body and the chestnut tree, which bear so much weight in the poem. I would argue that it expresses a kind of metaphysical bewilderment which Bonnefoy notes in Yeats (Bonnefoy, L'Improbable 258; "Yeats ne s'y oppose qu'avec fureur, accablé de son évidence." My emphasis).

The most intense interactive moments in the poem are when the poet meets an image, a presence in Yeats' understanding of the word.⁴⁴ The poet has several such experiences, for example when his beloved seems to stand

⁴³ De Man's argument bears down on one point; how can one decide which way to read the image? He argues that there can be no rational choice between reading a figure as a natural image or an emblem needing decoding. This, however, this is precisely the point, for it would not be art if it were a matter of rational choice and decision. It would be philosophy, it would be argument or a treatise on presence.

Furthermore, this very undecidability marks the sort of irresolvable indeterminacy I am addressing.

⁴⁴ See below Chapter 2.

before him as a living child. In these instances, he is as wrapt in reverie, as a mother is with her infant, or a nun is adoring an image of Christ -- in the poem these things are treated as equivalent. This creates the same exclusivity we noted between woman and shape in Klee's painting, an exclusivity that prevents any easy entrance into the work of art. We may identify with the poet at first, as with the woman in the painting, but we only really enter the poem when we realize that we, like the poet, have images before us.

Mother, nun, "I" and reader -- all are confronted with images that impinge upon them as "presences." Hence the "present image" of the beloved floats into the poet's mind as well as into the reader's mind ("the mind"). Like Stevens' "nothing" or the second "there," this image is and is not there. The whole poem becomes an indeterminacy before the reader.

Yeats has striven to make this poem a presence to the reader, in the sense that I have defined "presence." The reader is compelled to ask the same questions of the poem that the poet asks of the images he sees. As with Klee's painting, we enter when we begin to look at the poem as a poem; we step back and read the emblems, we experience the pages of the book, we see the illusion as illusion. But at this moment too the poem becomes an indeterminate presence.

This happens, for example, in stanza III. The poet wonders if his beloved was like this or that when she was young. The tense shifts from present to past. This is the only time this happens in the poem. Yeats exploits the opportunity by lurching from past to the most concrete present situation (the classroom), until his beloved seems to appear to him but also to the reader; she stands there like a materialized apparition. This is a form of indeterminacy in the poem, for the beloved seems to be there and yet in the setting of the poem she is not there.

The same thing happens when the poet cries out "O Presences" or questions the images before his mind's eye. Each of these instances marks a crisis when art and life, illusion and anti-illusion meet, or collide. This produces the cry, "O Presences."

One must not underestimate Yeats' fascination with ghosts. His whole technique could be said to strive to create that sudden appearance of a ghost at a seance and the witnesses' ensuing shriek of horror. The urgency of the interrogatives in stanzas V and VIII, mitigated as they are since there is (literally) no one to answer them except the "Presences," demand the reader's interaction, in precisely the same way as Klee's indistinct forms require the viewer to enter and to interact with the work in order to complete the image.

In the case of the poem, the text seems to speak, as if it were a presence demanding our present response. But it is nevertheless a text, and as such its silence distances the reader from the questions. The effect succeeds only if we begin by identifying, but end by ceasing to identify, with the poet (the "I" of the poem) or with the "Presences."

Yeats' whole interest is making his readers experience this crisis of illusion, just as the sight of Klee's barren woman does. This is what I designate as the first way presence makes itself felt in the act of reading.

"Among School Children" is concerned with presences, uncanny presences which are embodiments of the union of opposites (the emblem of the "sphere" and "the yolk and white of the one shell"); as Yeats wrote in a famous letter, "Man can embody truth but he can not know it" (Ellmann 289). The opposition is resolved in an "embodiment," as Frost uses the word in "The Most of It," an canny presence that exposes our attempts to determine it.

As I have tried to show, Yeats creates his effect in "Among School Children" by having the reader imagine a scene and then suddenly have a presence break in upon that mimetic illusion. We noticed that the same thing is effected in Klee's painting, in which the viewer must use imagination to complete the lines of the painting until suddenly that shape, that presence appears. This involves an apparent

self-awareness of the work of art as an imaginative construct (Krieger 150; Iser, Reading Process 64-65).

A similar thing is happening in Yeats' play The Resurrection. There are three unusual features in this play: much of it happens offstage, it relies on canonical Biblical texts, and it presents a feeling of historical inevitability which is accentuated by its emphasis on circularity (the opening and closing poems create a sense of circularity, as does the repeated emphasis of the cycles of the year and history). The contrapuntal lines of the story of Christ and the pagan myth of Dionysus merge when we realize that the yearly death and resurrection of Dionysus is a microcosmic example of the macrocosmic death and resurrection of Christ. The story recounted in the New Testament is both unique historical event and pattern. Yeats achieved this by using a familiar story, in the most canonical version.

In the performance that I imagine, it is essential to the effect of the play that the audience knows what will happen; something that startles can be made more startling when it rises up in the midst of the familiar. Knowing so much, the audience is prepared to participate. The air of intimacy is created, for example, when the Greek enters the

play through the audience.⁴⁵ When the Greek and the Hebrew hear the growing noise of the Dionysian revelers, they twice look out over the heads of the audience (Plays 366). Just when the Syrian enters, the Hebrew speaks from among the audience (Plays 369). And last, if the play is produced, as Yeats imagined, in a "studio" or a "drawing-room," there is no real stage and the curtain is but a cloth folded and unfolded as the opening and closing verses are sung (Plays 364).

By setting the play in a simple room with a curtained door to the unseen inner room where the apostles are, Yeats draws the audience and the actors together, even as he draws Dionysus and Christ together. Furthermore, when twice the Greek looks over the heads of the audience and sees and describes the Dionysian revelers, the audience is made to participate in the illusions created by his words. The whole success of the play depends upon the audience's ability to imagine the Dionysian revelry which is happening offstage, or more exactly right behind them. The gesture of looking over the heads of the audience increases the foreboding; one might have the urge to turn around and see

⁴⁵ The stage directions for the opening of the play read as follows: "The Hebrew is discovered alone upon the stage; he has a sword or spear. The Musicians make faint drum-taps, or sound a rattle; the Greek enters through the audience from the left." My subsequent observations on the stage directions are backed up by page references to the Collected Plays.

what is there. However, all there is to see is one's own reflection.

Very little happens in this play. There is a lot of theological and philosophical talk that revolves around the subject of the play, the resurrection of the dead Christ. However, a great deal is made to happen in the minds of the audience. Yeats has used a technique common in classical drama, making present to the action an event that happens or has happened offstage.⁴⁶ These absent events are made vividly present to the audience's imagination.

The excitement of the ecstasy of the worshipers of Dionysus, made more imaginatively convincing and foreboding by the use of music, happens offstage. The whole effect of the play is to suggest their approach, until they seem just outside the house where the apostles and our three characters -- and the audience -- are. The growing intensity of their ecstasy comes in one emotional crescendo. To achieve this, it is essential that the audience be tricked by the descriptions and the music, be tricked just as the Titans tricked the infant Dionysus with rattles and mirrors. The audience is tricked by the rattles offstage,

⁴⁶ In classical drama it is usually death that happens offstage. So in this play too, for Christ has died off stage, but he enters walking, not on a stretcher.

but more than this by the mirrors of imagination.⁴⁷ The play demands full complicity through identification.

This participation is similar to that we found in "Among School Children" and Klee's "Eine Unfruchtbare." We enter the illusion of the work. It achieves this effect by means of the vivid speech of the players in performance and their living presence among the audience. If we read the play we can experience this mentally.

The audience's familiarity with the story and even the text of the New Testament keep the illusion alive and increases the foreboding and anticipation. Similarly the talk around the action of the play, the talk about Christ, makes the audience almost chant, mentally, and sway like the revelers themselves. The audience and the revelers join together in their anticipation of the god's arrival. Then suddenly Christ walks across the "drawing room."

The play has built up so much anticipation that Christ seems to step out of the audience's imagination into this little room. He appears there before the audience, seemingly alive but dead. He is present, he is a presence, in much the same way that the nun's or the mother's image is a presence, or the image of Maud Gonne, or the dancer, or the whole poem "Among School Children" are presences. An

⁴⁷ In a sense these are lures; seen in this light there is an interesting link with Bonnefoy's Dans le leurre du seuil.

image has come alive, right before our eyes, in our living space (or living room).

Christ is an embodiment of the unity of opposites, like the "sphere," or the "yolk and the white of the one shell," or the two drops in Klee's painting. After all, he is both dead and alive, as the Greek finds out. The Greek, who expected a phantom, touches Christ's side and feels a heart beating there. He exclaims in horror, "The heart of a phantom is beating" and screams. The same scream or shriek is in the silent painting and the silent text, only now it is voiced as the drama is played, actually or mentally. Yeats has very deliberately oriented every detail of the play to this one effect, as I envision it in reading.

The play concludes with two stanzas of verse, as it had opened. The concluding verses recount the coming of Christ from an historical-cosmological perspective, how Christ, as neither a god, as the Greek thought, nor merely a man as the Hebrew thought, but a new third thing, a God-man who initiates a new era in which emotion reigns. The second stanza speaks of how imagination drives human beings on to achieve, but how this very achievement deadens that drive and even mocks that achievement. Contact with reality "consumes" the dream that drove us towards reality, just as emblem consumes naturalistic image in Yeats' poetry (de Man,

Romanticism 194). The play ends with the following two lines:

Whatever flames upon the night
Man's own resinous heart has fed.

Human imagination has created something marvelous -- this very play, for example, with its emotional intensity. Despite a sense of defeat and futility, something has happened: the sole initial reality, the heart's desire, remains. All acts of imagination are reduced in these final verses, whether it is the image of unity that is Christ, or the image the audience bears during the play, or even the play itself. All are presences that "flame" and light up a "drawing-room" one "night." The emotional intensity of the "flame" is all; the emotional intensity of presence is all.

Through the technique of this play, Christ becomes our imaginative realization and stands present before us. But it is our own desire, as the shape upon the lap of the barren woman is a realization of her own desire. The shock we might feel from seeing Christ is the shock of seeing the clown-executioner. We saw Christ this night, as she saw that shape, because we desired to see him, desired with the haunting and even shocking inevitability of a written text. But the woman consciously desires, while the audience submits to the play which implants the desire. Yeats makes the audience feel that sense of inevitability of a prior

presence and yet makes the audience also feel responsible for bringing it about. The audience is caught between these, just as it is caught between the unique historical event and its pattern.

The play's intended success depends upon the audience's imaginative ability; we must be seduced by the images (spoken on stage) as by mirrors and rattles (all the more powerful because oral/performative, present, seductive, erotic), get the shock of horror when suddenly our imagination materializes in the figure of Christ, but we are left with the statement that it was but our own desire that created all of this, or made it happen. We enter the mimetic illusion of the play and then are turned out of it. Yeats is not content to have an audience identify with a person or image; it is not enough to feel the uncanny vicariously. One must feel it, through art, in one's very reality and present life.

What is happening in one's reality during the play is not simply the events within the play but also the experience of play watching, the experiencing of art as art. The illusion of art is exposed, and so are the illusions of our own determinations. All that is left is the intensity of emotion, the heart.

As my last example, I would like to look at a poem from Bonnefoy's Dans le leurre du seuil. It is difficult to

enter any one particular section or poem in Dans le leurre du seuil, because its tentative divisions (marked by dots or spaces) constantly urge the reader to look at the whole book rather than the fragmented parts. But it is also true that one finds within the book individual passages that reflect the whole. Such is the case with the first seventy lines of "Deux barques" (Poèmes 275-276).⁴⁸ This poem is a microcosm of the movement, pace, and emotional tenor of the whole collection. More than this, it contains all the major themes of the collection.

In the opening poem, if I can call it that, of the section entitled "Deux barques," the word présence occurs in the non-abstract plural, that is to say in exactly the same way as Yeats' "Presences" in "Among School Children." A fruitful comparison of the two poets will emerge from this apparently small point of contact.

Like the whole collection, the opening poem of "Deux barques" is set in a specific place, a house in Valsaintes (Shadow's 164). This gives the impression that the setting is anchored, however tentatively, in a real place, an external reality. The poem opens with a specific scene in the house, "le lit défait, / La fenêtre qui bat dans la chaleur" and ends with another specific scene, presumably

⁴⁸ For another discussion of this passage in terms of presence, see Gasarian (17).

another room in the same house, "je retrouve/ Le verre d'hier soir, à demi plein." Furthermore, in the course of the poem a concrete memory arises, "te souviens-tu,/ Nous allions par ces champs barrés de pierres." The shift to the imperfect tense strongly suggests a real past experience of a speaker who is present in the text, as does "ces champs" whose demonstrative adjective points outside the poem to what the reader can only assume to be a concrete place (Banfield 268-269). This creates the same effect as Yeats' allusion to "that fit" noted above, a sense of familiarity and intimacy.

Although it is hard to fit together, the reader can identify and identify with the scene: in the bedroom of the house, during a night or early morning when it is still dark outside ("dans l'ombre encore"), while there is a storm ("L'orage qui s'attarde"), a restless lover tries to contact his beloved. This draws the reader into the poem in exactly the same way that Yeats' concrete setting, more simply given, draws the reader into "Among School Children."

Furthermore, as in Yeats' poem, the possibility of identification is undercut, the illusion is pierced. However, this happens immediately, for even as the scene is set it is undermined. For example, on this stormy night, inside the house and out, the lover takes the hand of his beloved who sleeps ("à son rêve"), and addresses her in his

mind. Does she wake up? He asks her to unclench his fists and form his hands into a cup so that he might drink. She seems really to do this, though it is never stated that she wakes up. He drinks ("je bois" which must be compared with the "quand je bois" and the end of the poem). There can be no doubt about it. After so much urgent speech, after so many imperatives, the indicative is striking -- but it is by no means clear that he literally drinks.

If he does not drink, however, the indicative can only refer to what he does in his own dream, or his imagination which is also a kind of dream. Are they both asleep? No clear answer can be given. We can only say for sure that what concrete, indicative action we are given is as soon undercut; we are left uncertain what is reality and what is dream or imagination. Even at the most concrete moment, when the poet wakes up ("je me lève"), he as much metaphorically as physically wakes from a dream. We are forced to ask whether there is a beloved at all, despite all the feeling in the language. The more traditional, mimetic approach I used with "Among School Children" does not work well for this dream-poem. Questions about the status of language arise too soon.

The same is true of these "présences" that are recalled. They seem to have been seen, once, in a real historical time. The use of the imperfect tense is natural

to indicate as much. But this one use quickly gives way to the present indicative again ("ils se penchent, eux comme nous"), until historical time, the present time of the stormy night, the present of dream, and the present of metaphor, are indistinguishable as they were in "Among School Children." The scene we see is made to disappear; the poem's images tremble in the liminal space between appearance and disappearance, like Stevens' "nothing."

The poem is best approached allegorically, as a timeless present. For example, these two presences smile under the first tree ("sous les feuilles du premier arbre"). Are these really other beings, other than the couple that were walking once through fields or a kind of mirror projection? Perhaps they seem more like the mythical Adam and Eve.

Bonnefoy, using a slightly different technique than Yeats, pits apparently literal meaning against symbolic or allegorical meaning. Allegory is a very written method of encoding meaning. It depends upon absence and temporal disjunction, even more than the emblem which, for Yeats at least, has the ambition of standing alone (de Man, Blindness 207; Stamelman 423). Allegory as écriture always depends upon another previous text to which it refers (de Man Blindness 207). In using allegory, not of the sort used by Spencer but the sort described by Walter Benjamin, Bonnefoy

puts the accent on absence, as if the poet can only speak of a presence that has passed away by the time of writing (Stamelman 427). But by the same token, allegory suggests another sort of presence, because it turns the reader's eyes to the text as a text to be interpreted in the reader's present tense. Indeterminacies are created in this poem through the temporal interplay of mimetic illusion and allegory. Though the technique is different the result is similar to "Among School Children."

Bonnefoy, like Yeats, wants to pull simple identification up short, but more than this he aims to show how in writing even the most concrete scene is only a dream; we take it to be real but this is an illusion because it exists only in language and not in reality.

Bonnefoy is interested in assimilating dream and waking states, not to assert the greater value of dreaming, but rather to assert how much of our life is a dreaming which simultaneously leads us to and keeps us from presence. His aim is to create a strong dream fabric only to tear it, to suggest, though not write, something beyond our dreams.⁴⁹

Dreams are indispensable. For Bonnefoy, they are the very stuff of life, especially mental life. What matters, for this analysis and for Bonnefoy's technique, is not a

⁴⁹ As Bonnefoy says in the Naughton interview, "Dreaming, in poetry, is to stop dreaming" (Shadows 172).

clear demarcation between dream and waking reality (the poem articulates as much, "Quel est le vrai de ces deux mondes, peu importe"). The process of undercutting images is all important (making the text a material presence in the reader's present tense).

By being so aware of the interplay between dream and reality, Bonnefoy anticipates how our desires, almost always hidden from us, structure our images, our dreams, our reality. This anticipation abates the sense of the uncanny, because no one in the poem, especially not the poet, thought we simply and purely experience external reality. The uncanny effect in Klee and in Yeats comes from the realization that what one thought was one thing is really also another (alive/dead, dead/alive) and that it reflects back to us our own unknown determinations; we see ourselves unexpectedly reflected back to ourselves.

Instead of the uncanny, we get uncertainty and a questioning relation with language. This technique sidesteps the full identification with the work of art. Bonnefoy consciously emphasizes the end of the process, the moment when we look at the work of art as art and no longer as merely life. He points us to where we continually experience the frame of the work.

The dynamic tension of mimesis and allegory occurs, for example, towards the end of the first stanza, when the poet

returns to the imperative mood, again attempting to contact his beloved. He bids her to invent him, perhaps redouble him, fiction or reality it hardly matters so long as they meet. He bids her do it "Sur ces confins de fable déchirée"; the "Sur" suggests that it take place on these borders, that is in a place exactly between, a threshold. The fable might be the story of Adam and Even, but it does not matter because the fable is also just an image, dream or fiction, and it is torn because it is not pure fable nor pure reality. The threshold in this microcosmic level is the threshold of the whole book. But this very threshold is an invention, an image, and as such only a lure. We are put between the mimetic and the allegorical, only to look towards presence, là-bas.

The implication is that the lovers invent each other by creating images of each other. In this sense they transcend themselves, assimilating themselves to something greater than themselves. This is precisely what the poet asks of his beloved, namely to be indifferent, to receive him impersonally and absent-mindedly. If she begins to take him as more than his mere individuality, he will be able to raise himself up and they will be able to know a sense of presence. By inventing him she increases him ("rédouble-moi"). Perhaps this is Bonnefoy's version of the Heracles myth.

The bid here is to have the lovers invent each other and rise above themselves through love; but the emphasis is not on the Narcissistic aspect of this.⁵⁰ The emphasis is on consent. This means that one's image of one's self is redoubled or increased by another's image of oneself and at the moment there is the possibility of getting out of one's own Narcissistic projections. One consents to have one's image of one's self and world upset, knocked off balance, torn, by an Other and when this happens presence emerges.

Bonnefoy gives us images but does not let us dwell in them; he cuts across them in order to suggest something beyond these projective images. Something truly external to us, something truly Other. This, as we saw in Chapter 3, is Bonnefoy's understanding of presence.

In the opening poem of "Deux barques" the reader feels the mimetic power of language which happens through the mental process of reflection; on the other hand, there is the drive towards the Other, towards an reality external to our desires and projections. The poet draws the reader into the poem with mimetic illusion (or lure). Then the poet turns us out by self-consciously presenting to the reader the work of art as artifice through the use of allegory.

⁵⁰ This is perhaps alluded to in the second stanza of the poem; "je suis vou  t  / Sur cette eau o   fleurit notre ressemblance."

The mimetic and the allegorical in this poem are in conflict and create indeterminacies. As I have tried to develop throughout this chapter, one way that poetry can make presence felt is by turning the reader's gaze toward the work of art as art and leading the reader to engage in a relation with the work of art in the present act of reading, engage in an active realization. The realization is active because so many indeterminacies arise when the illusion of art is exposed. In the end, what happens is that the act of realizing a poem in the present moment is made self-conscious, thus giving rise to a feeling of presence in the reader. Why presence? Because the reader is able to feel this taking place in the present moment, for one thing, but also because of all when one's determinations are shown to be limited and limiting then the idea of the unlimited and truly indeterminate can appear.

Chapter 5

Plotinian Presence and the Sounding Text

It will be recalled that I defined presence as any indeterminacy in a poem and I argued, citing the examples of the previous chapter, that indeterminacies can convey a sense of presence by making the reader self-consciously aware of the act of reading or realizing a poem. This approach could apply to just about any poem. I would like, therefore, to limit my field of inquiry and concentrate on a certain kind of indeterminacy, one which conveys a sense of plenitude, inexhaustible possibility, and intensity.

To develop my explication of this kind of indeterminacy, I will make use of the philosophy of Plotinus. I will do this for two reasons: first, his One is a model for the sort of indeterminacy I will be describing, and, second, his Enneads describe a relation of sound and silence that is fruitful for understanding this kind of indeterminacy.

I. Plotinus' One

According to Plotinus the first principle, the Good or One, is beyond knowledge, language, thought, and Being. It is the source of these, and therefore it is logically prior and other than them. The One eternally creates the universe by abiding what it is in its perfection, sustaining and creating the universe eternally. It as it were overflows

itself, so that each subsequent reality has a portion of it (Enneads 5.2.1.9). Put in terms of presence, the One is present to each thing everywhere as a whole and all at once, according to its capacity to receive the One.

For Plotinus, everything in the cosmos has a trace of the One, possessing it non-spatially (Enneads 5.1.6; 6.4.11; Gurtler 14-23). This means simply that each thing in the cosmos has a unity unique to itself, and insofar as it has unity, of a greater or lesser degree, it also has Being and reality. A heavenly body has more reality than a stone because it has a greater unity, but both have their own unique unity.

According to Plotinus, absence is not so much the withdrawal of the One as our hiding the One by our skewed vision. Our view of reality can either reveal or conceal the One. Matter is absolute privation and evil. Because it lacks unity it lacks Being. The soul's separation from the One comes about through our tendency to non-being.⁵¹ This is its otherness from the One.⁵²

⁵¹ If one were to find a good place to catch Plotinus in a dualism it would be here. All things including Nous remain irrevocably other than the One (see for example Enneads 3.8 and 6.8; for this view of the One see Armstrong 27-28). However, if we take this otherness as the sort of ontological refraction that Bonnefoy talks of in L'Arrière-pays, or take it in a psychological sense, not in a purely intellectual one, so that our tendency to non-being would be a kind of emotional dispersal, a dissociation among all the others in us, then it is possible to see the One as immanent still. However, the position will be open to many strong philosophical objections,

Absence is not synonymous with privation (or matter). Rather absence is the disappearance of the One's presence as we tend to non-being, as we separate ourselves from the One in an act of selfishness (Enneads 3.7.11.15-17 and Blumenthal 4). However, if we recall our selves (this is Plotinus' version of the Platonic doctrine of recollection), and ready ourselves to contact the One, we see absence overtaken by the presence of the One.⁵³ We must open ourselves to an inner metamorphosis of our vision. This makes possible the famous Plotinian return to the One, which begins with an inner transformation (Hadot 48; Schroeder,

not the least of which would be the reconciliation of transcendence and immanence. But according to Plotinus, the One's transcendence does not mean it is cut off from us (Enneads 5.5.3; 5.5.8; see also Armstrong 117).

⁵² There is a problem in Plotinus' conception of otherness here, as J. M. Rist has shown (Road 223-224; "Otherness" 86-87). The philosopher, an embodied soul, wishing to contact the One, puts away his otherness and becomes a unity, until he is so like the One that he contacts it. But if he is so like the One and there is no otherness between, how are they not the same? How is the philosopher himself not the One itself? We saw this problem arise in relation to Yeats' notion of presence and his reading of Plotinus in Chapter 2.

⁵³ Plato derives the word kalos (beautiful) from the verb kalein (to call; to name, to summon) (Cratylus 416d4-10). Plotinus seems to evoke this false etymology at 6.7.23.1-4 to express the "call" of beauty to realize our connection with the One (Schroeder Form 72-73):

"There [in the divine realm], surely, one need not wonder if that which the soul pursues and which gives light to Intellect and in falling upon it stirs a trace of itself has so great a power, and draws to itself and calls back from all wandering to rest beside it."

Form 84). It also makes for an apparent ambiguity as to whether the One is immanent or transcendent.

The return to the One is an approach, as it were, of like to like. It is possible for a person to contact the One because the embodied soul has a trace of something kindred to the One (Enneads 1.6.2.7-11). The work of art can serve to awaken this trace, to turn our gaze from non-being toward the One. It can alter our perception or our vision of the world.

If we are selfish and concern ourselves with the distractions of this world -- that is, if we fail to see all entities, material or otherwise, in their relation to the One -- we tend toward non-being and make ourselves unlike the One. As this happens, the One becomes hidden for us by our own way of seeing. We live in division, from ourselves but also from the One. This is because the One is absolute, unthinkable unity and any attempt to conceive of it in thought or language necessarily divides it and conceals its unity.

How is it present? As one life: for life in a living being does not reach only so far, and then is unable to extend over the whole, but it is everywhere. But if someone again enquires how, let him call to mind its power, that there is not a certain quantity of it, but if he divides it up endlessly in his discursive thought he always has the same power, endless in depth; for it does not have matter there in the intelligible, that it might fall short along with the size of its bulk and come to little. If then you grasp the endlessness for ever welling up in it, the unwearying and unwearying nature which in no way falls short in it,

boiling over with life, we may say, if you concentrate your attention somewhere or fix your gaze on a particular point you will not find it there, but the opposite will happen to you.

(Enneads 6.5.12.1-11; my emphasis)

The One shatters every image or word we create for it.⁵⁴ It eludes us in a sense, but this is not true, in fact; rather it is our language, our images, all of our determinations that hide the One. To be open to the One is to be open to having all of one's ideas and conceptions, all of one's habits, exploded and yet not to feel destroyed or abandoned; it is to have an accepting and creative relation with formlessness and absence.

The sort of textual indeterminacy I posit for Yeats and Bonnefoy is similar. It is absolutely inexhaustible. It refuses and defies every attempt to determine it. Like Plotinus' One, it is always already there and always other than we have thought it, always more. Hence its presence

⁵⁴ "Vision of the One is iconoclastic; it destroys our images of it. This is the very formlessness that...so terrifies the soul. The sunrise of the One overwhelms our horizon, our interpretive activities that would limit the One. In this sense the One interprets us. What does it mean that the One for us becomes, not an icon, but vision, another way of seeing? Again, we may appeal to our example of reading. Do we not say that the study of a text may alter our vision, our way of looking? In this case, it is not simply that such study presents us with new and curious things to look at, that we may, from our horizon, interpret them. Rather the text invades our horizon and interprets us, changes our way of looking." (Schroeder, Form 85).

conveys a sense of plenitude ("boiling over with life," "unwearying and unwearing"; cf. Enneads 6.7.12).

II. Plotinus' Notion of Presence⁵⁵

In Plotinus' view the whole of reality is linked up and down, from the One to the stones of earth, and from the stones up to the One. This is possible because each thing has both an independent and dependent relationship with its source (which is ultimately the One). The source has greater reality than the product and gives the product whatever reality it has, even as the source turns away from what is created and is unaffected by it. This double relationship is what Plotinus designates as presence.

According to Plotinus, the relation of presence has two aspects, dependence and independence (Schroeder, Form 55ff; see also Reflection and Synousia). His model for the relation of dependence is a form of representation like a mirror reflection. A mirror's image is dependent on its source because if the source is removed from before the mirror, there is no longer any image. The image in the mirror depends upon the presence of the source of the image. The source of the image remains separate, alone by itself, and unaffected by the process of being reflected.

⁵⁵ In the following discussion I am heavily indebted to the work of Frederic M. Schroeder on Plotinus' notion of presence.

Plotinus' model for the relation of independence is a form of representation like a portrait painting. This sort of representation involves an analysis of the source of the image, isolating areas of color and form and reproducing them in another medium. Furthermore, the finished product has a life independent of the model or source of the image.

Plotinus expresses these two modes of presence with two different verbs, pareinai and syneinai. Pareinai, which is the traditional Platonic verb denoting presence, denotes in Plotinus presence as a relation of independence grounded in representation.⁵⁶ Syneinai, which is used in Plato but usually for purely human and not metaphysical relations, denotes presence as a relation of dependence grounded in reflection (Enneads 6.4.10; Schroeder, Form 25-28; 50-55).

Plotinus' notion of presence is not one of absolute self-evidence. Rather it entails also absence, for the One is eternally and everywhere present, each person and each thing has it, but it remains present "while being absent" (6.4.11.20). The One is "not absent from any, and absent from all" (6.9.4.25). The One's presence is a simultaneous

⁵⁶ For Plotinus' notion of presence in relation to Plato, see Schroeder "The Platonic Parmenides and Imitation in Plotinus." For the different semantic ideas contained in these uses of the Greek verb 'to be,' see C. Kahn, The Verb 'to Be' in Ancient Greek. A notable precedent for Plotinus' use of syneinai to mean "to be present" can be found in Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus v. 647.

presence-and-absence, immanence-and-transcendence. Plotinus insists that the One always remains alone by itself, not turned toward its creation. It does not occupy itself with anything other than itself. It is transcendent. However, each thing has the One, a trace of it at least, and remains connected to it, or stationed in it (O'Daly, Presence 163; Enneads 5.1.11.13-15). Hence the possibility of contact with the One is always present.

These ideas can be applied to textual indeterminacies. On the one hand, an indeterminate element is available for my determination. On the other hand, it can refuse all determinations. An indeterminacy is dependent on the reader's realization of the text but it is also in a sense independent of this realization and at times it even defies full determination. Insofar as it is dependent on the reader, an indeterminacy will reflect the reader's idiosyncratic habits of mind (syneinai); insofar as it is independent, an indeterminacy will remain beyond the grasp of the reader, or other than the reader's determinations (pareinai).

Presence, according to Plotinus, involves both of these relations, which act in a dynamic tension. This tension constitutes our relation to the One, which is immanent and transcendent, independent and dependent (Enneads 6.7.42.6-8). In this respect, Plotinus' philosophy is in sharp

contrast to that of Proclus, for whom the One is absolutely transcendent and whose metaphysics are far less dynamic (Proclus 209; Ronan 69; Niarchos 82). The later Neo-Platonists multiplied entities between the embodied soul and the One in hopes of coming closer to the One. In fact, this only expresses their awareness of the remoteness of the One.⁵⁷

Because Plotinus speaks of presence with the One as a 'shedding' of otherness, some scholars have argued that the mystical union is the realization of ultimate solipsism (Enneads 6.9.11.51; 5.1.6.12; see Kristeva 113-121; cf. Hadot 10-14). There is ample evidence in the Enneads to read the union with the One as the self becoming the One, the All (O'Daly, Self 82-94). In many ways this is how certain later Platonists took it, including Taylor who influenced Yeats. However, as many other scholars of Plotinus have insisted, in Plotinus' account of this union, the self is not transformed into the One, nor is it fused

⁵⁷ "As far as I know, there is no evidence that Proclus ever supposed that the mystical union itself could be attained by theurgy proper. His fault was that he altogether lost sight of the attainment of this union. It is true that theurgy seems at times to be higher than philosophy, but Proclus' strict view is that theurgy does not bring us to the mystical union. For that we need a 'higher kind of theurgy' - - by which Proclus means 'a different kind'; -- namely faith....For Proclus much more than for Plotinus mysticism depends rather on the ability of man to raise himself in a somewhat mechanical fashion than on the unaccountable 'presence' of the One. (Rist, Road 192; cf. 244)

into the One (Rist, Road 222-27; Schroeder, Form 88; O'Daly, Self 93; Armstrong 44-46). What must happen is that the self is brought to the highest state of unity possible for that soul, while still remaining an embodied soul and so other than the One. The person comes to feel the One's presence with him or herself everywhere as a whole all at once, according to her or his capacity, while still remaining other than the One. Since the One is so much more than us and we remain always other than it, contact with it cannot be identified with the realization of the ultimate self. In this way a person can "be with" himself and with an irreducible Other, as Porphyry says of Plotinus:

In this way he was present at once to himself and to others [synen], and he never relaxed his self-turned attention except in sleep. (Vita 8.19-21)⁵⁸

If we open ourselves to the One, that is, if we transform our relation to the absolutely indeterminate, we are with ourselves and with what is irreducibly other than us. In terms of reading poems, we are with a textual indeterminacy even while suspending the desire to determine it absolutely. We suspend this need momentarily and allow the plenitude of its otherness affect us. A striking

⁵⁸ Bonnefoy's epigraph to his Giacometti echoes this passage but seems to be a conflation of two different passages from the Vita (8.1.9-21 and 9.16-22). At any rate, he picks up the notion of "being with" in the last chapter of Giacometti and discusses how one can be with oneself and another (Giacometti 503).

example of this occurs in the following passage from Bonnefoy's Dans la leurre du seuil, which has so many similarities to the passage from the Enneads quoted in the Introduction:⁵⁹

"Tu ne me toucheras
Ni d'été ni d'hiver,
Ni quand la lune croît
Ou se dissipe.

Ni des mains du désir
Ni en image,
Ni de bouche qui aime
Ou déchirée.

Dormiras-tu,
Je reviendrai pourtant
Contre tes lèvres,

Te retourneras-tu
En soupirant
Comme pour te pencher, mon voyageur,
Sur une source,

Je serai là,
Ta bouche frôlera mes paupières closes."
(Poèmes 310)

One can not come to this presence, for it is not found, or come upon, but arises unexpectedly, the unique gift.

⁵⁹ "But one should not enquire whence it comes, for there is no "whence": for it does not really come or go away anywhere, but appears or does not appear. So one must not chase after it, but wait quietly till it appears, preparing oneself to contemplate it, as the eye awaits the rising of the sun; and the sun rising over the horizon ("from the ocean", the poets say [Iliad 7.421-2]) gives itself to the eyes to see.... But he [the One] did not come as one expected, but as one who did not come: for he was seen, not as having come, but as being there before all things, and even before Intellect came." (Enneads 5.5.8.1-6)

III. The Sounding Text

The kinds of poems under consideration here exploit both the written and the oral modes of language to create indeterminacies. The actual nature of the oral versus the written modes of language is not my concern here. I designate as oral merely those words or phrases that have a greater performative quality. These words and phrases call for a different kind of realization by the reader than do words and phrases with a lesser performative quality.

It can often be fruitful to read a poem in light of its so-called oral elements. For example, a direct address in a poem can create the illusion of a closer contact between reader and text during the realization of that text, thus creating certain kinds of indeterminacies.

I call the sorts of poems that play off performative/oral words and phrases off written ones "sounding texts," whether this sounding is actually vocal or sub-vocal. Plotinus gives the following example of a sounding text:

Just as there is often a sound in the air, and a word in the sound, and an ear is there and receives and perceives it; and if you put another ear in the middle of the space between, the word and the sound would come to it, or rather the ear would come to the word.
(Enneads 6.4.12.1-5)

Speech is present everywhere in the air all at once and each ear receives it according to its capacity. The same is

true of Plotinus' Divine Reality. This simile seems in the Platonic tradition of privileging oral communication over writing (Derrida, Dissemination 136-137). On a closer look, however, this is not the case at all. This simile turns out to be most un-Platonic.

First of all, the sound is said to be just there, in the air, as often happens, and a word is "in" the sound. But how did the sound and the word get there? We must assume that there is a source of the sound and the word. Furthermore, the word exists before the sound, because the sound results from the impact of the word or logos on the air. (Enneads, 4.6.2.10-16).⁶⁰ Secondly, the ear of the hearer receives the sound, as we might expect, but then Plotinus corrects himself and says rather that the ear "comes to" the word.

This is a curious description of oral communication. For the word exists before sound and enters it, therefore there must be such a thing as an unsounded word, a text.

⁶⁰ Plotinus considers sound to result from the impact of the logos, which forms an impression in the air. Air alone is not necessary, according to Plotinus at Enneads 4.5.5, to convey sound to the ear. Hearing is likened to reading letters written on air; it is the logos (or 'rational forming principle') that actively forms the air. As with all its activities, the soul apprehends the form in the sound, the logos, which is, as suggested in the subsequent argument, conceived of as written first of all, and not spoken. For a more detailed discussion of sound in Plotinus, see R. Ferwerda, "Plotinus on Sound" (43-57).

Also, the source of the sound is not apparent in the simile, which is to say it is absent or invisible. Lastly, the word is already there, in fact it has always already been there, so that the ear can come to it. What Plotinus has in mind here must be a written text, but a written text that is speaking or sounding. For Plotinus, unlike Socrates, the text is not silent, is not a pure sight; it is sight becoming sound (Phaedrus 275d4-7).⁶¹

Plotinus sees the best expression of this notion of presence in the figure of the sounding text, the present speech of an absent author, instead of the Platonic figure of a self-announcing voice revealing an interiority.

Since the One is transcendent, it is not in need of us; it is independent. It does not turn to us and address us, its presence is not an address we hear, but a sounding or speaking text we overhear. It sounds impersonally.

However, each person has the One intimately, and so it addresses the individual; we hear the One as well. It is an intimate possession. The One speaks to all things, all people, impersonally, and we seem to overhear it. And yet

⁶¹ "The fact is, Pheadrus, that writing involves a similar disadvantage to painting. The productions of painting look like living beings, but if you ask them a question they maintain a solemn silence. The same holds true of written words"; Phaedrus and The Seventh and Eighth Letters, translated by Walter Hamilton (97).

it speaks to us personally since each of us has the One according to her or his capacity to receive it.⁶²

In terms of reading poems, an indeterminacy can call an individual reader to determine it. It addresses the reader intimately, since each realization of a poem is an individual act. However, insofar as the indeterminacy is inexhaustible, it will address all other possible readers at the same time it calls to an individual. It will thus speak impersonally as well as personally. Furthermore, oral/performative modes of language can create the illusion of intimacy between the text and the reader, while the text's written-ness will undermine this illusion. A whole new kind of possible indeterminacies now opens in the realm of sound.

An example of this kind of aural indeterminacy can be found in Bonnefoy's poem "la voix encore" (Ce qui 28). This poem, like several passages in preceding volume of poetry (Dans le leurre du seuil), comes in quotation marks, presumably to indicate that it is transcribed speech (cf. Poèmes 264, 306, 307, 308, 310). The voice, as so often in Bonnefoy, is negative; it antagonizes the poet, and it refuses something. Because quotation marks, questions, and imperatives are all linguistic modes that imply a hearer

⁶² It speaks to our "timeless individuality" as Yeats puts it in reference to Plotinus (Explorations 368).

present to respond, they create an illusion of intimacy, as it were drawing the reader into the poem.

The voice in the poem speaks so directly about meeting that we might expect it to be the voice of a person, the beloved, perhaps, of Dans le leurre du seuil. But nowhere in this book, nor in the previous one, is the voice given body or personality. In fact, people are so rare in Bonnefoy that one can not but think it deliberate. What is so curious about this voice is that it is systematically set up to seem personal address and yet to be absolutely impersonal, just like the sounding text of Plotinus.

It calls to us, even calls us back to ourselves. It draws us to the poem and asks us a question. But the voice also distances us precisely because it is a written text. Since an implied hearer is not an actual hearer, the written-ness of the poem distances us from the speech, the questions, the imperatives. And yet each time we read the poem we reactivate the voice. We give to the written text its sound.

This creates an indeterminacy in this particular poem. This can be most clearly seen in the aural pun on "voix" and "vois." When the voice says "vois" what does it ask us to see? At first we see what the mimetic power of language makes appear, the wood nailed to the door, two bodies making love, a stone in the grass. But when we look again we see

the "voix," that is we see the written word, which is a "voix" and yet is not a "voix," since the text, as we scan it, is a (silent) sight becoming sound.

The "voix" sounds. It draws us near, asking us questions and speaking in the imperative mood ("vois"). The pun on "vois"/"voix" depends on the reader's ability to create mental images and yet also suggests something beyond these, a presence which opens a hole or tears preservation inherent in writing.

What we hear in the end is another refusal. Although the voice in "La voix encore" is more obliging than those in Dans le leurre du seuil, still it seems to say that the One or presence is not found in language but in what is not there in language, only in what is refused (Vie 99; "De vent et de fumee"; "l'oeuvre ne prendre/ À pleines mains qu'une eau qui se refuse").⁶³ What we seek is somewhere else, somewhere other and yet not totally elsewhere, but something over there in our here, "là-bas." However, despite this absence, a presence is felt in this indeterminacy, as it can be felt in Stevens' poem discussed above.

⁶³ We shall see this again in the next chapter in reference to Bonnefoy's poem "Hopkins Forest" where a voice, perhaps the voice of all Bonnefoy's voice poems, says 'noli me tangere.' This is his refusal to submit presence to language.

IV. Sounding of Silence

I would like to take this kind of aural indeterminacy further, again using the philosophy of Plotinus. According to Plotinus, the One is silent and remains beyond language, beyond knowledge and thought (Enneads 5.3.14; Schroeder Form 67-70). Nous is a trace of silence, and so it must be a kind of sound. Language can take us to the Intelligible World (Nous) where the primal negotiation of Sameness and Difference oscillates like tones in a fifth or a seventh chord or the two tones sounded in a diphthong.⁶⁴ Beyond this is the stillness and the silence of the One (Enneads 5.1.6; Schroeder 40-65). What is the relation of this sound and the silent One?

Plotinus seems to suggest that there is a kind of primal sounding before language, in the realm of Nous, the Intelligible World, where sameness and difference first come into being. It is, as it were, a kind of sound and has its

⁶⁴ As has often been noted, Plotinus, like all Greek philosophers privileges the sense of sight over all other senses. He repeatedly refers to the soundlessness and stillness of the realm of Nous (see R. Ferwerda, La signification 117-123). And yet if all things are other than the One, and the One is silent, all things must partake of sound in some sense, including Nous. I imagine that these voices must be primal sound, the first difference from silence, perhaps something like Saussurean phonetic differentiation.

nature and being from its separation from silence or the

One:

If then there is to be conscious apprehension of the powers which are present in this way, we must turn our power of apprehension inwards, and make it attend to what is there. It is as if someone was expecting to hear a voice which he wanted to hear and withdrew from other sounds and roused his power of hearing to catch what, when it comes, is the best of all sounds which can be heard; so here also we must let perceptible sounds go (except insofar as we must listen to them) and keep the soul's power of apprehension pure and ready to hear the voices from on high.

(Enneads 5.1.12.13-21)

By its very sounding, Nous expresses the silence of the One, just as language expresses the logoi of Nous but in a fragmented way. This sound is a trace of an originary silence just as form in Nous is a trace of an originary formlessness. The One's presence-and-absence is most vividly perceived when we can hear that sounding before language.⁶⁵ We must only listen, and by listening be present. This is a kind of sounding in which silence can be heard, just as in flickering light darkness can be seen:

Oh, that dark light cast by the stars! It must be recognized...In the scintillation or twinkling, in the Schimmern of the stars, the light at its height, its breaking point, becomes the secret flashing light that beckons us. This pulsing light -- the Other in the Same -- this transcendence, this awakening of the Same by the Other, this pointillism of light, made acute by this twinkling -- is this not the ineffable in which a spoken word deafening our ears falls silent at the very heart of the words we hear? (Levinas 83).

I imagine that an aural form of this "twinking" can be heard in poems. I see this as the sounding of silence, which arises when words put their trust in silence, as Bonnefoy says:

Mais la difficulté du langage, son incapacité fameuse à exprimer l'immédiat, je n'oublie certes pas qu'elle n'est pas résolue. Elle n'est au mieux qu'éclaircie, ou accusée, puisque je n'ai fait que vouloir des mots qu'ils mettent leur foi dans le silence. Que peuvent-ils retenir ou dire, quand la présence se donne dans l'univers de l'instant? La parole peut bien, comme je le fais maintenant, célébrer la présence, chanter son

⁶⁵ Perhaps this is something similar to what Heidegger called "das Geläut der Stille" ("the ringing of the stillness;" see Bernasconi 62).

acte, nous préparer en esprit à sa rencontre, mais non pas nous permettre de l'accomplir. La parole est déjà l'oubli, il se peut bien qu'elle ait été notre chute, la voici en tout cas privée de la rencontre de l'être, ne faut-il pas condamner, une fois de plus, la prétention de la poésie? (L'Improbable, 126)

This capacity of words, albeit only under certain conditions, to have a fruitful relation with silence, is the vision of the other in the same, as Levinas says. I find it in many poems of Yeats and Bonnefoy. It is the testament of possibility in poetry, the sun flashing in the glass, the "bright sculptures of Los's Hall," which announces the end of solipsism and the advent of something more. This sounding can be identified with Yeats' "fifth element" and Bonnefoy's "tache," since both of these are vocal elements that convey a sense of "unwearying and unwearing" possibility and intensity. Examples of this sounding of silence will be discussed throughout the rest of this dissertation.

Chapter 6

Having extended my definition of indeterminacy with the help of Plotinus' philosophy, I would like to concentrate on some examples of the second way a presence can make itself felt in the act of reading. As will be recalled, the first way occurs when the reader's determinations are revealed and reflected back to the reader. The second occurs when the reader confronts certain indeterminacies in a poem and suspends, momentarily, the need to determine them; at these moments a sense of plenitude and intensity can arise for the reader. The sorts of indeterminacies to be discussed now have a quality of inexhaustibility. Like Plotinus' One, they can not be subjected to determination without losing sight of them, as it were. Furthermore, they convey a sense of intensity and plenitude. Examples of this process can be found in a painting by Paul Klee ("Knabe mit Spielsachen") and two poems (Bonnefoy's "Hopkins Forest" and Yeats' "Long-legged Fly").

Klee's "Knabe mit Spielsachen" was painted in 1940, the year of his death (Paul Klee at the Guggenheim 203). In keeping with the character of his late work, this painting is executed in an unusual medium (colored paste), and its figure is drawn in broad black lines. These lines make the painted forms immediately comprehensible. The viewer does not need to step up close to see where the lines go, where



Figure 4. Paul Klee, "Boys with Toys," ("Knabe mit Spielsachen"), 1940.

the figures are, and where the background is. The color scheme helps to distinguish the forms, too, unlike "Eine Unfruchtbare." Solid blocks, not blotches, create the forms. The colors have a harmonious range, from brown to tan to yellow, but also from brown to red to orange.

The painting is immediately striking, far more so than "Eine Unfruchtbare." The vivid colors and bold lines are executed with a sure hand, giving the painting a subtle but unmistakable intensity. And yet all the forms are static, relentlessly geometric. This discrepancy is curious. The details of the painting do not give the whole of the work's effect; there is something more, something difficult to determine, which generates the energy we feel in this painting.

The figure is remarkably similar to the barren woman, especially in the gesture of the arms thrown into the air. But what a different feeling between the two paintings! The image of the boy conveys a sense of joy and triumph, whereas the barren woman seems stunned and confused.

What is it in the figure of the boy that creates the feeling of joy and triumph? It is not the gesture of the arms alone (which do not have hands, which were so expressive in the other painting). Nor is it the face, which is featureless except for the eyes. The eyes themselves seem almost blank. They stare up out of the

painting, whereas the woman's eyes are fixed on her lap or closed. But the boy's powerful upward look, perhaps directed to the parents who will recognize the child's achievement, flows from eyes that are strangely blank, almost demonic. A smile would have given too much away. There is much expressiveness in the twist of the boy's torso, as if he has just succeeded in making the diamond balance on the dowel below his legs and he suddenly turns around to say "Look, look, I've made it stand." His torso, however, is a rigid geometric shape; no sinuous lines are used to suggest torsion or energy. His body has weight. He sits. But he has just now suddenly thrown up his arms and turned around. In doing this his legs fly up into the air. He is so excited that it seems he might fall over backwards.

All this, however, comes in static forms. A bare minimum is given, but given in such a way as to achieve maximum effect. And the feeling of the painting is achieved by no one particular detail, not the color, not the lines, not the composition. We are not drawn into a scene in this painting as we are into "Eine Unfruchtbare." There is no one to identify with. The boy interacts with someone outside the painting. His toys are there, but have no particular importance.

What has importance is his feeling of triumphant joy and his eagerness to relate this feeling. But the feeling

is not simply given, not directly painted. To have given him a smile or an atom-like symbol of energetic joy would have deadened the feeling of the image because it would have tried to put into paint what can not be put into paint. The image would have become a disconcerting shape upon the viewer's lap, with no way for the viewer to put the strange half-living object at a distance. Because no one element in the painting conveys the feeling, the feeling remains free, expansive, and powerful enough to be present to the viewer.

The boy, like the barren woman, is a figure for the artist. He has just succeeded in making something, putting things together, and his joy is the joy of the artist who feels in contact with the source of creativity, with genesis. The artist in his work, and the child in his games; they have not trapped the spirit of genesis in a mere product, that is to say as finished work and object in the world. He has created in the finished work of art a parable or simile of genesis that speaks of the spirit of becoming without freezing it into any given form:

The deeper he [the artist] looks, the more readily he can extend his view from the present to the past, the more deeply he is impressed by the one essential image of creation itself, as Genesis, rather than by the image of nature, the finished product.

(Klee, On Modern Art 45)

The painting of the boy may be compared with Klee's late painting "Pfirsich-Ernte" ("Peach Harvest" 1937; Paul

Klee at the Guggenheim 187). The tranquil, joyous lines of this painting and its peach tones speak as much of a harvest of actual peaches as the artist's harvest of peach tones. The artist has touched the same source that creates real peaches, and he in turn creates his peach tones, and his painting, which are his version of the genesis of peaches:

But if anyone despises the arts because they produce their works by imitating nature, we must tell him, first, that natural things are imitations too. Then he must know that the arts do not simply imitate what they see, but they run back up to the forming principles from which nature derives; then also that they do a great deal by themselves, and, since they possess beauty, they make up what is defective in things. For Pheidias too did not make his Zeus from any model perceived by the senses, but understood what Zeus would look like if he wanted to make himself visible.

(Enneads 5.8.1.32-40)

Both "Pfirsich-Ernte" ("Peach Harvest") and "Knabe mit Spielsachen" ("Boy with Toys") are immediate, simple, and powerful compositions. But their real significance lies in the way the most simple and direct means can be used to suggest what can not be painted at all, which as such remains beyond artist and viewer alike, but makes its presence felt, nonetheless. One might think that such simple presentation would tempt the viewer to relate to the image as an icon with theurgical powers.⁶⁶ A naive response

⁶⁶ As noted in Chapter 2, Yeats often seems on the border of this. However, I feel that while Yeats was fascinated by image-presence, his real poetic concern is how these presences break in upon our emotional life.



1937. 19. Pfirsich-Ernte.

Figure 5. Paul Klee, Peach Harvest, ("Pfirsich-Ernte"), 1937.

to a landscape painting would be to see in it a nice place to have a picnic. Or as Klee has written in his essay "Über die moderne Kunst" ("On Modern Art"), the layman would look at a portrait for some likeness of his uncle and exclaim, "But that isn't a bit like uncle!" (On Modern Art 31)

A similar response might happen to these paintings of Klee's, but somehow it doesn't. Somehow, almost between the lines, and between the colors, he evokes something far more profound, the intense contact with the source of all creativity, the presence of the One. The paintings have presence as objects, but the presence they evoke, however unpainted and therefore absent, is felt as more present than the physical object itself.

Bonnefoy's poem "Hopkins Forest" comes near the middle of the 1991 collection Début et fin de la neige. It is a central example for my argument because the word presence occurs in the third line of the poem. Like "Among School Children," "Hopkins Forest" contains several concrete scenes. There are four specific scenes in the poem, corresponding to stanza breaks.

The first scene depicts the poet going out of a house (presumably) to draw some water, and then his seeing the night sky. In the second, the poet goes back into the house and tries to read a text. These two scenes are closely related (the house being constant) but they are divided by

stanzas into inside and outside. These scenes are referred to in the fourth stanza as a dream ("ce rêve"). The third scene takes place on a train in New Jersey. And the last scene (the fourth stanza) takes place in northwestern Massachusetts, in a wood in Williamstown. The last stanza unites all the previous ones in a described place that is, however, no specific place.

In the first three scenes, apocalyptic imagery prevails and is closely paralleled by the act of reading. The first stanza recounts how the poet leaves the house to get some water and under the presence of another sky ("un autre ciel"), a black sky emptied of stars, except for a mass of stars above some oak trees. In the second stanza, the poet has left the house out of some anxiety, it seems. He re-enters later ("rentraï") and re-opens a book left on the table. Was it something in the reading that drove him outside? Was it the absence of the author in the text that sent him seeking presence? Does reading create the thirst, metaphorical as well as real in this case, that drives the poet to seek the water (of presence). Does reading empty all things of presence?

Bonnefoy is fond of staging his poems at a moment of departure ("je sors"), which is a threshold moment, a Janus moment of retrospect and prospect (Gasarian 35). It is clear that once outside the poet is in the presence of

something strange, unexpected, even disconcerting, an other sky, but also he is in the presence of the red stars that burn and smoke like a furnace. The word "brasier" here is strong; perhaps it recalls the furnaces of suffering and self-transformation in Blake. The terror and hope implicit in the first stanza resembles the terror and hope one feels in the verge of a spiritual transformation.

In other poems, red light on the horizon is prophetic, a figure of desire or longing (e.g. Poèmes 293, 315; Stamelman 427; Caws 454). In this particular poem, the "other" sky anticipates the sky of the last stanza, as does the union of fire and smoke anticipate the union of light and shade in the final stanza ("claires dans la pénombre"). But the experience of that sky and that red light returns the poet inside, to the text which has been rendered unreadable. Signs become suddenly indecipherable. It seems that even the white of the page becomes a white abyss where spirit falls silently.

It is as if the poet, like Dante, tried to climb the mountain of earthly paradise intellectually, by means of a text (Freccero 46). A hope was glimpsed, but the summit never gained. The result is despair and the loss of hope in texts, which now become unreadable.

These ideas are continued in the third stanza. He is on the train between Princeton Junction and Newark, New

Jersey. It is a matter of chance he is there ("deux lieux du hasard pour moi"). He almost seems lost. The passengers are reading, as the poet was reading in the second stanza, silently, which serves to remind one of the text's being the present speech of an absent author, silently, like the falling of snow, like the falling of spirit in the white of the page between words. In this unfamiliar place something familiar (as familiar to the poet as the house he exits and enters) appears -- a large picture of Baudelaire. This image brings an apocalyptic vision of the sky emptied, and the emptying of language too.

The stanza begins with concrete and mundane scenes but ends on spiritual note. At this moment of the poem, poetry, language, and meaning are very much in jeopardy and Baudelaire is there, in the photograph, which is like a written text in so far as its fixed form seems to bring Baudelaire permanently close to us -- present, but also permanently absent. Baudelaire was one who knew how precarious and even futile are these human approaches to the mountain of the spirit. We may dream and build in language, but our dreams and our language never take us to the summit.

In each of these three scenes, the sense of disaster, destruction, and absence is mirrored in the act of reading. Reading seems to empty the world, or language at any rate. This is confirmed in the fourth stanza ("Du monde dévasté

par le langage"). The poet is walking in Hopkins Forest in Williamstown, Massachusetts. It is fall and the foliage is turning. A sudden storm buries the forest and all its color in a white mass of snow. Again an apocalyptic scene is depicted, the world emptied by language -- we might wonder, was it emptied by a written text which gave the illusion, so convincing, of presence?

Somehow the order of nature is out of step with itself, and a premature death threatens all life, all color. But amid the snow the poet sees one thing, a painted plank, that does not yield its color to the white snow. The poet experiences a rapprochement ('rapprocher' occurs twice in the poem) between two forces, life and death, the presence of color and the absence of color (cf.; Enneads 3.6.17.21). The poet experiences a reconciliation between two conflicting principles ("le conflit de deux principes") which had caused a wound ("la plaie"). As a result of this experience, which the poet keeps within his mind (at his horizon where the visible gives way to the invisible, as if the red stars of the first stanza have been internalized), opposites can be held together. Two lights are blended.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ So far as I have found this image occurs four times in Bonnefoy's verse oeuvre (Poèmes 213, 222, 237; Début 36). This image occurs frequently in Plotinus (e.g. Enneads 4.3.31.11; 5.8.3.6; 6.7.21.13). Plotinus uses the image to describe how the higher world is present to the lower world, just as in the poem something from beyond the physical world is present to the physical world.

In the last stanza, light and shadow, visible and invisible, summer and winter, trees and stones, finitude and infinity, sound and silence, the high and the low -- all the sorts of oppositions that language creates no longer seem adequate and yet language is not rendered useless or absurd by this fact. Somehow by virtue of the experience of presence, the poet precisely does not experience the confusion of words that he does in the first part of the poem. Now something holds. Language is temporarily regrounded in a speaking silence. What had been emptied is now full again. Perhaps too the act of reading is redeemed.

There seems to be a reconciliation in this poem between language and presence. But how can there be, if language is absolutely incapable of directly expressing presence (Stamelman 421; Naughton 43; cf. Enneads 5.3.14.1ff; 6.8.19; 5.3.10; and 6.7.38)? Throughout the poem, the poet has been struggling with the absolute separation between signs, or the human desire to assign meaning, and presence which seems beyond the grasp of language. The poet has changed his relation to the absence in language (silence, textuality) and the absence of color (whiteness). By the last stanza the poet has gained some unnamed confidence and trust, which he possesses and listens to inwardly. The sound he hears, above the sounds of the world ("à travers les bruits") is a light whispering ("le léger/ Chuchotement") which is as much

silence as noise ("le haut, le bas/ N'étant plus, ni le bruit"). It is a gentle whispering that also seems to let silence be heard as silence, the hidden (other sky) to appear as hidden.⁶⁹

This silence and this other sky which the poet now, in the present tense, possesses inwardly, gives him the confidence that he lacked at first, to rest before the silent and the absent, to enter the silence and the whiteness of the great snow ("J'entre pour un instant dans la grande neige").

The poet now is granted a complete vision of the other sky, whereas before it was only partial. The anxiety of the second stanza is allayed; an anxiety, we must remember, that is associated with texts and reading (Baudelaire is a text because he is his poems and because he is a silent image). Somehow, the act of reading, of putting the poem together ('rapprocher') has left us with a similar confidence before what the poem does not describe directly but makes us feel. "Hopkins Forest" brings us to a silence, a silence that is no longer threatening, and not merely silent, after all the plank seems to speak. It is an absence no longer wholly absent, like Stevens' "nothing." We feel something there, like the intense presence of Plotinus' One.

⁶⁹ This seems to me an example of Plotinus' primal sound, which speaks of the silent presence of the One.

I have deliberately left the most curious part of the poem until the end. When the poet sees the plank, he compares it to the resurrected Christ, who says to Mary Magdalene "Nolo me tangere" ("Non, ne me touche pas"). What are we to make of this? On one reading it might seem that the spiritual principle says to the mortal world, "no, don't touch me" and in so refusing death keeps its integrity as spirit (remains impassive). But this reading is not complete, because the spiritual principle is never separated out allegorically, never simply assimilated to color, for example, or to the snow.

It seems to me that the painted plank is like the resurrected Christ in so far as it is both dead and alive.⁶⁹ The plank, though but a throw-away artifact and not living - - though it used to be a tree -- remains alive and colorful when all the color of the trees is hidden in whiteness. In refusing the death of snow, it is alive, and yet by nature it is dead (inanimate). Similarly with Christ, who has physically died and yet walks and presumably even has a beating heart like a living person.

Now the most curious question arises; why, if this is a moment of presence, does the plank seem to say "Don't touch me"? It refuses itself, turns away. This quality of

⁶⁹ Perhaps the plank is a piece of the cross.

turning away strikes me as curious. Does this plank provoke a sense of the uncanny like Klee's painting (and Yeats' Christ too)? Is the painted plank, if we follow Bonnefoy's ideas about the Oedipal nature of artistic creativity, an image of the poet's mother, resurrected and predictably untouchable, as perhaps she appeared to the poet/boy on a snowy day with her red cheeks? (Vérité 90-91; Rue 143). This almost seems a plausible reading. Or is the plank a kind of microcosmic allegory of the poem itself, which is silent yet also speaks (the illusion of direct speech is a technique exploited in the poem), dead and yet somehow alive too?

The poem also is an artifact that refuses death, while the poet will die. Does the poem then say to the reader/Magdalene, "Don't touch me, for what you seek -- presence -- is not here." Or does it say "Don't touch me, for I refuse to yield you my secret." Is there a difference between these two? The silence surrounding the second reading, that secret, seems to return us to the poet's mother; the poem, or the poet for that matter, can not yield up the secret of its source, namely Oedipal desire? The second reading is perhaps more favorable, but it turns the poem into a strange shape upon the reader's lap, by bringing us near to presence only to refuse it to us. We are left in doubt, and a little confused, because the poem speaks so

strongly about an experience of unity and presence, after equally strongly speaking about dispersal.

At its core does the poem refuse the possibility of unity and presence? For consider what effect the poem would have if it were to stop with the last line of the fourth stanza. All the emphasis would fall on the plank's distance, its absence as refusal and turning away. The feeling of presence would not come through as it does in the fifth stanza. It is as if that silence itself turned away - - how then can it be presence still? If the poet did contact it, would this give the impression that words can actually preserve presence, that poems can give us the world? We are left to wonder whether poetry, as Bonnefoy practices it, can do anything at all except say to the reader that what is sought can not be found there, that poetry can work only through absence.

What the poem gives is the disappearance of presence, but in such a way as to give the assurance, even despite the refusal, that it is still present. For the poet carries this experience with him, and it imparts to him a sense of confidence. Something from the realm of pure light, is present to the poet in this life, even if it itself remains separate and absent.

Bonnefoy refuses to speak presence, refuses to fragment it by subjecting it to language, just as he refuses to speak

of the Other or enclose the Other in a covering of subjective determinations.⁷⁰ This is because he believes, as Plotinus believes, that all our attempts to determine the One only hide it. However, the poem conveys an intensity that is unmistakable.

Like "Hopkins Forest," Yeats' great poem "Long-Legged Fly" makes this sort of presence felt. The poem is one of Yeats' most immediate and simplest; it contains no Platonic doctrine of recollection, no elaborate myths, only well known stories and historical moments deftly and boldly delineated, like the figure of the boy in Klee's painting. Caesar, Helen/Maud Gonne and Michelangelo appear at peak moments in their lives, appear clearly to us, as clearly as the scene in any simile in the Iliad. The scenes are vivid enough so that a listener could take them in on one hearing. In fact the poem has many oral/performative features that enable it to be comprehended as it is being recited.⁷¹

The first oral/performative feature is the immediacy and transparency of the poem's images, which each contain a

⁷⁰ See above, Chapter 3.

⁷¹ A parallel example would be "Easter 1916." This poem has a refrain and a catalogue, two features of oral texts. The catalogue in particular demands that we recite it, for recitation is a way of remembering, ensuring an active memory of those lost, a feature of epic catalogues often noted. In reciting the names we participate in the collective tragedy. We experience on a personal level the impersonal events of history.

compact idea (Zumthor 98, 107; Ong, Orality 40; Yeats, Letters 109). Such clarity enables the listener to apprehend the poem as it is being recited. Second, the poem is a series of metaphorical circles closed off by the refrain. Within each stanza there seems to be another ring, which begins with the conditional purpose clause in "That," and ends inevitably in its answering counterpart, the imperative. Such parallelism and ring composition are typical of oral texts (Lord 30; Foley 60; Zumthor 111; Ong, Orality 38). Furthermore, the imperative mood, like a question, is a linguistic mode that implies a person present to respond. Of course an implied hearer is not an actual hearer; the preservation of the text distances the hearer from the imperative. And yet it draws us near as well and creates an indeterminacy.

The last oral feature of this poem, and the most striking, is its refrain. As Paul Zumthor has shown, a refrain has an indelible trace of performance (77). When we hear a refrain, we seem to react immediately and want to sing along with the poet/singer. The repetition of the refrain, like the repetition of a single word, pushes us out of language into pure voice, as we noticed happening in

Yeats' poem "Presence" (Zumthor 147; Nancy 234; Bachelard 169).

The most striking indeterminacy in this poem is the silence on which the mind moves.⁷³ This silence seems to be the source of creativity, for the image of the fly's movement evokes the creative act in its sexual connotations, and it its echo of Genesis where the Spirit is upon the face of the waters. The source of creativity in the poem, like Plotinus' One, is never ultimately determinable. It is an active silence, emphatically there and turned towards us; we hear and overhear it, like Plotinus' source.

The whole poem is a meditation on the poet's creative relation to the source of creativity, and ultimately to creation. Each of the three scenes depicts a moment of creativity, a profound contact with the source of creativity that is pure movement.⁷⁴ As Plotinus says, the soul can grow anxious as it approaches the formless One:⁷⁵

What then could the One be, and what nature could it have? There is nothing surprising in its being difficult to say, when it is not even easy to say what

⁷² Both Zumthor (126) and Bachelard (Poetics 162) speak of the vocal elements of a texts as "vertical," which is to say that they emerge from the two-dimensional space of the visual text into a tactile and aural space.

⁷³ It is true that oral poetry knows silence very deeply -- in the pauses before or during a speech, or the more stylized pause at the caesura. But only a sensibility steeped in textuality could have as profound a relation with silence and absence as is displayed in "Long-Legged Fly" and "Hopkins Forest."

Being or Form is; but we do have a knowledge based upon the Forms. But in proportion as the soul goes towards the formless [the One], since it [the soul] is utterly unable to comprehend it because it [the One] is not delimited and, so to speak, stamped by a richly varied stamp, it slides away and is afraid that it may have nothing at all.

(Enneads 6.9.3.1-7)

However, there is no anxiety in this poem. Each character has a confident and assured relation with silence. They seem to feel no need to determine it, but seem to relate to it in a peaceful and fruitful way.

Somehow the intensity and power of this poem, like Klee's painting, is not contained in any one of the images. In fact, it seems to vibrate between and beyond them. The poem almost miraculously writes around its emotional center, but by doing this, that center is not felt as threateningly or strangely absent. The feeling of the poem, like the boy's feelings of triumphant joy, is intensely present, but not written, nor spoken, but silent. That presence reassures

⁷⁴ It is typical of Yeats that in each of these scenes, except for the artist, the creative moment has destructive consequences (Caesar's death and the ensuing civil war; the fall of Troy).

⁷⁵ "As Plotinus specifically tells us, to proceed beyond Nous is to take a leap, and in a sense it a leap into the unknown. There is even a sense of fear attached to it, fear in 5.5 lest we fail to achieve our end through imputing any kind of duality to that which we are seeking, and fear, as we read in the more striking 6.9.3.7, lest the approach to the One be a deception, and a grasp of the infinite turns out to be a grasp of nothingness." (Rist, Road 220; cf Hadot 32)

the reader, even when we realize that it is a silence that is present to us, but not a silence of refusal, nor one of escape, but one of giving and contact.

Chapter 7

In this chapter I would like to extend my argument one step further, into some examples of poetic techniques through which Yeats and Bonnefoy make presence felt in a poem. This is a way of extending my hypothesis to a greater variety of examples. I will be exploring various manifestations of what Yeats calls the "fifth element" and Bonnefoy a "tache/tâche," which are both vocal elements creating an "unwearying and unwearing" indeterminacy.

Although there are doubtless more, I will discuss examples of three distinct techniques for creating a "tache" or "fifth element": what Yeats calls "mutual reflection," verbal resonance, and silence. This chapter will be made up of a brief outline of these three techniques and some concrete examples of them in the poems of Yeats and Bonnefoy. My goal is to show how what I called the address of the poem emerges in specific instances, and how each way it emerges demands the reader's fullest response, that is, demands the reader to be in presence and feel that sense of plenitude and intensity.

I. Mutual Reflection

The first form of the poem's address is the most difficult to describe, although we engage it unconsciously (almost) every time we read. It occurs in the act of

reading a poem and is not a thing to be found in the poem. We have already seen examples of this in its simplest form ("Among School Children," and "Deux barques"). In respect to these poems, I discussed how presence can be felt in an active questioning by the reader of the artifice of poems -- asking what is the relation between art and life, presence and representation, what is the relation between the mimetic illusion of a poem's language and awareness of that illusion, its ability to create and disperse an illusion of presence.

As we noted, this sort of questioning requires an imaginative stretch on the reader's part. This sort of indeterminacy can demand the creative participation of the reader either to complete and connect something left incomplete or unconnected, or to hold two or more elements together and play them off of each other (Iser, Reading Process 63). I call this technique "mutual reflection," borrowing the phrase from Mallarmé via Arthur Symons via Yeats.

At the end of his essay "The Autumn of the Body," Yeats speaks of a new trend in poetry that is replacing the old "picturesque and declamatory" way of writing (Essays 189). This new poetry is philosophical and spiritual, striving to be "a poetry of essences." Its technique is to substitute description for "words 'that take light from mutual

reflection, like an actual trail of fire over precious stones,' and 'to make an entire word hitherto unknown to the language'" (Essays 193; Ramratnam 34-35). Yeats is here quoting from Arthur Symons' discussion of Mallarmé poetic technique in The Symbolist Movement in Literature (73).

I take this technique as a model for the first form of the "fifth element" or "tache." The imaginative stretch of the reader is to be sensitive to this leaping flame, to feel how this light from mutual reflection reaches or stretches from one textual point to another.

The most obvious example of this is the use of repeated words and phrases. Such repetition make the same words become different from themselves, according as their context varies. As the reader passes from one occurrence to the next an indeterminacy arises because the same words are used but their meaning is slightly different. This difference sets up a resonance between instances of the same word. This difference creates opacities in the poem that resist being easily resolved into meaning, and in some cases no determinate meaning can be fixed during the realization of the poem. Instead of a restricted meaning, we find that meanings multiply.

Examples of this can be found in Yeats' "Her Vision in the Wood" and "Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks at the Dancers" and in Bonnefoy's use of a restricted vocabulary.

Perhaps the most common and most subtly exploited oral/performative feature in Yeats' verse is the refrain. He used it early and late in his career, and it is particularly effective in his ballads-like poems such as "I am of Ireland" or "What Then?" or his political songs of his last years. The refrain can offer ironic comment, or express outrage or exultation, but it always has the effect of stretching the reader's imagination between occurrences of the refrain. To demonstrate how this can happen, I will look first at Yeats' poem "Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks at the Dancers."

In this poem, according to the title, Yeats' character Crazy Jane looks at some dancers. But are they present before her or present to her mind only? It is typical of Yeats that the lines between performance and life, image and flesh, are unclear, though not confused. The way this happens is very curious. First of all, Crazy Jane "looks" at the dancers in the present tense. But the rest of the poem is given in the past tense -- if she were looking at a live performance she would have to use the present tense at some point in the poem.

The same would be true if she were looking at an ivory carving of two people dancing ("that ivory image"). But what ivory image? Yeats has used the demonstrative to suggest the physical presence of the image, but the image in

fact is not physical (Adams 21). It must be that Crazy Jane is looking at images in her mind, watching a scene from her memory or imagined memory, for she has "grown old" (a common metaphor also in Bonnefoy). And "that" refers to the image in her mind, as if one could point to it there or as if it were a physical entity made, say, of ivory (ivory because of the woman's pallor). It is there and not there, like Stevens' "nothing."

The poem goes further. That "ivory image" which Crazy Jane finds in her mind is the woman dancing with her beloved. But the dancer is an image, being a composite of flesh and spirit, or rather an image in an image. She is an image-presence to Crazy Jane like the icons in "Among School Children." The woman herself seems far away, like the spirits in the Condition of Fire. So the poem gives us the musings, the internal movement of Crazy Jane's mind.

What then is the refrain, which, like the title, is in the present tense? It seems to me to be something like Crazy Jane's present utterance, as if she were looking at the images in her mind and muttering in response to them, half audibly, "Love is like the lion's tooth." A person overhearing her would surely think her mad. But of course the readers do not simply overhear Crazy Jane; they overhear the inner workings of her mind too. Suddenly Crazy Jane is a presence speaking to us, or we have this illusion. For

the title might have read, being more explicit, "Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks at the Dancers in her Mind and Mutters to Herself Three Times: 'Love is like the Lion's Tooth.'" We realize that she is a presence only when we realize that these images are visions of hers, images of images. When we do this we also see the poem itself as image too, as an artifice, and a presence to the reader.

But presence in this poem goes even further. One of the most important aspects of the refrain is the way in which the same sentence or phrase subtly alters its meaning according to its different contexts. What is required to realize this is the reader's present mind, reading the text and feeling how the meaning alters. I say the meaning "alters" but I do not mean that it comes to rest in some stable other meaning, rather it continually others itself, remains the same and yet evokes many other possible meanings, without coming to rest finally in any one of them. It is pure resonance (Bachelard 197). Reading the refrain, the mind is stretched along these vocal 'otherances.'

The first occurrence of the refrain gives us a straightforward declarative statement: sexual love has a side to it that is aggressive and violent like a lion attacking its prey. The emphasis is on the "is" as a transparent copula. It is a simple simile. The second occurrence seems to have the same meaning, but with an even

stronger sense of violence, especially in proximity to the word "hate" which precedes the refrain. In "Per Amica Silentia Lunae" Yeats says that sexual love is founded upon spiritual hatred. The beloved often conspires with the Daimon to destroy the lover. The violent struggle that is physical love, according to Yeats, is like the violent struggle of predator and prey, where predator is not to be simply identified with the male, for in the poem the woman strikes and penetrates the man with her knife.

However, there is a gentleness and joy latent in the first occurrence of the refrain. We hear this come forth when we listen to the words themselves.

Love is like the lion's tooth.

The very sound of these words is revealing. The line has a very erotic movement. The gentle "l's" lead up to the one stopped consonant "t" and the sentence ends with the ecstatic, brimming diphthong "oo" and the fricative "th." According to the context, the refrain can tend toward emphasizing the violence, or the gentleness, or ecstasy of sexual passion.

Such are the first two occurrences of the refrain. The third, however, ranges to another possibility. Crazy Jane, in her present state, having grown old, looks back and realizes that she can no longer dance such a dance as she sees in her mind. However, remorse does not plague her --

rather the last stanza rises to a pitch of exaltation and defiance. As we read the refrain, its meaning seems to alter and reflect this joy, as if to say not so much that love is violent, though this meaning is still there, as that only love has bite, has reality and the sort of power that is the essence of pure existence. The emphasis subtly shifts from "like" to "love" so that the line reads as a whole, in one go, not two separate parts linked by a transparent copula. And yet still under all of this the other meanings resonate, for in fact the words have not altered. Presence in the poem arises as the reader stretches between occurrences of the refrain. The refrain becomes a whole which is greater than the sum of the parts of the poem. It evokes a presence that is something more than the words on the page. This is that "fifth element" Yeats mentions in "Per Amica Silentia Lunae."

My second example of "mutual reflection" is Yeats' poem "Her Vision in the Wood." Instead of a refrain I will be looking at a particular phrase in the poem, the Homeric "wine dark." The phrase in Homer is a form of epithet whose original meaning has grown obscure while it has remained in the poet's stock vocabulary (Foley 24-25; Parry 153; Lord 30ff; Vivante 13-17). Like many epithets in Homer, it is unclear whether this phrase has ornamental, metrical, or semantic function. As such, it is an indeterminacy.

"Her Vision in the Wood" is the eighth poem in the sequence entitled "A Woman Young and Old." This sequence is a series of meditations on love and sexuality by a woman who is by turns young and old, whether literally or figuratively (she seems to gain youth through sexual love). As in "Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks at the Dancers," sexual love in these poems turns upon hatred ("Each hating what the other loved, / Face to face we stood," "Meeting"; Poems 275-276). It also involves impersonal as well as personal elements, for the woman's vision of her beloved in the wood is a vision of Adonis who was torn apart at his death. This is in keeping with Yeats' ideas about love. The lover loves in the beloved an image, an archetype, something from the world of the Daimons, from "before the world was made" (cf. Poems 261, "Young Man's Song" and 270-271, "Before the World Was Made").

The woman, now "too old for a man's love," rages at her old age. In her rage she tears at her breast as if that pain could displace the pain of growing old in body but not in passion. The blood she draws creates in her mind an image (her "vision") of a classical scene ("those bodies from a picture or a coin"), Adonis being torn apart.

The repetition of the phrase "wine dark" (or the words "wine" and "dark") in this poem has the same effect as a refrain. Their repetition creates echoes and associations

in the reader, that trail of fire that Yeats spoke of (referring to Mallarmé).

The midnight, the moment of aesthetic transformation, is called "wine-dark" (Vendler 63). The woman's blood is called "wine" (line 7). Her nails become "wine-dark" (line 10) because of the blood she has drawn, though blood is never called blood except in reference to the wounded man (lines 23 and 25). She calls her blood "the dark" -- a euphemism or metaphor that resonates with "wine-dark." Her bloodied nails, the blood running down her hand, seem to reproduce the "wine-dark" midnight, the hand reproduces the blood-spattered tree against the sky. Finally, in an eerie twist, the band of singers seems unaware of the woman's presence; they do not hear her shriek or see her fall, because they are "drunken with singing as with wine." Nor does the reader. The technique lends a semblance of objective reality to the vision, and by the same token to the poem.

The various echoes of the phrase "wine-dark," all six of them, create indeterminacies or opacities the poem. This opacity resists an allegorical reading as a "fabulous symbol," but it makes a direct emotional impression. However, this impression is not determinate or determined. It is rather a form of pure presence. Presence lives in

these repetitions, which maintain a formless element in the poem.

All sexual desire, according to Yeats, is figuratively to make bloody and to be bloodied, to mutilate and to be mutilated as by the tooth of a lion. Love comes to this woman when she sees the man's "glazing eye" -- "glazing" and not "glazed" or "gazing" -- his eye could be glazing over because he is dying, or from pleasure. Perhaps his gaze is active and puts a glaze on her eye, so engrossed is she by her vision. At this point she seems to be in the vision, interacting with its figures, but then somehow, as happens in dreams, when she shrieks and falls and the singers sing on, she becomes convinced that her vision is no "fabulous symbol" but a vision of her own violent desires. She sees herself, or part of herself that had been hidden from her. She realizes she is no longer in the vision, interacting with it, but is as it were outside of it.

The reader as well, like the woman, initially visualizing this scene feels a part of it but then is suddenly thrust out when the woman shrieks and falls, unseen and unheard. The reader is turned out of the mimetic illusion of the poem at precisely the same moment as the woman falls out of her vision. Both realize that what was visualized was no symbol or allegory but unconscious desires. This is very much like what we noticed happening

in the Crazy Jane poems as well as in "Among School Children" and Klee's "A Barren Woman." We really enter these works of art when we stand outside scene depicted and see the mimetic illusion as illusion.

The purple opacity -- one might even say purple passage -- in the poem, the phrase "wine-dark," reflects back to the reader her or his own desires; the mimetic image of poetry, that comfortable illusion that words give us reality or a painting is great because it depicts an attractive setting, is exposed as self-reflective and self-serving. We might say that the opacities created by repetition are the bruises the poem incurs in its struggle to refuse to preserve the present experience of existence.

I would like now to turn to my example from Bonnefoy's poems. Although he never uses refrains, Bonnefoy does employ a restricted and repetitive vocabulary which allows that trail of fire to leap and burn in the most striking ways.⁷⁶ From Bonnefoy's earliest poems to his latest certain images repeat themselves: a fire smoking from wet branches, bees buzzing in a meadow, earthenware cups, torches dropping sparks, and boats drifting or launching

⁷⁶ Much could be done with the repetitive vocabulary in Yeats too, especially in a volume of poetry such as "The Tower." It seems to me that Yeats was aware of this technique, as the above examples show, but he did not take it nearly as far as Bonnefoy has.

with someone or something at the prow. Even specific words repeat, such as déchirer, se pencher, rassembler, retrouver, ronce, cendre, arbre, barque, cri and, of course, presque.

These words repeat in poem after poem so insistently that one might think a strict, even symbolic system were being set up. In fact, behind these verbs especially, there seems to be a narrative, namely the narrative of the Fall. For example, the action of "tearing" (déchirer) has a double aspect; on the one hand, it describes loss, on the other hand, it describes the moment when a real contact with what is or with another being might occur, a moment when what is lost might be found again in another form (retrouver). This double movement gives a certain pitch of anguish to Bonnefoy's poetry. His words hang on that delicate presque which he seems to love as Yeats loves "suddenly."

The critical question here is, how is the reader to deal with the apparently deliberate repetition of these words and images? One wants to look at the collection as a whole, and even to relate the poems to each other. However, one ends up being caught between making these connections and never really being able to complete them.

The barque in Bonnefoy's poetry seems to be associated with what passes, and therefore with death. The association with death is reinforced by the ferryman and the echoes of Egyptian mythology, both of which evoke the passage of the

dead from this world to the other across a river. But we can not say so confidently that the boat symbolizes or allegorizes death?

Paix, sur l'eau éclairée. On dirait qu'une barque
 Passe, chargée de fruits; et qu'une vague
 De suffisance, ou d'immobilité,
 Soulève notre lieu et cette vie
 Comme une barque à peine autre, liée encore.
 (Poèmes 278)

Are there two boats then, as the title of the section "Deux barques" suggests? Only two? And what about the boat in Ce qui fut sans lumière in the poem "la Barque aux deux sommeils" or more strangely that in "Le Mot Ronce, dis-tu" (Ce qui 42):

Le mot ronce, dis-tu? Je me souviens
 De ces barques échouées dans le varech
 Que traînent les enfants les matins d'été
 Avec des cris de joie dans les flaques noires
 Car il en est, vois-tu, où demeure la trace
 D'un feu qui y brûla à l'avant du monde.

How do we read the sign of these boats, and its meaning? It seems to me that Bonnefoy deliberately creates this uncertainty so that each time the boat appears, its prow just there, we get a start, feeling the familiar return and yet not knowing exactly what is so familiar; "L'énigme, le soleil rêve, la barque rouge, / Passe, boitant sa mort" (Poèmes 311). Like the refrain, the boat is both the same and other.⁷⁷ But between each instance of the word barque a

⁷⁷ Bonnefoy himself has implied in his interviews and prose work, the poet himself is still trying to figure out what he

resonance occurs, a fire leaps. It seems to point to a closed allegorical system, but its circuit is never completed.

The reader is tempted to read deeply as if it were an allegory, and yet at the same time the sign "barque" seems to be emptied (Stamelman 423). The reader is caught between these two impulses. This creates a resonance between the uses of the word, a resonance that makes the sign, the word barque, no longer signify in a simple, common-sense way. It creates a gap, a space of formlessness. This resonance creates significance, not signification; it is not the signifying of something, but a formless intensity which is what I mean by "significance"; "O ratures, ô rouilles/ Où la trace de l'eau, celle du sens/ Se résorbant s'illimitent" (Poèmes 287). This is the "tache/tâche" discussed in Chapter 3. With this technique Bonnefoy alters the word as a sign so that the sign is no longer, for a dreaming moment, exile, but it becomes the place; "Je crie, Regarde,/ Le signe est devenue le lieu" (Poèmes 288). The image of the boat speaks of death and what is passing. As such it presents the possibility, in the very face of death, of presence, of being wholly present in the passing moment.

means by the boat. But how are we as readers to take this?
(Shadows 176)

Repetition of the word barque prevents this living presence from being absolutely preserved in the poems.

It seems to me that the uncertainty and the resonance between the uses of the word barque are moments when the text, as it were, tears itself or, as it were, demands that the reader relate in presentness, demands an existential response of one's whole self; to open our determinations that threaten to hide the indeterminate One:

Sa tâche [the poet's], qui est de rétablir l'ouvert, comme disait Rilke, c'est nécessairement une réflexion, sur ce qui reclôt sa parole.

(Entretiens 199)

II. Verbal Resonance

The second form the poem's address can take is that of vocal sound divorced from signification. Although the refrain and the repetition of words also tends to divorce sound from signification, as we noticed, this form of the address achieves the same effect only by a different means. It does it within the resonance of a single word, not within the resonance between words or in the associative link between words or phrases. A resonant example of what I am describing could be found in Rimbaud's famous sonnet "Voyelles."

The vocal aspect of language can even interfere with the production of meaning (or signification) (Zumthor 147; Bachelard 196; Nancy 234-235). A simple example would be

how when one repeats a single word over and over again its meaning is slowly lost as its sound takes over. Paul Zumthor and Gaston Bachelard have spoken of these elements as "vertical" elements (Zumthor 126; Bachelard 162). Bachelard also speaks of how they open up infinite interior spaces in the reader, or how at certain points in a poem the voice is ready to sing out (202; 197).

We also saw in Chapter 5 that Plotinus conceived of a sound "prior to this world," or prior to discursive reasoning and discourse. He suggests that this sound exists in the realm of Nous, the Intelligible World, where sameness and difference first constitute each other. This primal sound has its nature and being from its separation from the silent and formless One (Enneads 5.1.12.13-21). It exists as a trace of silence, though it itself is a kind of sound. By its very sounding, it expresses the silence of the One, for sound is a trace of an originary silence just as form is a trace of an originary formlessness. The One's presence-and-absence is most vividly perceived when we can hear that sounding before language, because a trace of the silence can be heard within this sound.

I would like to consider three examples of this form of the poem's address; Yeats' "Byzantium" and Bonnefoy's "Le Mot Ronce, dis-tu" and his short poem "Le soir."

The core of Yeats' "Byzantium" is the relation between spirit and matter, time and eternity, and their mutual role in the creative act. It begins, like "Among School Children," with a scene one can easily visualize and even place historically and geographically. The second and third stanzas explore a realm where dream, image, art, and reality are not distinguishable.

The twofold nature of images, which we noticed in relation to Yeats' notion of presence, contains something both human and superhuman, transcendent and disdainful of human life and yet time-bound and indeed directed toward the time-bound.⁷⁸

The time shifts from twilight to midnight (stanza four) to dawn (the last stanza), from present to past to present. The first two stanzas occur in the present tense, though the third stanza tends to speak of the present so generally that it seems timeless. In the fourth stanzas we are back in the present tense. What seems like different times, however, is just a simple present applied differently. We are always in Byzantium, and in Byzantium the eternal present reigns and fights to stay the sea of transience and history. The

⁷⁸ The moon embitters the image, so it is not utterly unaffected; but we must remember that the image for Yeats is composed of "accidental phantasy" and an intermediary spirit. Pure spirit remains alone by itself, transcendent, and impassive.

jumps in time reflect the absolute present of dream-time and vision, which are more real than common sense notions of time, just as dreams, images of art, and vision are more real than common sense perceptions of reality (as we saw in "Among School Children").

The images in the last stanza are vivid like those of the first. A new immediacy is achieved; Yeats has taken us to a new emotional level -- this is one of his great achievements, the way his great poems reach one emotional peak and then unexpectedly take us to another, higher peak. In this fiery scene all is made simple, as in the Condition of Fire (which, we noted, was like Plotinus' Nous). Thought and existence burn down to one substance, as in Blake's furnace. The speed and energy of fire comes to us in the last three quick and repetitive lines of the stanza:

Dying into a dance
 An agony of trance
 An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

The last stanza begins with a disguised progressive participle "astraddle." This suggests continuing action in the present. Next we get two main verbs ("break"), which diminish the sense of the passage of time because they are the same word describing one action and not a series of actions in time. Timeless marbles break the force of history as a sea-wall breaks a flood tide. Finally, the poem ends with additive phrases we read over quickly, even

more quickly than the last three line of the previous stanza, in order to get to the object of the main verb, the last line which technically is the object of the verb but reads as just barely hanging on to the sentence as an appositive.

The demonstratives "those" and "that" of the last three lines reproduces the anaphoristic (repetitio) and additive structuring like that of oral poetry (Ong, Orality 37). It is a kind of accumulation like a catalogue, which Yeats exploits also in "Easter 1916." The repetition of "that" has a powerful effect. It keeps us close to the main verb while we try to rush over the intervening lines ("Those images that yet/ Fresh images beget"), but these severely impede our speed. So does the heavy caesura in the last line.

The effect of the last four lines is a lurching, choppy movement.⁷⁹ This happens on a smaller scale within the last

⁷⁹ It is interesting to consider how Bonnefoy has transposed Yeats' music:

A dos de dauphins, portés par ce sang (cette boue),
 Les esprits, tous! Les forges vainquent (le flot qui
 monte),
 Les forges d'or de l'Empereur! Et les (marbres)
 De la salle de danse vainquent
 Les amères fureurs de l'intrication (vainquent),
 Ces images qui en conçoivent
 De nouvelles, toujours, vainquent (cette mer)
 Déchirée de dauphins, tormentée par (l'appel du gong
 immense).

line itself. The prose stress of the line, behind which is the ghostly voice of a blank verse line rare in Yeats, falls on "dolph" and "gong" with their alternating stopped and continuant consonants. Both are closed syllables surrounding the sound spelled "o." This is followed by an echo between the torn and torm which sound so similar but are differently accented. All of these features produce the feeling of choppy water, as if it were the battle between time and eternity, churning things up, making things happen, until the last line ends on that brimming diphthong sea. The sea itself is not precisely located, mimetically in the poem, not symbolically identified with any exactness, yet it seems to stretch there before us into the distance, we feel immersed in the very middle of it, in its stirred waters, the lurching rhythm of last lines. It seems to me that the last line can not be read without an attempt at audible articulation. It is like the word vaste in Baudelaire as Gaston Bachelard analyzes it (Poetics 196):

In my opinion, for Baudelaire, the word vaste is a vocal value. It is a word that is pronounced, never

Bonnefoy has extended the meaning of the main verb ("vainquent" for "break").

He has also repeated it and brought it close to its direct object in the last line. The English word order is more ambiguous. He creates a very emphatic repetition of "vainquent" which comes to sound so strongly and abruptly in these lines that it sounds like the hammer of the smithy striking the anvil. The sounding of "vainquent" could also be the gong that torments the sea as it torments the rhythm of these lines.

only read, never only seen in the objects to which it is attached. It is one of those words that a writer always speaks softly while he is writing it. Whether in verse or in prose, it has a poetic effect, which is also an effect of vocal poetry.

Like the refrain, which is also a vocal element, not only a visual or textual one, this last stanza of "Byzantium" demands to be spoken aloud, demands the active participation of the reader to realize its vocal potential. But the poem's presence is only partially in this. For it achieves its greatest effect, its greatest presence, not simply by its oral features or its being spoken, but by transforming a symbol that is both mimetic (stanzas 1 and 4) and non-mimetic (stanzas 2 and 3) into an actual utterance. For what does that last line actually mean?

It seems to me that while the words are not reduced to nonsense, they have in fact lost a dimension of their meaning. Image, which is described or in a sense discussed in the first four stanzas, is here turned into sound, which is both a vocal presence in virtue of its demand to be sounded and also a presence as a poem; the "image, man or shade," "miracle, bird or golden handiwork" is not something out there to be thought about, it is the very words on the page activated in reading. It seems to me that like "Among School Children," this poem too makes presence felt in both ways simultaneously -- the most real thing, is the process of uttering these words. This stanza has the same effect as

the refrain but without the repetition, showing an opacity in the language, showing the language as language, but turning that into pure song, which is vocal sound at another level than signification.

The next example I want to consider is Bonnefoy's "La Mot Ronce, dis-tu" from Ce qui fut sans lumière. This poem is really about the sound of a word, pure sound, as it pushes out beyond, or perhaps more aptly for Bonnefoy, tears (déchirer), the process of signification (Shadows 163).

This poem of Bonnefoy's sounds the word "ronce," its status as "parole." Insofar as the word itself is the subject of the poem, language is foregrounded. Language is all the more foregrounded because the poet evokes his own arbitrary associations with the word ronce ("Je me souviens/ De ces barques"). It must be at the level of the word's material sound, that the poet makes his associations, not its meaning merely. When the poet asks, "Le Mot ronce, dis-tu?" in the first line, the title of the poem is repeated, almost like a refrain -- we hear the word "ronce" two times one right after the other. This pushes the word toward pure sound divorced from signification.

But who is this "tu" who says the word "ronce"? In a sense it is the reader who has just pronounced "ronce." This sort of self-conscious reference to the poem comes again when the poet asks:

Et poésie, si ce mot est disible,
N'est-ce pas de savoir, là où l'étoile
Parut conduire mais pour rien sinon la mort,
Aimer cette lumière encore? Aimer ouvrir
L'amande de l'absence dans la parole?

Not only does the "dis-tu" serve to bring the reader to consider the poem as poem, but so does the poem's complex, written syntax. Although the question in this quotation seems general, it is also addressed to the reader about this specific poem; how does this particular poem open the almond (or is it the kernel?) of absence in the word "ronce"?

This happens in many ways at once. First of all, the question itself implies someone present to respond. However, the textuality of the text distances the reader from the question. This happens also when the poet says "dis-tu" not "écrit-tu" and then says "vois-tu." We noted the same mixture of the aural and the visual, the textual and the oral in "La voix encore." Furthermore the poet uses the word "disible" which as a neologism must be modeled on "lisible" (Poèmes 289). What is sayable is also readable here in the text, the word "ronce."

This is not all, however. The word is not an empty trace, but a shimmering that marks a disappearance or

refusal of presence in words, even as it assures us, nevertheless, that this disappearance is not a total absence but a withdrawal of a prior presence. A fire burns at the prow of the boat, and this fire is a microcosm of the fire from before the world (Yeats' "Condition of Fire") -- our experience of it is the experience of presence. But that fire goes out, in the waves, in time ("où le temps dépose"), and all that is left is a shimmering on charcoal or shimmering smoke.

If the word "ronce" is like that wooden boat which sinks into the waves and loses the fire, what is the smoke? It seems to me that it is the very sound of that word in distinction from the written sign "ronce," the sound which disperses in air like smoke, whereas the written sign "ronce" remains as the product of evaporation. The sound "ronce" engages what came before language and signification as vocal sound. It opens for us that primal sound Plotinus heard in Nous, and it makes it audible as a form of the silence of the One. Just as the flowers of the almond are another form of light, just as snow is too, and the shimmering smoke and salt crystals -- and all of these are a figure of the glinting sun imaged in the window-pane -- so the sound of the word "ronce" is another form of the words we say in presence, another form of the question "Are you there?"

Its pure sound is disible not simply lisible -- and I think of this as Bachelard does of Baudelaire's vaste. The sound reaches back and brings into being a fleeting impression of presence, though again in another form, or through a medium. In reading this poem we feel that fleeting impression, since we pronounce the word "ronce" and explore that part of its significance that cuts across signification. The absence is opened because the disappearance of presence is, as it were, seen in the shimmering trace that is the sound, that is the evaporated salt on the charcoal.

Bonnefoy has asserted that presence is an experience outside language, but it gives birth to language (L'Improbable 116-117; Entretiens 189; Naughton, "Presence" 43; Stamelman 424). It is as if in the experience of presence we also feel the need to speak it, but in speaking it we create words that will soon begin to hide presence, fragment our vision, and exile us from that experience. However, the creation of words, while signifying our exile, also creates in us the dream of the word (la parole), the dream of that moment of the birth of words, when things were still obscure but clear, daybreak, the dawn of meaning (L'Improbable 130).

Poetry can liberate language from itself, momentarily, by releasing sound or parole (L'Improbable 128-133). Poetry

is not to be identified with a valorized voice, nor with an infinite regress of signs, but it is and is alive in both the sound and the written sign, the dispersing smoke (parole) and the sparkling traces (écriture). It is the parole that can speak to us of what comes before language. Poetry can open up words (like "L'amande") and excavate down to the primal sounds and also silence (L'Improbable 131). A prose récit of Bonnefoy's makes this clear:

L'origine de la parole

La lumière était si intense! Réverbérée de partout, refluant des dalles et des murs, des voûtes même, des palmes, elle décolorait les êtres, les chose, brûlait leur ombre: rien donc en ce qui existait là, périssait là, n'indiquait plus qu'il y avait de la matière sous l'apparence, n'en accusait plus le hasard, on eût dit le présent sans fin, l'espace sans ici ni ailleurs, les essences seules à être dans leur ample bruissement clair d'air qui monte en vibrant au-dessus d'un feu.

Et je comprenais que l'été est le langage. Que les mots naissent de l'été comme laisse un serpent derrière soi, à la mue, sa fragile enveloppe transparente. Que ce a'avait pu être qu'au sud, dans les miroitements du sel sur le roc -- et ces buissons ardents! et ces grands orages, qui errent... -- qu'on avait inventé les mots, et par eux l'absence; qu'on avait rêvé la parole.

(Rue 147)

A parole like ronce is rich ground for the poet, and the poem sets to digging. The address of the poem is the sound behind the linguistic sign that is liberated through the poetic act; the reader, in getting down to this level, in being able to hear this sound, has already had to become creative by letting the word resonate.

Bachelard speaks of how a single word can contain a resonance that is released through vocalization. This happens for example in Bonnefoy's beautiful short poem "Le soir" in Pierre écrite (Poèmes 228):

Le soir

Rayures bleues et noires.
 Un labour qui dévie vers le bas du ciel.
 Le lit, vaste et brisé comme le fleuve en crue.
 -- Vois, c'est déjà le soir,
 Et le feu parle auprès de nous dans l'éternité
 [de la sauge.]

As with so many of Bonnefoy's poems, there is here too a self-conscious allusion to the poem. "Labour" means "ploughing," but the word also echoes the Latin labor. In Bonnefoy (as in Yeats too) "labour" is associated with time and also the "work" of poetry, the poet's "tâche."⁸⁰ There is another reference to the poem itself. The Latin word versus originally applied to a way of plowing fields back and forth. Written poems were called versûs because on papyrus they looked like a plowed field. Bonnefoy's word "vers" suggests poetry (vers; labour/labeur/travail) and time, all summed up in the figure of the act of plowing, which is perhaps also sexual. The poem also gives a mixture of sight and sound (vois...parle), which suggests the text's sight becoming sound.

⁸⁰ The idea and even the word labor itself is discussed in Bonnefoy's introduction to his translations of Yeats (Quarante-cinq 29).

The whole poem is summarized and gathered together in the one word sauge with its dilating diphthong and buzzing consonant ending. Sage is of course appropriate for the poem because its gray-blue, gray-green color reproduces the evening's mixture of blue and black light. But how does it speak or address the reader? It seems to me that it speaks in the mixture of vowel and consonant sounds, in the very tension of blue and black in the word sauge itself. The word is a union of these colors, just as it is, in the poem, a union of sight and sound, text and speech, which is the poem, the "labour." As such it speaks to us as a presence, it reveals to us another level of sound in words. It makes us bend, as Bonnefoy says of Homer, "sur des sons de plus bas que ses cordes dans/ La maladroit lyre des mots terrestres" (Vie 97). And once we have bent over this barely audible sound, we have transformed ourselves, opened in ourselves our capacity for presence.

III. Silence

The last form the address can take is silence. This is the easiest to name but the most difficult to feel in the act of reading. We noted the working of silence in two major poems already, "Long-legged Fly" and "Hopkins Forest." So I would like to end with a reflection on just one poem: Bonnefoy's "La seule rose."

"La seule rose" is the concluding verse poem in the 1991 collection Début et fin de la neige. The poem begins in a city -- it is not clear if it is a real city (such as Mantua) or an imaginative city that combines several known monuments of Renaissance architecture. The classical facades ("des facades"; "ces frontons") and the room of San Gallo at San Biagio form the backdrop of this poem. These buildings are more beautiful than anything in this world. They verge on perfection, on absence -- absence because they seem from another world. Furthermore, the pediments play hide and seek with the poet, as they hover in the mist or hide in the snow.

This second stanza has many interesting echoes of Plotinus. Pure form, being immaterial and best expressed to us in mathematics, is most completely realized in matter, according to the poem, in classical architecture (Fink 239). This form desires the pain of being born in matter -- this is actually more like Blake or Yeats than Plotinus; as Blake says, "Eternity is in love with the products of time." In Plotinus, pure form is intellectual and resides in Nous. It desires only to return to the One, although a case could be made that the One's goodness creates the cosmos out of love, its desire extending the immaterial as far as possible into the void of non-being. The artist, with a hand freed of weight or gravity, conveys immaterial form into matter.

This is very much like the artist in Plotinus' Enneads 1.6 and 5.8, who is especially attuned to the realm of Ideal Beauty and the immaterial Forms, which constitute the intellectual but is beyond discursive reasoning.⁶¹

A further similarity comes in the way in which immaterial form appears in the material world. The pediments "montent/ A un plus haut niveau de l'apparence." Through a kind of effort, immaterial form appears as an appearance (a phenomenon literally), it is achieved, or rather its advent occurs, just as sound occurs when the word (logos) strikes the air.⁶² The dynamic event, which is the work of art, results from the drama of the immaterial appearing as material. This is similar to how Plotinus conceives of the work of art (Koutras 150-151).

The impact of immaterial and material seems embodied in the pediment and in "un seul grand trait floral" which could be a Corinthian column, or a volute, but perhaps it is the rose of the title in the form of a rosette. If it is the rose, it is conceived of as the tradition usually conceives of it, as the emblem of the divine in this world (Yeats' rose, Dante's and Petrarch's and so on). The rose returns, but in another form at the end of the poem.

⁶¹ See above Chapter 5.

⁶² See above Chapter 5.

In the first section the poet is in the city, looking greedily but still with some perceptual effort at the event of form in matter. This sight inspires the poet with hope ("un regain de l'espérance"). The sense of weightlessness in the weighted, of spirit in matter, lightens the heaviness of our birth in exile, our birth in matter exiled from pure spirit or pure light. The experience of the architecture renews the poet's hope because it impresses upon him, in a new way and at a new level of awareness, the co-existence of spirit and matter.

He wonders what is in the secret of those walls, what is the nature of the event of spirit's appearance in matter. But when the poet approaches an empty niche and wipes the accumulated snow from its base (here snow and light are explicitly linked: "Je fais tomber un peu de sa lumière"), he suddenly finds himself in a "bee-loud glade," a ten year old boy with a hand full of flowers.

It is a sudden and startling shift, from summer to winter, snow to flowers, buildings to meadow. It arrests the reader, especially since it is punctuated with a question mark. Is it the poet's other childhood? This question and certain difficult syntactical constructions, such as the distance between "elles" and its referent, also serve to remind the reader of the poem itself. The poem is

beginning to speak to the reader at a level other than mimetic imagery.

In the third section the poet moves on, always a metaphor in Bonnefoy for the passage of time, but also for the refusal to stay put or to repeat the past, a metaphor of leaving behind and entering the unknown, and so it is also a figure of destiny. He approaches a building, standing just under the arch of a door near "cette salle" which seems to be the same one mentioned in the first section ("la salle la plus intense/ Qu'ait bâtie la désir"). The sparkling snow effaces the limit between the inside and the outside -- outside is snow, sparkling, inside lamps, sparkling -- does the poet look through a window? The poet seems on a second threshold. The first is no doubt the one under the arch. The second is perhaps the one at the entrance to childhood, or rather the other childhood, or even to presence which is a contact with the unity of things. The poet drifts into childhood, gives himself to it and is no longer startled by its sudden appearance in his mind.

The sense of presence is most vividly evoked the following stanza, which has many similarities with "Hopkins Forest":

Et au-delà ce même bruit d'abeilles
 Dans le bruit de la neige. Ce que disaient
 Les abeilles sans nombre de l'été,
 Semble le refléter l'infini des lampes.

This experience is even beyond mathematics, just as Plotinus' One is beyond it too and beyond all thought and language.⁶³ Not only are inside and outside, summer and winter, light and snow united but also sight and sound ("disaient...refléter"); or put another way, silence and sound are united. We recall that in "Hopkins Forest" the poet keeps his experience of seeing the plank in the snow at his mind's horizon. He seems to hear it on the other side of sound, as a silence, the sounding silence of the "lèger/ Chuchotement des flocons." So in this poem, for beyond (au-delà), in the sounding silence of the snow, there is the sound of the bees, and what the bees said is reflected by the silent lamps. Silence and sound are deeply layered here.

But what is it that the bees said -- we notice the strange past tense -- which is reflected, imaged, reproduced, in the light and the snow? The actual sound of the bees is never described in the poem. It is left out. The poet only mentions what they were saying ("ce que disaient"), but he does not give it to us nor does he give us the sound of the bees. The content of their saying remains in the past. It seems to me that what the bees said is simply their buzzing, which is a form of the sounding of

⁶³ For architecture (Alberti), mathematics, and Bonnefoy, see Finck.

silence, the vocal "tache." And yet maybe they did say something, and it was again the Oedipal "Noli me tangere." Perhaps these two are the same.

In the last section the poet shifts out of childhood as suddenly as he had shifted into it. Now he is back in the city. He has eyes only for an arc traced in mud on a stone, however, and no longer for the arch describing the immaterial forms of geometrical beauty. The poet no longer looks at the geometrical, ideal, immaterial arch (the classical architecture of Alberti, Brunelleschi, San Gallo, and Palladio speaks of the ideal -- especially Palladio, it would seem, because he is said to make a sign from the other bank, the place of perfection and purity of form and light). He has eyes only for the "tache" of mud. It is as if the poet is able to look into his own life and see in its apparently senseless and painful reality also a trace of the divine from the other world only after he has been filled with the hope that these classical monuments inspire. This enables the poet to accept his present life and even know joy in it. However, when he turns to his present life, he also leaves behind the classical ache in favor of the arc of mud.

The poet attaches his mind to what has no meaning and no name. This does not mean that our life here is senseless, but that the things of this world, if we relate

to them in presence, are not contained in meaning or names (language) or even form, any determination. At this point in the poem the poet cries out, much like the poet in "Among School Children," that he does not betray the architects of the ideal, but he declares his faith; pure form is what the mist has penetrated (and so made both obscure and clear), the mist which effaces itself -- the only rose is the trampled snow. He does not betray the architects because he finds in the mist and snow the same thing that the more monumental architects sought (Poems 265-266):

You ask what makes me sigh, old friend,
 What makes me shudder so?
 I shudder and I sigh to think
 That even Cicero
 And many-minded Homer were
Mad as the mist and snow.

In the silence between the third and fourth sections something happens. The poet's reverie over childhood ends and he is back in the city. It could only end in his realization of its lost-ness, its pastness; he hears what the bees said, always what they said, not what they say, and suddenly the childhood that the architecture offered him, the other childhood, disappears.

But the disappearance of that other childhood also instills in the poet the confidence of its present absence. It goes with him, just as the experience of the plank in the snow went with the poet in "Hopkins Forest." He finds hope

in forms that mark a similar disappearance, the "tache," the "rature," the streak of mud, the footprint in the snow which marks the poet's passage through this life.

The rose is one of the oldest and most venerable literary symbol in Western literature. Bonnefoy's rose is not the Celestial Rose of Dante, nor the rose of ideal beauty of Laura, nor the rose of Yeats, nor Gertrude Stein's.⁸⁴ Dante's white rose and Petrarch's falling petals are transformed into snow, trampled snow. It is a symbol as humble and as common as the painted plank in "Hopkins Forest" or the puddle ("flaque") in other poems of Bonnefoy's.

However, the trampled snow is still as much artifice as Dante's rose, since it is a literary symbol. Keeping this in mind, we need to ask how the emblem of the trampled snow might be a kind of metonymy of the whole poem "La seule rose." The architectural beauty of the Renaissance is rejected as a kind of art possible for the poem. And yet without betraying this ideal -- Bonnefoy as much as Yeats is very interested in the canonical art of the past and in

⁸⁴ Petrarch is suggested here because of the epigraph of the collection. The falling petals of Petrarch are falling throughout Bonnefoy's collection, in the form of flowers and snow ("Quand la brise d'on ne sait où venue déjà disperse/ Les fleurs de l'amandier, pourtant l'autre neige." (Ce qui 43) This is an excellent parallel to Levinas' "twinkling" which is the same in the other.

continuing it into the present -- the poem is itself a version of "neige piétinée."

First of all the trampled snow evokes the passage of time, for footprints mark the poet's passage through time ("j'avance"). It also marks the actual passage of the poem itself through time, in the act of reading. The last line is self-reflexive, referring to the action within the poem but also by extension to the poem itself as something unfolding in time.

We noted that the poet's experience of presence seems to be evoked in the third section. But when does the reader feel presence in the act of reading? I myself feel presence in a barely audible voice in the poem, one I would like to try to make a little more audible.

"La seule rose," like "Among School Children" begins in a clearly delineated scene, albeit partially imaginary. As with Yeats' poem too, we truly enter this poem only when we pull away from the mimetic illusion, remembering that the rose is also a Rose, a literary symbol.

This begins to happen in the second section. In the third section we get what the bees said reflected in the silent lamps and in the whisper of the snowflakes. In the last section the poet ends on what has no name and no meaning, the arc of mud, the trampled snow. It seems to me that the footprints in the snow do not trace an esoteric

knowledge like Yeats' imaginary Judwalis dancers whose "children are taught dances which leave upon the sands traces full of symbolical meaning" (A Vision 41). What the footprints trace is a passing, which has no further allegorical meaning than just existing through time, here in the world of matter; no meaning, no name, just existence.

If the poem can convey this sense of "mere being," then it must be in something other than language as signifying system. I feel that it is what the bees said. The poem refuses to say what the bees said and to try to preserve it in language. A disappearance remains gone and yet also present, as a "tache," something like that, who can say exactly, which foremost conveys emotional intensity of mere existence, of being aware of the limitations of matter and yet fully awake (to use a metaphor of Plotinus) to the spiritual in every common thing.

We might say that the silence in this poem, like that of "Hopkins Forest" and "Long-legged Fly," is present and also absent. It is there and not there, like Stevens' "nothing." It stays with the poet as with the reader, but it is not simply preserved in the poem. It can not even be identified with the poem, but it emerges in the time-bound project of reading. It is silence within sound, perhaps, like "the blackbird whistling" and "just after."

We recall how Plotinus conceived of primal sound as a trace of silence, as having a trace of silence. The poem itself is silent about what the bees' said, but one can hear them, silent, sounding the silence of the One. This silence is the source of creativity, giving rise to the writing of the poem, it seems to me. It also enables the poet to maintain a sense of hope in life.

In the last section the poet replaces the monumental "arche" with his "arc." Just when this happens he calls out to his friends, the great architects of the Renaissance. It is the moment when the poet's own work threatens to become a monument to replace the others, or he seems about to fail their example. Life and art are merging at this point, just as in "Among School Children" when the poet calls out "O Presences." But at this moment a danger arises; the work threatens to eclipse life. Bonnefoy brings this out in a recent poem about Helen and the double image that was made of her (Vie 97):

Chaque fois qu'un poème,
 Une statue, même une image peinte,
 Se préfèrent figure, se dégagent
 Des à-coup d'éntincellement de la nuée,
 Hélène se dissipe, qui ne fut
 Que l'intuition qui fit se pencher Homère
 Sur des sons de plus bas que ses cordes dans
 La maladroit lyre des mots terrestres.

Each time a work of art prefers itself as figure, that is, each time that it believes too much in its mimetic

powers, the object of the imitation disappears. An awareness of the artifice of the poem, an awareness that the poem deals in illusions, is essential to its success as a poem. The voice of the poem can not sound, it is scattered, fragmented, if one loses this awareness. For it is not the object itself, or the content of the dream that matters; only the voice, which emerges from out of the dream, this is all.

That voice speaks to us of presence, and there is nothing else. The illusions that we create give us what we need to live here and now. And the words in which they come hold good for a time, but they too begin to tarnish as time passes; Bonnefoy, as a poet, has set himself the task of removing that tarnish through the violence of writing. His poetic act is an act of clearance, of liberating the sounds behind the linguistic sign that speak in presence.

Conclusion

It will be recalled that my governing hypothesis was that both Yeats and Bonnefoy are poets concerned with presence and that there is a notion of presence, grounded in Plotinus' philosophy, that applies to both Yeats and Bonnefoy. This notion, however, is not to be found simply in their poetics, or their philosophical armature informing the poetic work, but it is to be found in the act of reading of the poems themselves. It seems to me that the work of both Yeats and Bonnefoy does in fact convey a sense of presence, despite or in reaction against the representational nature of the poetry. Their poems manage to achieve this through a relentless self-consciousness directed to poetry and art in general. This creates a sense of presence insofar as the reader is aware of the present act of reading.

However, I felt it that this alone did not account for the feeling of presence I feel in relation to certain types of poems of Yeats and Bonnefoy. I found that certain types of indeterminacies in the poems, especially those arising from the interaction of the oral and written poems of language, radiated a sense of presence, of plenitude and intensity.

In turn, this sense of presence seemed to me very close to Plotinus' notion of presence. However, since the poets'

notions of presence, as expounded explicitly in prose treatises, did not agree so neatly with some aspects of the philosophy of Plotinus. I found that the real common link between my three writers arose through the act of reading poems (and the philosophical-poetical texts of Plotinus). This in the end became my main concern: how something in a poem's mechanical working through time (in the act of reading) did in fact convey to me as reader a sense of plenitude and intensity which was not determined and in fact resisted or deconstructed my own attempts to determine it. It was in the indeterminable indeterminacy that I found the closest link between Plotinus, Yeats, and Bonnefoy.

Furthermore, I have recast the question of reader-response criticism in terms of presence in order to account for, or at least to raise the question of, a reader's relation to a poem. In this sense I have sought to explore the personal side of the act of reading, but in an impersonal way. I have sought to explore the way a poem has significance, not so much how a poem has signification. I believe that while poems most certainly have specific meanings, a poem's greatest meaning is its significance to the reader, the life of the poem in the life of an individual, the hope it imparts even if this is expressed in the most negative terms. The poem's intensity seems to me all, not its signification of this or that idea. This is a

neglected area of study, for many reason, both practical and philosophical, but it is of unavoidable interest when one considers poets like Yeats and Bonnefoy who demand so much from the reader and return so much.

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